

# THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION BY THE OAU

*Report DEC. 1981 UMSA Conference, Harare*

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In the early 1960's at an extended executive meeting of UMSA a decision was taken to send Mr. I.B. Tabata, President of UMSA and Miss Jane Cool, chairman of the Working Committee of UMSA to the newly established O.A.U. for the purpose of seeking aid for the liberation struggle in S.A. including military training and financial assistance. Mr. Tabata and Miss Cool were joined in Swaziland by Mr. N. Honono, President of the A.A.C. who at that stage was under house arrest in S.A.

In August 1963 the mission left Swaziland and proceeded by air to Tanzania. The intention of the mission was to return to Swaziland as soon as it completed its dealings with the O.A.U. These plans came to nought when the S.A. regime passed a law preventing foreign aircraft from over flying its airspace without reference to it.

The mission was housed as guests of the government in a hotel in Dar-es-Salaam

## **Petition before African Liberation Committee of Nine.**

At the invitation of the Committee of Nine the delegation presented a petition in December 1963. In addition to the UMSA delegation the A.N.C. was represented by J. Mathews and P.A.C. by P. Molotse. No sooner had Mr. Tabata, the leader of the delegation, been called upon to address the Committee than both Mathews and Molotse protested against the decision to allow the delegation to speak on the grounds that UMSA had arrived too late on the scene, when the revolution was imminent. The Committee overruled their objections in no uncertain terms pointing out that they had no rights in any decision making of the Committee. Mr. Tabata then presented his petition to the Committee which was printed in pamphlet form in November 1963 and is also to be found in a chapter in the book 'Imperialist Conspiracy in Africa' By I.B. Tabata. The petition analysed the political situation in S.A. and the nature of the struggle for liberation. It showed that there were 2 struggles in S.A. namely

a) the national liberation movement and b) the conflict between the representatives of imperialism and the Afrikaner Fascist wing. Whereas the first struggle is the true one because "it has as its immediate objective liberty and land" and "leads to political freedom and freedom from want", the other struggle seeks to remove the Boer regime and institute neo-colonialism.

The UMSA memorandum after stressing the importance of unity and the urgency of the struggle concludes "We ask the independent states in the continent of Africa, who are committed to the assistance of their brothers in the South to make a careful study of the complex situation in our country and to give us such assistance as will save us from the fate of neo-colonialism".

## **The Result of the application for recognition by the Committee of Nine.**

In January 1964, the delegation received the news that the Committee of Nine had rejected the application of UMSA for recognition. The chairman of the Committee, a Nigerian lawyer Jaja Wachuka, stated "your organisation, i.e. UMSA, with its activities falls outside the purview of the mandate of the Committee of Nine. We are here as a committee for decolonisation.

The refusal to recognise UMSA was a blow to the delegation, which failed to understand how an organisation like the O.A.U., which was supposed to be committed to the liberation of Africa, could deny assistance to organisations fighting for freedom. It became clear however from Mr. Wachuku's reply that the Committee and UMSA were going in opposite directions. The committee was for neo-colonialism, which was the prevailing order in "free" Africa while UMSA was for genuine freedom based on the control of both the politics and economy of S.A. in keeping with our slogan "land and liberty". At the same time as UMSA's petition was rejected, Mr Wachuku advised, the Swaziland delegation to accept the neo-colonial constitution offered by Britain. Wachuku was perhaps the only member of the Committee who understood that UMSA was fighting for genuine freedom and was opposed to neo-colonialism.

## **1964-1967.**

Despite the disappointment of non-recognition, we intensified our campaign for recognition during this period and gained some friends among the states including Zambia. During this period, the reason for turning down our application for recognition was that it was the policy of the O.A.U. not to recognise more than 2 organisations from the same country.

### **1968 - A turning point?**

In 1968 we decided to change our tactics in the O.A.U. At the conference of the Liberation Committee held in Algiers instead of asking for recognition the president of UMSA, Mr. I.B. Tabata, requested assistance from the O.A.U. as follows:

- 1 . ) The military training of at least 200 of our cadres.
- 2 . ) The granting of diplomatic facilities such as passports, travel documents, and visas.
- 3 . ) Supply of arms and ammunition to our trained men.

The Liberation Committee accepted these requests unanimously and referred the matter to the Standing Committee on Defence for its execution. We were greatly encouraged by this resolution because we believed that at last the O.A.U. were establishing a dynamic link with the struggle of the masses in S.A. for liberation. The Liberation Committee emphasised that bilateral arrangements between liberation movements and O.A.U. member states could be made on matters affecting the liberation struggle.

