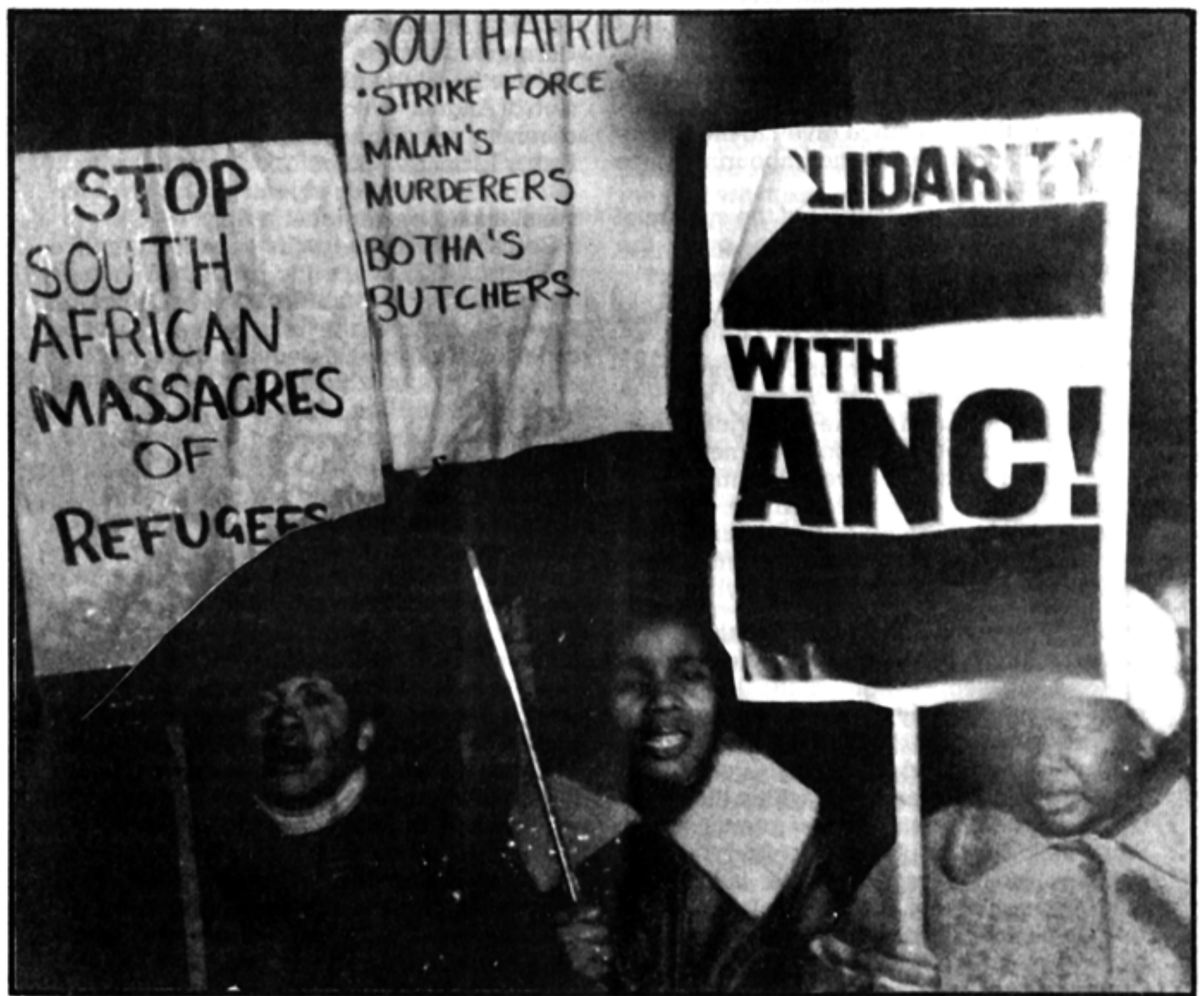


# APARTHEID DESTABILISATION



**PRETORIA'S STRATEGY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

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## Pretoria's Strategy in Southern Africa

The South African racist regime has had one main pre-occupation since the beginning of the 1960s, viz: how to halt the advance of African freedom and independence into the borders of South Africa. The pressures to forge a viable strategy became more urgent as the borders of free Africa yearly crept closer and closer. By the mid-1960s, Pretoria thought it had evolved a strategy that would enable it to:

- Disrupt, immobilise and if possible destroy the national liberation movement;
- Render the assistance given to the liberation movement by the neighbouring states ineffectual; whilst
- Preserving the essentials of the system of white colonial domination over the southern cone of the continent.

