

United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information · Press Section · New York

Special Committee against
Apartheid
613th Meeting (AM)

GA/AP/1839
26 February 1988

ORIGINAL: FRENCH

SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID COMMEMORATES TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF DEATH
OF MANGALISO ROBERT SOBUKWE, FOUNDER OF PAN AFRICANIST CONGRESS

The Special Committee against Apartheid held a solemn meeting this morning to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the death of the Chairman of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe.

In 1959, Sobukwe was elected Chairman of the Congress, which he had founded. He died on 27 February 1978 after more than 18 years in South African prisons, including Robben Island, and exile in Kimberley.

Jai Pratap Rana (Nepal), Acting Chairman of the Special Committee, in opening the meeting, recalled the landmark dates in Sobukwe's life, and called on participants to observe a moment of silence in his honour.

Statements were then made by the representative of Liberia on behalf of the United Nations Council for Namibia; the representative of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU); the representative of the current Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement; an observer for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); and seven special guests. Among the latter, the mother and sister of two of the "Sharpeville Six" launched an appeal to the international community to continue to support efforts for the clemency of the condemned individuals.

The observer for the PAC read out a message from Andrew Young, Mayor of Atlanta, in which he favoured the imposition of sanctions against South Africa in accordance with Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

During the meeting, Thuli Dumakude, a South African performer, sang a composition dedicated to the former PAC Chairman and to all those who had fallen in the struggle against apartheid.

Statements

JAI PRATAP RANA (Nepal), Acting Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid, said Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe had laid down his life to free his sisters and brothers living under the domination of the diabolical regime of apartheid. As many other freedom fighters, he had joined the struggle while

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still a student at Fort Hare University, where he took an active part in anti-apartheid activities as President of the Students' Representative Council and Secretary of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) Youth League. He was one of the authors of the Programme of Action of the ANC, drafted in 1949.

As a professor, Sobukwe was known as a brilliant scholar, he continued. Given his commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle and his remarkable intellectual capabilities, Sobukwe was unanimously elected as President of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) at its inception in 1959.

Although the action campaign launched in 1960 had been totally peaceful, he went on, in the wake of the Sharpeville tragedy the South African Government had accused Sobukwe and some of his sides of sedition and incitement to riot. After 19 years in prison, he had been exiled to Kimberley, where he felt deeply isolated. Having received special permission to undergo surgery in Cape Town, he was forced to return to Kimberley, where he died on 26 February 1978.

He called on participants to observe a moment of silence in memory of "this great patriot whose gallant spirit continues to hold light to the struggle in South Africa".

SYLVESTER JARRETT (Liberia), speaking on behalf of the United Nations Council for Namibia, paid homage to the leaders of South Africa and Namibia who, like Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe, had raised the consciousness of their compatriots and encouraged them to struggle against apartheid and the occupation of Namibia and to resist the repressive policies and laws that upheld them. The South African and Namibian peoples had no other choice than to struggle, by any means available to them, to eradicate an evil, racist, anachronistic and consequently violent system. They had the right to resort to armed struggle in order to resist repression elevated into policy by a racist regime that refused, with characteristic arrogance, to conform to morality and legality.

It was the duty of the entire international community, he continued, to support the legitimate struggle of the South African and Namibian peoples and to boost efforts to eradicate the odious system of apartheid. Had it not been for the support of certain countries concerned with their own selfish interests, apartheid would have been dismantled.

PETER D. ZUZE (Zambia), representative of the current Chairman of the OAU, said South Africa was responsible for the death of Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe. That death had not been of natural causes. Sobukwe himself had believed that the cancer which cost him his life had been injected into him by agents of Pretoria's racist regime.

Stating that Sobukwe's death was not an isolated instance, he said force could not break the will and the courage of those struggling against apartheid.

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The Pretoria regime was gravely mistaken if it believed it could stem the anti-apartheid tide by banishing, incarcerating or assassinating the leaders of the liberation movements.

Expressing his profound indignation, he condemned the actions taken two days ago by South Africa against 17 anti-apartheid organizations and the trade union movement, and called upon the international community to condemn them as well.

Despite the destabilizing acts to which it had been subjected, Zambia, he said, would continue to support the struggle against apartheid. The OAU remained committed to its total eradication. The imposition of comprehensive mandatory sanctions, as provided for by Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, was the only way to make Pretoria dismantle the diabolical system of apartheid. He called on those with an influence over Pretoria to join in the campaign for sanctions, and asked all States to extend or increase their assistance to the victims of apartheid.