While the discussions were taking place at the O.A.U. Guinea consented to the training of our cadres by Cuban instructors in Guinea and towards the end of 1968 a total of 6 of our officials and cadres underwent guerrilla training in that country by Cuban instructors. At the end of the course they were highly commended by the instructors for their excellent performance in the various aspects of military training.

### **1969.**

Following the resolution of the O.A.U. Liberation Committee in Algiers 25 cadres came out of S.A. to Botswana for training. When their arrival was reported to the Executive Secretary of the A.L.C. (African Liberation Committee) for action, he informed us that the training camps were so full they could not accommodate our men. Although we were very dissatisfied we were compelled to infiltrate the men back to S.A. at great risk to themselves as some of them were arrested by the Special Branch.

### **1970**

After a great deal of planning and discussion we infiltrated some of our trained men into S.A., to revive the home front and to recruit men for military training abroad. For security reasons they were instructed to recruit the men in small batches. During the period September to November, they were able to bring 9 men into Zambia. Again in respect of these recruits the O.A.U. failed to fulfil its promise to train them. They remain in Zambia to this day, one of their number having died.

### **1971.**

While the A.L.C. was meeting in Joshi in Tanzania, the Defence Committee which had been assigned the duty of training recommended that UMSA produce 50 men as it would be too expensive to train only 10 men. In arriving at this decision they ignored the security aspect in bringing out such a large number of men, particularly following the swoop of 1970-71 when over 200 cadres were arrested following the infiltration into S.A. of our trained men. The Executive Secretary of the A.L.C. also suggested that our men should be trained under P.A.C. For security reasons which we expressed to the A.L.C. we refused this offer. However, we stated we were prepared to train with but not under any organisation.

### **1972.**

At Benghazi, Libya, the Executive Secretary told the UMSA delegation that the defence Committee were recommending to the A.L.C. that a country should be found to train our men. The Chairman of the A.L.C. assured the UMSA delegation that our men would be trained by the O.A.U. Contrary to what the Chairman had said the Executive Secretary stated that our application for training had been strongly opposed by the delegation from Zambia and for that reason it had been deferred. The leader of the Zambian delegation tried to create the impression without proof that leading members of the executive of UMSA were a security risk.

At this same meeting the A.L.C. expressed their disappointment and indignation at the rather poor progress shown by the A.N.C. and P.A.C. in the liberation struggle. What was paradoxical in the situation was the fact that the recruitment machinery of A.N.C. and P.A.C. had ground to a standstill while our recruits in Zambia were being denied training facilities by the O.A.U. it was clear that we had fulfilled the condition for recognition, namely political activities on the home front. This was highlighted during the trial and conviction of our 13 men. Consequently our supporters in the O.A.U. urged us to resume our application for recognition. We mounted a vigorous campaign and demanded immediate recognition of UMSA by the O.A.U. and pointed out what a farcical and ridiculous situation UMSA was placed in because of non-recognition. We asked if the events of 1970-72 had no meaning to the O.A.U. and contended that the liberation struggle in S.A. was neither the exclusive reserve of the A.N.C. and P.A.C. nor of the A.L.C. It

was clear to us that within the Liberation Committee itself there were forces at work against our recognition and one of these was the Executive Secretary, Mr G. Magombo. On the question of the training of our men he had told the president of UMSA that the matter had been referred to him to handle but thereafter UMSA did not receive any report from him concerning training. We were not in a position however, to express our views openly about the hostile acts by the Executive Secretary against UMSA.

### 1973

At the Mogadishu meeting the A.L.C. appointed a fact—finding commission to be chaired by a Nigerian military man to investigate both the internal and external political activities and strength of UNSA, Frolizi and Unita

### 1974

At the Yaounde Conference in Cameroun the A.L.C. once again urged the A.U.C. and P.A.C. to form a united front and for the first time the A.L.C. included UMSA to be part of the suggested united front.

The A.L.C. acceded to a request by UMSA for aid and granted a sum of £5,000 for the prosecution of the struggle.

### 1975

In January 1975 after the report of the fact-finding commission had been discussed and adopted, the A.L.C. which met in Dar-es-Salaam passed the following resolution on UMSA's application for recognition "As regards UMSA the Committee adopted the recommendation of the standing committee on Policy and Information, that the application of UMSA be deferred for 1 year pending further investigation". We learnt from reliable sources that Zambia was the only country which was opposed to our recognition and had demanded that we be further investigated. The A.L.C. therefore acted on the principle of unanimity, that is if one member state opposes the resolution it cannot be passed despite overwhelming support for it. The opposition of Zambia to recognition of UMSA must be placed in the context of the detente proposals between Zambia and S.A.