The three pillars on which this strategy rested were:

- The brutal repression of the democratic movement inside South Africa;
- The preservation of the Portuguese and British colonies on the sub-continent to act as buffer zones between South Africa proper and independent Africa;
- A crash programme to acquire self-sufficiency in food, energy, armaments and regional defence capability.

While Portuguese colonialism and the illegal Smith regime held sway in the region, Pretoria felt secure behind the buffer territories controlled by its allies. The victory of the liberation forces during the mid-70s threw this entire framework into crisis, occasioning a heated debate over policy within the ranks of the regime. It was as a consequence of this that a major overhaul of the racists' defence doctrine took place during the late 1970s, leading *inter alia* to the political demise of Vorster and the emergence of the clique led by PW Botha as the dominant power holders in Pretoria.

PW Botha's entire political career has been closely linked with a specific section of the ruling white 'National' Party. He has for years been associated with the Afrikaner business

elite based in the Cape Province. Before becoming Premier he served as Minister of Defence in Vorster's cabinet where he developed close ties with the top military echelon. According to Eschel Rhoodie, Vorster's disgraced Secretary for Information, Botha was a staunch advocate of direct military intervention in support of the white settler rising that occurred in Mozambique during September of 1974. He is also known to have been the chief architect of the invasion of Angola, which Pretoria undertook after receiving specific assurances of support from Henry Kissinger. Since becoming Premier in 1978, Botha has been able to put his own personal stamp on regional policy.

Botha's ideas were first given definitive form in 1977, while he was in Vorster's cabinet, when he tabled a White Paper on Defence. It was in this refurbished rendition of Pretoria's National Security Doctrine that the concepts of 'total onslaught' and 'total strategy' were first employed.

'Total onslaught' was a creation of Botha's policy formulators, specifically invented to give moral credibility to what is fundamentally a strategy to ensure the survival of racism and apartheid. It posited that the southern tip of Africa was the target of a total onslaught by the forces of Marxism, orchestrated and guided from Moscow, who had already made significant gains in the shape of a socialist-oriented Mozambique and Angola. To resist this onslaught required that the other countries of the region mobilise all their human and material resources in a well-coordinated 'total strategy', at whose core would be South Africa as the economically dominant country in the region.

Setting aside the wishful thinking and warped ideological content of 'total strategy', its conception was based on a number of well-reasoned premises. The first of these was the recognition that in fact there is no conventional military threat to South Africa's borders from the independent states to its north. The Pretoria regime faces primarily the threat of unconventional warfare, emanating

from within its own borders. The second premise is that the defendability of the system of apartheid would depend in large measure upon the capacity of the regime either to broaden the base of its support — by recruiting supporters from among the oppressed — or at least neutralising potential sources of support for insurgency amongst the oppressed. (In the words of Magnus Malan, Botha's Minister of Defence, the solution is 80% political and only 20% military). Lastly, that in order to recover its former status in the international community, Pretoria would first have to demonstrate its acceptability to independent Africa.

The regional objectives of 'total strategy' are defined by these three premises. All Pretoria's actions are directed at one basic goal — to shape the total regional context in which the states of the region will have to make their decisions. As laid down by Botha and subsequently elaborated by his policy formulators, 'total strategy' contains three basic elements:

- To entice or coerce regional states into a position of objective alliance with Pretoria;
- As far as is possible, to exclude the international community from direct involvement in the solution of the burning problems facing the region. Or as expressed by Roelof 'Pik' Botha recently, 'to find regional solutions to regional problems'.
- To prevent, or at worst, delay the delinking of the other economies of the region from the South African economy.

