

STATEMENT OF FRANZ J.T. LEE BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON APARTHEID
September 14, 1966

Chairman Achkar and Members of the Committee:

First of all, I wish to thank you for this opportunity to address you and to present the views of a significant section of the oppressed peoples of South Africa.

There is a wide-spread belief, held frequently by South Africans and non-South Africans alike, that the liberatory movement within the country has been crushed; that it is no longer realistic to expect that the oppressed peoples of South Africa themselves will rise up and put an end to the apartheid tyranny. This despair in the ability of the South African masses to end their bondage through their own action has nurtured the idea that only outside intervention can prevail against that tyranny. It has been hoped that economic sanctions or the threat of armed intervention would compel the South African government to modify its policies.

Yet, the historical record makes all such hopes appear utopian. In the face of universal condemnation of apartheid by the civilized world, neither the unilateral actions of those states in a position to bring pressure to bear on South Africa, nor the behavior of international bodies in which these same states possess great influence, suggests that they have the slightest real interest in significantly modifying the conditions under which the non-whites of South Africa live. The recent decision of the International Court of Justice on the status of South West Africa is only the latest, if especially eloquent, testimony to this fact. And that the magnificent work of this Special Committee, in gathering and analyzing information, in exposing the horror of apartheid to the view of the whole world, and in making concrete proposals, has left not the slightest trace in the behavior of nations, has convinced even the most hopeful that it is futile to expect international intervention by states to force an end to oppression in South Africa.

The reason for this state of affairs is not hard to determine. At the end of 1962, foreign investment in South Africa amounted to 4.222 billion dollars, 60% of it being British and 11% American. In the same year, the average net profit to net worth ratio for U.S. firms operating in South Africa was 25%. 99% of mining capital, 94% of industrial capital, 88% of finance capital, and 75% of commercial capital was controlled by foreign investors. To expect the home countries of these investors to impose sanctions on South Africa is to expect them to impose sanctions on themselves.

If there is no prospect of radical change from within, and if it is a delusion to expect significant change to be imposed from without, then the future of the non-whites of South Africa appears grim indeed. But such conclusion of despair, would, I am convinced, be totally unwarranted. For there is, in fact, a very real prospect of revolution in South Africa. The forces that will bring this revolution have been developing for more than thirty years; and they are maturing now at an ever increasing rate. This process has been intimately connected with the history of a group of organizations, little known outside of South Africa, which have clustered around the Unity Movement of South Africa. Since, as I am convinced, the program and policy of the Unity Movement contain the key to the coming South African revolution, it is important briefly to review that history.

One of the consequences of the British conquest of South Africa, of the defeat of the Boer Republics, was the creation of a stratum of non-white intellectuals bound by ties of gratitude and privilege to the dominant English section of the population. To the non-white masses, British power appeared as a protection against the barbaric rapacity of the Boers. Thus arose a dependence on "English" politics, on the varieties of liberalism.

In 1932, however, the "English-Afrikaander" reconciliation, promised in the Act of Union of 1910, was consummated with the Herzog-Smutts coalition. By 1936, the liberal-nationalist coalition had produced the three notorious "Hertzog Laws;" which robbed Africans of the last vestige of parliamentary franchise, robbed them of the last remnants of their land, and robbed them of all free access to the labor market.

This liberal betrayal had an electric effect on the African population. In December, 1935, an All-African Convention of some 500 delegates, representing virtually every African peasants', workers', and professionals' organization, met to consider what action should be taken against the impending Hertzog Laws. The Convention established itself as a permanent federation of organizations and

adopted a program demanding full democratic rights and policy of absolute non-collaboration with the oppressor, of total self-reliance for the oppressed in their struggle.

The program adopted at that time can be summarized:

- 1) Universal franchise: the right of every man and woman over the age of 21 to elect, and be elected to, parliament and all governmental bodies.
- 2) Compulsory, free and uniform education for all children, with free meals, free books, and free school equipment for the needy.
- 3) The right of habeas corpus and other elementary principles of due process.
- 4) Freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association.
- 5) Freedom of movement and occupation; abolition of pass laws, and all restrictions on non-whites to live and seek work where they please.
- 6) Abolition of all color-bar laws: the guarantee of equal rights to all citizens.
- 7) A just re-distribution of land among those who till it.
- 8) Elimination of the system of taxation which burdens most heavily those least able to pay: enactment of a single progressive tax.
- 9) Complete equality of all citizens before the law; abolition of all punishments incompatible with human dignity.
- 10) Equal pay for equal work: equal access to apprenticeships and job opportunities; enactment of a minimum wage for all.

Not all the leaders of all the organizations originally affiliated to the All-African Convention were able to withstand the combination of intimidation and promises of privilege brought to bear by the government. Organizations that left the Convention developed alternative strategies based on various kinds and degrees of compromise with liberalism. Those that held fast to the radical democratic program of the Convention, to its policy of absolute non-collaboration, and to its principle of the necessity of the unity of the oppressed in struggle, prepared the way for the next great step forward.