The above resolution was scheduled to be discussed and finalised the following year In Maputo. In January 1976 the UMSA delegation led by the president accompanied by L. Nikani and N. Honono were refused entry to Mozambique on the grounds that they had no visas. This was a blatant lie as previous arrangements for the delegation's attendance at the A.L.C. meeting had been made with its executive secretariat. The delegation was refused permission to telephone the Executive Secretary of the A.L.C. and denied a stay—over at Maputo airport to enable them to contact the minister of foreign affairs the following day. The authorities at the airport ordered the soldiers to remove the delegation to the plane leaving for Zambia. When the delegation resisted the soldiers armed with guns threatened to shoot them and carried Mr. Honono bodily to the aircraft.

The refusal to allow our delegation to enter was by design and had been carefully planned to please Imperialism. The crude treatment the delegation received was unprecedented in the history of the O.A.U. We did not take the insult lying down. Apart from the fact that the matter was taken up with the then current chairman of the O.A.U. our president wrote a letter of protest to President Machel. In our absence the following resolution, which was recommended by the A.L.C. was adopted by the 26th ordinary session of the council of ministers: "Regarding the application of UMSA the Committee felt that the latest developments and the surrounding circumstances rendered it futile to consider recognition. The Committee therefore considered it unnecessary to entertain any more application from UMSA for recognition". Having been denied the opportunity to present our case the door to recognition was closed to us. To use legal jargon, we were tried, convicted and sentenced without defence by an organisation which is supposed to be committed to the entire freedom of the continent of Africa.

At about the same time as the O.A.U. had rejected UMSA, in Zambia the Minister of State for Defence, Mr. Chinkuli and Major Molapo called the officials of UMSA in Zambia to a meeting at which they stated that the governments of Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania had decided to support only one liberation movement from S.A. namely the A.N.C. and that all had to join this organisation or leave Zambia. He then called on our officials to renounce UMSA and join the A.N.C. He threatened that those of us like Dr. Limbada who were working in Zambia would have to leave the country if they did not renounce UMSA. In reply to a question the minister said that P.A.C. would meet the same fate as UMSA.

The statement by the minister in effect meant the withdrawal of recognition of UMSA by the government of Zambia. The 2 decisions of the A.L.C. and Zambia have one thing in common, the

elimination of UMSA in the interests of detente.

Since these decisions were taken, the promotion of the A.N.C. as the only authentic political organisation in S.A. is patently obvious and the behaviour of the A.N.C. has reinforced this plan.

### **The fact-finding mission of the O.A.U.**

The 6 nation fact-finding mission appointed by the O.A.U. in Mogadishu in Oct. 1973 consisted of representatives from Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zaire and Zambia. Its task was to investigate the political activities of UMSA, Frolizi and Unita both internally and externally.

In Nov. 1974, the mission chaired. by a Nigerian brigadier came to Zambia. It initially interviewed officials and executive members of UMSA including the president. The mission then proceeded to meet our cadres in the camp. The mission was deeply impressed by the cadres and their determination to fight for the liberation of S.A. In some respects the cadres were critical of the executive, in particular because the latter had failed to obtain training for them. The cadres were already under the influence of dissident members of UMSA due to the frustrations they had encountered at not being trained. When the mission left the camp it gave the cadres a sum of £50 to entertain themselves. As the mission could not visit S.A. for obvious reasons it decided to confer with the A.N.C. and PAC led by Tambo and Leballo respectively. It posed 2 questions to them a.) Was UMSA active politically in S.A. or not b.) Were they prepared to recommend recognition of UMSA by the O.A.U. As 13 of our members had recently been convicted in the Pietermaritzburg trial, Tambo had no choice but to answer in the affirmative to the first question but told the mission in reply to the second question that the responsibility for deciding the second question was that of the mission. Leballo answered both questions in the affirmative.

The missions report was favourable to UMSA "There is no doubt that UMSA as represented by Mr. Tabata, Mr. Tsotsi and other members who appeared before the mission is committed to the principle of independence and total liberation of S.A." Owing to the opposition of Zambia to UMSA, however, the mission recommended that the question of recognition be postponed for one year.

### **Attempts to unify the liberation struggle in S.A.**

UMSA as the name implies is aware and appreciative of the cardinal principle of the O.A.U., namely the formation of a United Front by organisations fighting in the same country.

In pursuance of this principle, in 1966 the O.A.U. appointed a committee consisting of Tanzania and Zambia to help in bringing about the United Front between the A.N.C. and P.A.C. Up to now all the efforts of this committee which has since been intensified have been unsuccessful.