These three elements are integrally related, and none can be understood in isolation from the rest. Pretoria mainly relies on its undisputed regional economic pre-eminence for the effecting of these elements. At any given time the racist regime seeks to maximise its political leverage by the calculated deployment of a mix of tactical options, including the economic, the military and the politico-diplomatic. The strategy in practice thus has two prongs; one coercive, the other persuasive. In international politics there can, of course, be no sharp demarcation separating these two. Coercion easily spills over into persuasion and vice versa.

### **TOTAL STRATEGY IN PRACTICE**

The need for a refurbished strategy had been underlined by the debacle of the racists' invasion of Angola in 1975-76. Under Botha's direction, first as Defence Minister, later as Premier, Pretoria's armed forces were reorganised to:

- Transform them into a highly mobile conventional force capable of swift deploy-

ment against any neighbouring state;

- Raise their capacity as an anti-insurgency force;
- Re-define Pretoria's strategic doctrine to include surrogate forces (Unita, LLA, MNR etc) and mercenaries as tactical arms of the racists' military machine.

On 7th March 1979, Roelof 'Pik' Botha, speaking at a reception in Zurich, announced a new departure in Pretoria's foreign policy. The racist regime, Botha said, 'will have to give serious consideration to the desirability of adopting a neutral position in the struggle between East and West. Henceforth Pretoria would give priority to "advancement of our own Southern African region" with a view to the "establishment of a sub-continental solidarity which would form the basis for co-operation in the important spheres of life".<sup>(1)</sup>

In April of that same year, during a parliamentary debate, 'Pik' Botha referred to what he called a 'new Great Trek' which could inaugurate an era of closer co-operation among the '40 million people south of a line from the Kunene and Zambezi rivers'. These two speeches marked the commencement of what was to be the first phase of the practical application of the 'total strategy' within the region.

The notion of seeking closer co-operation with independent Africa was more fully elaborated by PW Botha on 22nd November, 1979, at a conference between government and big business at the Carlton Centre in Johannesburg. Botha announced that Pretoria sought to formalise the ad hoc arrangements periodically reached with the regional states in a common search for 'peace and prosperity'. This could be realised in a Constellation of Southern African States (Consas).

As conceived by Botha's policy-makers, Consas would pass through three phases. The first phase would entail the emergence of a core group, bringing together South Africa, the BLS\* states, the 'independent' Bantustans and possibly Malawi. A second phase would draw in the other regional states to the exclusion of Mozambique and Angola. The last phase could lead to the incorporation of the states as far afield as Zaire.

The objectives of Consas ran along two tracks. The most pressing was the politico-military. The Consas would be essentially an alliance of anti-Marxist states — hence the exclusion of Mozambique and Angola — designed to recreate the protective shield Pretoria had enjoyed before 1975. For purposes of realising this, great store was set on the success of Muzorewa's Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, which Pretoria hoped would make the pro-

\* Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

ject more attractive to the states. The second economic track would serve as both the matrix binding the participant states together and as an incentive to deepen their economic links with the South African economy. Consas would be the persuasive aspect of regional policy.

The entire project suffered an almost irreversible setback in early 1980. Despite a massive financial investment in support of Muzorewa's electoral campaign, the ZANU(PF) swept the independence elections and formed the first government of independent Zimbabwe. The creation of SADCC\* later that year rendered Consas irrelevant for most of the region.

The near-total collapse of their methods of persuasion decided the racists to place greater reliance on coercion. Armed force as an option had of course never been set aside during the previous two years. After 1980 it received a greater emphasis in what the (London) *Economist* (July 16th, 1983) described as a 'flexible and amoral' policy based on the idea that 'the gun and the maize train will speak louder than a hundred speeches in the United Nations'.

The change in the international political climate occasioned by the arrival of the Reagan Administration in Washington coincides with Pretoria's decision to employ the gun more ruthlessly.

