



MPLA

**PRESENTATION BY COMRADE PAULO T. JORGE IN
THE CEREMONY OF COMMEMORATION OF THE 20th
ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF CUITO
CUANAVALÉ**

Mrs. Baleka Mbete,
Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to thank you for the kind invitation that was sent to me to participate in this commemorative activity of the 20th anniversary of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, a significant mark in the history of the struggle of the peoples of Southern Africa for their liberation.

It is important that facts as the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, be remembered and studied so that the young generations know the history of the struggle for national liberation of Southern Africa, that led to the independence of Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia and the end of apartheid in South Africa.

The Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique were part of the so called security curtain of the apartheid regime in South Africa, that included also Ian Smith's Rhodesia, which allowed the regime to maintain the liberation forces far from its borders.

The proclamation of the independence of Mozambique and Angola had a very important impact for the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa. The fact that MPLA and Frelimo proclaimed the independence of their countries had an important meaning for the movements of national liberation that in South Africa, in Zimbabwe and in Namibia struggled for the end of the oppression and for the liberation of their peoples.

The racist regime of South Africa tried to avoid the proclamation of the independence of Angola through an invasion which was defeated in March 1976. But with this invasion, the racist regime of South Africa destroyed a great part of the infrastructures of Angola, provoking enormous damages to its economy. In spite of having been defeated, the apartheid regime continued to manoeuvre and to attack the Angolan territory, due to the open support it benefited from the successive american administrations and others western countries.

The south african incursions and the occupation of portions of the Angolan territory with the consequent destruction of infra structures and the massacre of civilian populations became frequent. It is not too much to remember the Cassinga massacre in May 1978, in which were murdered more than 650 children, women and old people, all of them refugees from Namibia and, the Boma massacre in which were murdered 205 people and wounded 602 people all of them from Zimbabwe.

It was clear for the Angolan leaders that while the apartheid regime existed there would be no peace and development in the region. After the independence of Angola it was necessary to congregate all the efforts for the liberation of Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Dr. António Agostinho Neto, the first President of Angola, declared that "in Namibia, in Zimbabwe and in South Africa is the continuation of our struggle", what constituted the reaffirmation of the indefectible solidarity of the Angolan people to the Liberation Movements of these countries. The creation of SADCC in 1980 was the corollary of the efforts developed by the independent countries of the region to isolate the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Mrs. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year we are commemorating the 20th anniversary of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, in the southeast of Angola, where the armed forces of the South African racist regime faced the Angolan army and the Cuban internationalist forces, which after ten months of siege defeated the invader army and forced it to withdraw.

The south african aggressions against the countries of the region aimed at undermining the struggle of the liberation movements in

Namibia and in South Africa. The racist regime controlled firmly Namibia and its main military objective in that period was to control the south of Angola to prevent SWAPO to have a strong base to launch attacks against the occupation of Namibia and, the small town of Cuito Cuanavale was of great importance for the south african military strategists to consolidate their military and political objectives.

It was an open intervention, during which the President of South Africa and some of his ministers visited the invader forces in the Angolan territory.

A victory of the racist regime troops would mean the capture of the town and the destruction of the best battalions of the Angolan army and, maybe the end of the existence of Angola as an independent country. With the defeat of the racist regime troops and their consequent withdrawal, the Angolan, Cuban and SWAPO troops moved forward to the border with Namibia, which made the south african forces vulnerable in the north of Namibia. Cuito Cuanavale's victory was decisive for the consolidation of the independence of Angola, for the conquest of the independence of Namibia and for the end of the apartheid regime.

This regime was only destroyed some years after the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, but as a consequence of its defeat it was forced to begin the conversations that determined the independence of Namibia.

The independence of Namibia contributed decisively to persuade the forces inside the National Party in South Africa that they could no longer continue to maintain the minority regime in South Africa, what provoked PW Botha's substitution by Frederik De Klerk, the liberation of the distinguished combatant and historical leader of the people of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, and the beginning of the negotiations that culminated with the first democratic elections in South Africa in April of 1994.

As Comrade President Nelson Mandela declared in Havana (Cuba) in 1991, and I quote: "The defeat of the racist army at Cuito Cuanavale has made it possible for me to be here today! Cuito Cuanavale was a milestone in the history of the struggle for the Southern African liberation".

Mrs. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The epopee of the national liberation struggle of our countries was made with many sacrifices, with the loss of thousands of human lives, with the destruction of infrastructures and mainly with a great internationalist solidarity of our comrades from Cuba, that beside the Angolan forces helped to preserve the territorial integrity of the Republic of Angola and contributed decisively to the end of the apartheid and for the total liberation of Southern Africa.

It is important that these examples of solidarity, of internationalism, and of spirit of sacrifice are transmitted to the young generations so that they are aware of the past struggle that led to the liberation of the homeland and, that this legacy serves as catalyst for the reinforcement of the relationships between our countries and peoples.

A LUTA CONTINUA

A VITÓRIA É CERTA

Thank you very much.