In Benghazi at its Jan. 1972 meeting, the O.A.U. Liberation Committee expressed dissatisfaction at the poor progress of the struggle in S.A. and put the blame for its ineffectiveness at the failure of the A.N.C. and P.A.C. to form a United Front. At that stage it made no mention of UMSA, implying that the liberation struggle in our country is an exclusive preserve of the 2 recognised organisations. In defiance of the call for unity by the O.A.U. at its Mogadishu meeting in 1973 the A.N.C. in a very outspoken statement refused to unite with P.A.C. whose leadership it ruthlessly criticised. The A.N.C. went on to name a large number of national and international organisations with which it claimed to have formed a United Front. The speaker emphasised that his statement was a final rejection of a front with the P.A.C.

In May 1974 at the Yaounde conference in the Cameroun, the A.L.C. reiterated its call for unity of A.N.C. and P.A.C. but for the first time added to the list UMSA in spite of its non-recognition. In a memorandum submitted to the fact-finding mission of the O.A.U. in Nov. 1974 in Lusaka UMSA expressed its willingness to form a United Front with the 2 organisations from S.A.

At the conference of the Council of Ministers held in Addis Ababa, in Feb. 1975, the UMSA delegation issued a statement "A call for Unity" inviting the A.N.C. and P.A.C. to a discussion on unity. Copies of the same statement were also distributed among the foreign ministers for their information.

Again in April 1975 at the Dar-es-Salaam Extraordinary Session of the Council of Ministers convened to discuss the burning issues in S.A.,

Mr. I.B. Tabata wrote a letter to Tambo dated April 10th 1975 enclosing the same statement distributed earlier in the year in Addis Ababa. The letter which was presented to him in person by Mr. Honono stated "we propose a meeting of representatives of our respective organisations to be held at Lusaka or at any other venue deemed suitable shortly after 10th May 1975". Regrettably Tambo did not even have the courtesy to acknowledge the receipt of the communication. While the A.N.C. paid no heed to our urgent call, the P.A.C. responded favourably. At the first meeting of UMSA and the P.A.C. held in Dar-es-Salaam in Feb. 1975 at which were present the representatives of the executives of the 2 organisations, the question

of unity was discussed at length and there was agreement in principle. At a subsequent meeting of representatives of the same organisations which convened the meeting in April 1975 we agreed to invite the A.N.C. (African Nationalists) to join our next discussion. Furthermore, it was resolved that each organisation should submit a draft declaration of intent to form a United Front at the next meeting.

In April 1976 the resolution of the 26th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers was communicated to us by Laban Oyaka assistant executive secretary information and policy, as follows: "The Committee once again, appealed to the liberation movements of S.A. to consider seriously the formation of a United Front so as to adopt a common strategy to confront the enemy more effectively. It recommended in particular the necessity to identify and establish a realistic basis for unification". Despite this resolution when a discussion on unity takes place we are invariably excluded. This is sufficient proof that the Executive Secretariat of the A.N.C. is not serious about the liberation struggle in S.A. which cannot be won without unity.

In June 1976 a meeting of P.A.C., A.N.C. (A.N.) and UMSA was held at the P.A.C. office in Dar-es-Salaam under the chairmanship of P.A.C. In advance of this meeting UMSA had according to previous agreement drawn up a draft declaration of intent and delivered copies to P.A.C. and A.N.C. (A.N.)

It was hoped that the declaration could be agreed upon and published in Mauritius during the Summit to be held the same month. Alas, P.A.C. failed to submit the draft declaration stating that T.M. Ntantale who led their group

in the April meeting had not submitted the report to P.K. Leballo. What is more the latter denied that he had received our draft declaration. Since the 3 organisations were meeting together for the first time we decided to discuss the formation of a United Front. The deliberations which were frank and fruitful ended in general agreement on principle. The meeting decided to appoint a sub-committee of which Mr. Honono was made a convener to draft a new declaration of intent. Within 2 days Mr. Honono convened the sub-committee which could not proceed on account of a P.A.C. representative. On pursuing the matter Mr. Honono was told by Leballo that he had decided to consult his executive which was due to meet soon. When Mr. Honono letter on the sub-committee was tabled it was decided that the whole idea of the United front should be postponed indefinitely. P.A.C. sent 2 men to explain the position. They gave as a reason for a postponement a threat in the circles of the Liberation Committee spearheaded by Mozambique to de-recognise P.A.C. on the grounds that it was hobnobbing with dangerous, splinter organisations - Coremo and Unita. In other words if they allied themselves with the A.N.C.(A.N) they would lay themselves open to a similar accusation. That is how the discussions of the United Front came to an end. We had noticed during the course of our previous discussions that P.A.C. was dragging its feet and we called their attention to this fact. There was also division between those who were for unity and those against, the former being the stronger. In conclusion it should be mentioned that our persistence with unity did not blind us to the shortcomings of P.A.C. We wanted to use unity discussions as a formula to gain our end, namely to bring our cadres to Africa for training without let or hindrance. All the meetings we had had with P.A.C. were called at our instance.

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