This change in emphasis was signalled by the Matola raid, directed at three ANC residences in a suburb outside Maputo, on January 29th, 1981. It was followed by 'Operation Protea', a major invasion of Angola, during which the racists established a military occupation over vast portions of southern Angola. It was during that same year too that the role assigned to surrogate and mercenary forces in the regime's military strategy became clear. Two mercenary battalions, the 32nd and 201st, operating deep inside Angola, came to public knowledge, as did the relationship between Pretoria's crack Reconnaissance Commandos and various mercenary forces during an abortive invasion of the Seychelles.

The surrogate forces (LLA in Lesotho, MNR in Mozambique and Unita in Angola) were activated and re-equipped to give them a greater capacity to inflict material and political damage on target countries. Thus, for example in Mozambique, as Aquino de Braganza explained:

'... The efforts by the SADCC countries to lessen their economic dependence on south African capitalism is seen as a threat by the apartheid regime. Mozambique is

\* Southern African Development Co-ordinating Conference.

*Unita's Savimbi in Pretoria's pocket — seen with racist foreign minister Pik Botha drinking to PW Botha's inauguration as State President in Cape Town, 1984.*





*A picture that tells all — South African guns and a swastika from the Matola raid. Mozambique. January 1981.*

of key strategic importance for the realisation of the SADCC project. Our country's ports and harbours offer the only realistic alternative to continued dependence on South African transport facilities for many SADCC countries. It is no accident therefore that our railways have been the target in numerous acts of sabotage carried out by ... units of the SA Defence Force.<sup>(2)</sup>

South African agents also stepped up their activities in neighbouring states leading to the assassination of ANC members in Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

The manner in which the military and economic options could in practice be synchronised was demonstrated in the case of Mozambique in 1981. Immediately after the Matola raid, South African officials seconded to Maputo harbours were withdrawn and the South African Transport Services (SATS) withdrew a number of railway wagons from Mozambique. The disruptive impact of these actions added weight to that of the military strikes into the capital. Later during that same year the bumper maize harvest in Zimbabwe stood in danger of not reaching the market when SATS withdrew 20 locomotives on loan to that country. The real meaning of these actions was explained by Dr Deon Geldenhuys, an academic with close links to the policy-making elite in Pretoria:

'South Africa (could) use its economic links for strategic purposes (by) limiting or prohibiting the use of South Africa's railways and harbour facilities for the export of goods from states. There are, needless to say, numerous ways of limiting the use of these facilities, eg by manipulating the availability of railway trucks or berthing facilities in harbours, or harsher measures such as imposing surcharges on goods transported ...'<sup>(3)</sup>

Throughout this period, while Pretoria embarked on a policy of intensified and indiscriminate military intervention and destabilisation, the Reagan Administration sent unambiguous signals of its acquiescence in, if not approval of, Pretoria's adventurist policy. Given such *de facto* support from the leading Western power, Pretoria's policy was bound to pay dividends. Judicious application of the carrot to some states, who could at the same time observe the effects of the stick on their neighbours, achieved a breach in the defences of the regional states. In February 1982, Swaziland signed a secret pact with Pretoria whose terms committed an African country to policing the liberation movement on Pretoria's behalf.

Limited as this success was, it whetted the appetite of the regime which saw no reason for restraint. Destabilisation entered a second phase late in 1982. The dominant feature during this period was the intensification of military pressure against a few specifically targetted countries. Though the racists' special secret services continued their campaign of sabotage, subversion and disruption in all the states of our region, it is obvious that Mozambique, Angola and Lesotho were given special attention. Writing in the context of the campaign directed against Mozambique, Geldenhuys said:

'Assuming that South Africa is either engaged in destabilising Mozambique or contemplating it, several objectives are readily discernible. First and foremost, South Africa would want Frelimo to abandon its active support for the ANC ... South Africa would also welcome Mozambique toning down its revolutionary fervour and moderating its condemnation of the republic ... to achieve these objectives, support for the MNR and severe manipulation of economic ties are the two main obvious means to apply.'<sup>(4)</sup>

The commando raid against the houses of South African refugees in Maseru in December 1982 followed by increased diplomatic and military pressure against that tiny kingdom throughout 1983, coupled with manipulation of Lesotho's economic dependence on South Africa, eventually forced Lesotho to evacuate some 100 refugees. The second phase of the destabilisation campaign continued unabated and reached its climax with a massive invasion of Angola in December 1983. By the end of January 1984, it was announced that both Angola and Mozambique would enter into negotiations with Pretoria.