By 1943, a militant struggle was being conducted by broad sections of the Coloured people, who perceived in the government's proposed Coloured Affairs Department a disaster comparable to that which befell the African people with the passage of the Hertzog Laws. The time had come to broaden the base of the struggle by uniting all of the oppressed, not merely Africans, against their common enemy. The Unity Movement of South Africa was established at the initiative of the All African Convention. While some organizations in the liberation movement, among them the African National Congress and the Indian Congress, did not affiliate, for the first time the wall separating the different sections of the oppressed population had been significantly breached. The Unity Movement adopted the ten point program and the policy of non-collaboration as its own.

Since its founding in 1935, the All-African Convention has recognized that the key to the South African liberatory struggle lies in the migratory peasant-workers. They constitute not only the most numerous group in South Africa, but also the most bitterly exploited. Hence, they possess the greatest revolutionary potential. Through the organizations affiliated to the All-African Convention and, after 1943, to the Unity Movement, the ten point program and the policy of non-collaboration were incessantly propagated among this group. By 1960, in response to the ever more inhuman oppression, but also, I am convinced, as a consequence of the years of patient and often lonely propaganda efforts of the Unity Movement, a great mass upsurge spread across South Africa. Perhaps the most dramatic, and certainly the best known expressions of this upsurge, were the brutally suppressed revolt in Pondoland, where peasant committees actually exercised state power for several months, and the "anti-pass" demonstrations at Sharpeville, where so many were martyred at the hands of Verwoerd's police.

The actions of that year were mostly ill-conceived and badly led: and from these tragic errors, the liberatory movement must learn. But these terrible and wonderful events demonstrated not only the heroism and tenacity of the

African people; they also demonstrated with certainty that, for the first time in modern South African history, a real revolutionary base already existed. The peasant-worker masses were moving.

Under these circumstances, a new kind of organization became essential. For propaganda work, and for developing leadership, the numerous organizations federated in the Unity Movement were excellent instruments. But to organize the oppressed masses into a unified force capable of bringing down the entire structure of the oppressive society, a more centralized leadership was required. Thus, in 1961, a political party, the African Peoples Democratic Union of Southern Africa, was formed to carry out the task of mass organization around the ten-point program and the policy of non-collaboration. As its name indicates, with the designation "Southern" as opposed to "South" Africa, with the formation of APDUSA another element of the liberatory struggle was made explicit, namely, that this struggle is essentially **continental**.

Since the upsurge of 1960 and the founding of the APDUSA, government repression has grown ever more intense. The "State of Emergency", which is still in force in the reserves, the "Ninety-Day Detention Law", the "One-hundred-eighty-day Detention Law" and the "Sabotage Law" - all have been and are still being used ruthlessly by the regime in a desperate attempt to decapitate the mass movement by banning, imprisoning, torturing and killing the leaders of all tendencies and organizations of the liberatory movement. Nevertheless, APDUSA and Unity Movement organizers have been able to penetrate every pore of South African society, to bring the program and the organization to the mines, and the fields and villages of the reserves, to the plantations and the factories; to whatever place the oppressed people are gathered.

As a result of the labors and the sacrifices of APDUSANS, several of the largest peasant organizations in South Africa have affiliated to the Unity Movement during the past three years. Since 1963, both the MAKHULUSPAN and the FITA KHOMO have been won to the Unity Movement. The Unity Movement has thus become a mass organization. This ever increasing politicalization of the peasant organizations, their increasing tendency to affiliate to the Unity Movement, their ever increasing willingness to accept the leadership of APDUSA, is scarcely consistent with the view that the liberatory movement is demoralized, that the organized resistance to the apartheid regime has been crushed. Quite the contrary: It indicates that, in the face of the most intense persecution, the movement is growing not only larger, but also tougher, more resilient.

With the continued growth, qualitative as well as quantitative, of the liberatory movement, such acts of individual terrorism as the assassination of Verwoerd, will become increasingly rare. We deplore acts of individual terrorism because they do not advance the struggle for freedom and dignity. The history of such terrorist actions has amply demonstrated their futility. Only through mass action, only through the mobilization of the oppressed peoples around a correct program, can the monstrous system of apartheid be overthrown.

Verwoerd's assassination will merely mean the replacement of Verwoerd by someone equally, or even more, reactionary. The system remains; only the administration changes. And this change may involve an intensification of the oppression. Already there are signs that the South African government will use the assassination as a pretext to close the few remaining gaps in the totalitarian wall surrounding the non-whites of South Africa.

Nevertheless, the liberatory movement will continue to advance towards its inevitable goal. There will be defeats and there will be betrayals. But no repressive measures and no marginal concessions can very long deflect the forward sweep of the South African masses from its historic destiny: the total obliteration of apartheid and the system of economic exploitation which it serves.

Once more, Mr. Chairman, I would like to express my thanks to you and to the other members of the Committee for the opportunity to present this statement. I would also like to express my thanks to the Alexander Defense Committee for making possible my trip to the United States to help raise funds to aid the persecuted victims of apartheid. Such work as the A.D.C. conducts is not only commendable from a humanitarian point of view; it is also, by its effect on the morale of those struggling in the liberatory movement inside South Africa, of great political significance.