JAMES MANZOU (Zimbabwe), representative of the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, said Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe was a valiant son of Africa and a tireless fighter for freedom and justice, who had a vision for his country, of a South Africa where all communities, regardless of skin colour, would live in racial peace and harmony; where basic human rights, justice, freedom, dignity and equality would be guaranteed for all and where the inhuman system of apartheid would be a thing of the past. To that cause, Sobukwe had given his whole life.

The commemoration of Sobukwe's death was, he said, an occasion for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to the eradication of the scourge of apartheid. "It is our statement of faith that victory is certain for the oppressed people of South Africa and that in the not too distant future the vision shared by eminent sons of Africa -- Sobukwe, Mandela and Muthopeng, among others -- will become a reality", he added.

Rev. MOTSDKO PREKO, author of a book on Sobukwe and the struggle in South Africa, said that before his death, Sobukwe had been convinced that he had been poisoned during the time he was imprisoned without trial on Robben Island, between 1963 and 1969. For posterity's sake, he said he had to add the fact that the PAC leader had been murdered with a slow-acting poison. That was why the South African authorities had done everything possible to prevent Sobukwe from receiving medical treatment at the start of his "cancer".

Sobukwe's life continued to inspire the Azanian people, deprived of their land, he went on. No leader had had as much influence. He was an extraordinary leader who symbolized the aspirations of his people. He was as honest, modest and courageous as a lion, and felt there could be no co-operation between oppressors and oppressed, between "those who dominate and those who are dominated". "There can be collaboration, but not co-operation", he added.

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After Sharpeville, Sobukwe's PAC had been the first anti-apartheid movement to launch an armed struggle, he stated. Sobukwe favoured a "Government of Africans, by Africans and for Africans" in which everyone who accepted the democratic rule of the majority would be considered an African.

Sobukwe had been a socialist, convinced that only a socialist State could be able to raise the standard of living of the masses by eliminating waste through planning.

BENJAMIN POGROUND, journalist and former Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Mail, which is no longer published, paid homage to Sobukwe's courage and disinterested commitment. Sobukwe, he said, was very young when he had begun to militate against racial segregation, and that had cost him his university scholarship. He had had great difficulty in finding a job because of his commitment, and finally had had to agree to exile in Standerton, a village not far from Johannesburg, where he taught. In spite of everything, Sobukwe never forgot or ignored his beliefs. He would not ignore the suffering of his people. On the contrary, his student activism quickly became political.

After summarizing Sobukwe's life as a militant from the creation of the PAC in 1958, he said the responsibility for Sobukwe's death must be assumed by the South African Government, particularly J.T. Kruger, Minister of Justice.

BENNY KHOPPA, founder, along with Steve Biko, of Black Community Projects, said the commemoration was extremely well-timed. "I was only 11 years old when the first anti-apartheid action programme was adopted, but I remember. I remember one of the speeches Sobukwe made that year", he added.

The PAC, the political movement established in 1959, was still very much alive, he went on. Its former President had died when the Government was taking actions identical to those of two days ago against anti-apartheid organizations. Sobukwe had made a vital contribution by creating a framework for struggle. He had taught that physical and psychological resistance were needed in order to struggle. He also taught that the struggle was not only against apartheid: it was a struggle for freedom and rights. The Azanian people had a right to their land.

Rev. MANGEDWA NYATHI said Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe was the very essence of intelligence. He was a disciplined thinker and stimulating teacher. His commitment derived from sound ideas and morals. He was organized and possessed impeccable logic. But the most profound aspect of his personality was his faith in God and in the people. That faith was unshakable.

JOYCE MOKHESI, a sister of one of the six people condemned in Sharpeville, thanked those who had supported their appeal for clemency. The six young people had been condemned to death after being convicted of murder during the Sharpeville troubles of September 1984. Their lives could be saved only by an act of clemency by the President of South Africa.

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JULIA RAMASHANDA, mother of Theresa Ramashamola, one of the six people condemned to death in Sharpeville, said that everything should be done to make the South African Government commute the death sentence.

Pastor BENARD JORDAN said the role of the church in the struggle against apartheid and racism must be analysed. Judgement would come from the hand of God. Injustices would be punished by God. Bitterness should not be passed on to the next generation. In the words of God, the day of deliverance would dawn.

RIYAD H. MANSOUR, of the PLO, reaffirmed the solidarity of the Palestinian people and of the PLO with the heroic struggle of the South African people for freedom, justice and democracy. He denounced the relentless, intensifying repression by the minority racist regime. The South African and Palestinian peoples were leading the same struggle.

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PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand

Location:- Johannesburg

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DOCUMENT DETAILS:

Document ID:- A2618-Cn2-9

Document Title:- United Nations press release: Special Committee against Apartheid commemorates tenth anniversary of death of Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe, founder of Pan Africanst Congress

Author:- Special Committee Against Apartheid

Document Date:- 26 February 1988