### **THE ANC'S RESPONSE TO PRETORIA**

Our common inheritance of colonialism and imperialist domination in southern Africa has imposed a number of unpleasant yet objective realities upon the region. One of these is that independent states are periodically forced to enter into discussions, negotiations and diplomatic exchanges of an ad hoc nature with the apartheid regime. Pretoria at present seeks to milk political advantage from these arrangements by entangling the regional states in diplomatic intrigues of its own design. The ANC has no interest in trying to embroil the regional states in military confrontations with Pretoria. On the contrary, we have scrupulously avoided taking any actions which could be exploited as

a pretext for the Botha regime internationalising what is essentially an internal conflict. This will continue to be the attitude of the ANC.

It is obvious that the parties to the agreements reached in early 1984 — between Pretoria on the one hand and Mozambique and Angola on the other hand — came to the conference table with differing motives. Angola and Mozambique were motivated by a desire for peace — to bring an end to the undeclared war waged against them by the Pretoria racists since 1975. Pretoria, on the other hand, went into these negotiations with a number of ulterior designs and criminal intentions. The apartheid regime has always regarded regional diplomacy as merely one other means of attaining its goals. Its bad faith and mendacity in its dealings with neighbours are almost legendary.

Pretoria desperately craves legitimacy and international respectability, especially on the African continent. The very fact of negotiating with an OAU member state is chalked up as a victory for its diplomats in the racists' ruling circles. As our official statement of 16th March 1984 pointed out, Pretoria entered these negotiations with a view to:

- 'Isolate the ANC throughout southern Africa and to compel the independent countries of the region to act as Pretoria's agents in emasculating the ANC, the vanguard movement of the South African struggle for national emancipation;
- To liquidate the armed struggle for the liberation of South Africa;
- To gain new bridgeheads for the Pretoria regime in its efforts to undermine the unity of the Front Line States, destroy the SADCC and replace it with a so-called constellation of states and thus transform the independent countries of southern Africa into its client states;
- To use the prestige of the Front Line States in the campaign of the white minority regime to reduce the international isolation of apartheid South Africa and to lend legitimacy to itself and its colonial and fascist state'.<sup>(5)</sup>

The political strategists and long-range planners of the Pretoria regime have made no secret of their aim of winning the status of a regional mini-power for the apartheid regime. In that capacity, they hope, Pretoria will be in a position to cast itself in the role of mediator and arbiter in regional affairs. Once this status has been acknowledged, the regime will have the springboard from which it could lay claims that all developments in the region — and even beyond — are its legitimate concern and begin to demand a

continental role. Such long-range objectives have been stated in a number of subtle and less subtle ways by spokesmen of the racists. Pretoria has already inserted itself in the internal security arrangements of more than one African country and even has the temerity to pose as an agency for peace in our region!

It is one of the enemy's primary objectives to seriously undermine the whole concept of the Front Line States through separate negotiations and individual state responses extracted by a combination of military coercion and diplomatic guile. Should the racists succeed in eroding the consensus that exists among the Front Line States they will have won a significant victory. The indecent haste with which Pretoria sought to follow up the Nkomati Accords with additional 'non-aggression pacts' with Lesotho and Botswana betrays its unspoken ambitions.

'Non-aggression' pacts, as they are interpreted in the apartheid ruling circles, impose no obligations on the racists, as must be evident from our experience as a region. Their purpose is to recreate the *cordon sanitaire* that formerly protected South Africa's borders, only this time employing the Front Line States as buffers. As a direct consequence of the accords, PW Botha has found the courage to revive the project of Consas — he explicitly made reference to it at the signing ceremony at Nkomati — and has been able to open a number of formerly barred doors in Europe on the strength of it. In the meantime disturbing contradictions could be generated between the ANC and OAU member states; contradictions which, if improperly handled, could cause grave damage to African unity and set back relations amongst our peoples.<sup>(6)</sup>

As part of its general offensive to isolate and destroy the ANC, the Botha regime has recently put forward a number of proposals regarding the possibility of talks between itself and the national liberation movement. These have been widely canvassed both in Africa and in the outside world. On more than one occasion Comrade President OR Tambo, speaking on behalf of the leadership of the ANC, has made it clear that the ANC will only consider such talks if it receives assurances that they will lead to the dismantling of the entire system of colonial domination and apartheid. Without such assurances there can be no question of the ANC laying down its arms.

The strategic goal of the national liberation movement is the seizure of state power by the forces of democracy and national liberation, to achieve national self-determination. Because of the peculiar features of South

Africa's internal colonialism, self-determination in the South African context will be centred on the destruction of the white minority state and its replacement by a unitary democratic state based on the principle of majority rule. The institutional modalities of such a democratic transition must necessarily entail the acquisition of equal political, civil and human rights by all South Africans.

For 49 years (1912 — 1961) the people of South Africa pursued their struggle by non-violent means, employing constitutional and extra-constitutional methods. Despite the non-violent character of our struggle, successive white regimes had no compunction about employing massive armed force against an unarmed people. As recently as a week ago the African townships of the Transvaal were invaded by heavily armed army and paramilitary police units who remain there like an occupying army till this very day. This record of consistent repression and inflexible intransigence ultimately persuaded the ANC that it is necessary to respond to the repressive violence of the regime with the liberatory violence of the people. The armed liberation struggle is therefore a painful necessity, imposed upon us by the nature of the regime; armed force has to be wielded as the means of coercing the minority to submit to the will of the majority.

In pursuance of our objectives, we reserve the right to seek and find assistance from whatever quarter is willing to render such assistance without compromising our aims. Those who are genuinely interested in the success of our movement have never called into question our relations with states, movements, parties or governments beyond the African continent.

The ANC feels that the recent history of the southern cone is most instructive with regard to the general direction OAU, and specifically Front Line States', policy should take. We recall that it was primarily the efforts and the sacrifices of the peoples of Mozambique, Angola, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde and Zimbabwe, under the leadership of their respective liberation movements, that finally brought down Portuguese colonialism and the illegal Smith regime. Africa as a whole, and particularly the regional states, are freer as a consequence. It is our contention, and events in the recent past bear us out, that the strategy and tactics pursued by the ANC are proving themselves in practice. It is clear that none of the Front Line States — and for that matter many others beyond the immediate proximity of South Africa — will be secure as long as apartheid survives. It is therefore in the self-

*The Botha — Malan version of peace in southern Africa.*



interest of all these countries that they assist in the elimination of that system.

As a matter of the greatest urgency the Front Line States must ensure the defeat of Pretoria's attempts to destroy the unity of this essential grouping of African states. A vital step towards this goal would be an undertaking that no arrangements be made with the racist regime without full, joint consultations by members of the group. United action alone can enhance the capacity of the individual states to resist pressure emanating from Pretoria.

The single most important contribution the ANC can make towards the defeat of the apartheid regime's regional strategy is the all-round escalation of the politico-military offensive inside our country. During 1984, under the inspiration of the ANC, the people of our country have inflicted a far-reaching political defeat on the enemy. Despite temporary setbacks the armed units of our people's army have kept up the military pressure against the regime. The united support we have received from the members states of the OAU has contributed immeasurably to these achieve-

ments. The OAU can assist us in consolidating these gains by committing itself to a programme of action towards the implementation of all aspects of the ANC's internal political programme.

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**Issued by the African National Congress, PO Box 31791, Lusaka, Zambia.**