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Subslug: [Speech by African National Congress President Nelson Mandela at the national ceremony commemorating the Moncada Barracks attack, in Matanzas, Cuba-live, in English with passage-by-passage translation into Spanish; italicized portions indicate written text that Mandela did not actually read but that were read in Spanish]

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FULL TEXT OF ARTICLE:

1. [Speech by African National Congress President Nelson Mandela at the national ceremony commemorating the Moncada Barracks attack, in Matanzas, Cuba-live, in English with passage-by-passage translation into Spanish; italicized portions indicate written text that Mandela did not actually read but that were read in Spanish]
2. [Text] Friend, Secretary of the Communist Party, President of the Council of State, and of the government of Cuba, President of the socialist Republic of Cuba, Commander in Chief, Comrade Fidel Castro; [applause] Cuban Internationalists, who have done so much to free our continent; Cuban people, comrades, and friends:
3. It is a great pleasure and honor to be present here today, especially on such an important day in the revolutionary history of the Cuban people. Today Cuba commemorates the 38th anniversary of the storming of the Moncada. Without Moncada, the Granma expedition, the struggle in the Sierra Maestra, and the extraordinary victory of 1 January 1959 would never have occurred. Today this is revolutionary Cuba, internationalist Cuba, the country that has done so much for the peoples of Africa. We have long wanted to visit your country and express the many feelings that we have about the Cuban revolution, the role of Cuba in Africa, southern Africa and the world. The Cuban people hold a special place in the heart of the people of Africa. The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African Independence, freedom and justice, unparalleled for its principles and selfless character.
4. From its earliest days, the Cuban Revolution has also been a source of inspiration to all freedom-loving people. We admire the sacrifices of the Cuban people in maintaining their independence and sovereignty in the face of the vicious imperialist-orchestrated campaign to destroy the impressive gain made in the Cuban Revolution. We too want to control our own destiny. We are determined that the people of South Africa will make their future, and that

they will continue to exercise their full democratic rights after liberation from apartheid. We do not want the popular participation to sit at the moment when apartheid goes. We want to have the moment of liberation open the way to ever-deepening democracy.

5. We admire the achievements of the Cuban Revolution in the sphere of social welfare. We note that the transformation from a country of imposed backwardness to universal literacy [as heard]. We acknowledge your advances in the fields of health, education and science.

6. There are many things we learn from your experience. In particular, we are moved by your affirmations of the historical connections with the continent and people of Africa. Your consistent commitment to the systematic eradication of racism is unparalleled. But the most important lesson that you have for us is that no matter what the odds, no matter under what difficulties you have, you had to struggle. There can be no surrender. It is a case of freedom or death.

7. I know that your country is experiencing many difficulties now but we have confidence that the resilient people of Cuba will overcome these as they have helped other countries overcome theirs.

8. We recognize that today's revolutionary spirit began long ago and that this spirit has been nurtured with the efforts of those who fought for the freedom of Cuba and, in fact, the freedom of all who were suffering under imperialist domination. We also find inspiration in the life and example of Jose Marti who is not only a Cuban and Latin American hero, but an admired symbol for all those who fight for freedom. We also honor the great Che Guevara [applause] whose outstanding revolutionary efforts, even on our continent, were of such magnitude that no prison nor censorship could conceal him from us. His life is an inspiration for all those who love freedom. We will always honor his memory.

9. We are humbled and full of emotion to be here. We have come here today recognizing our great debt to the Cuban people. What other country has such a history of selfless behavior as Cuba has shown for the people of Africa? How many countries benefit from Cuban health care professionals and educators? How many of these volunteers are now in Africa? What country has ever needed help from Cuba and has not received it? How many countries threatened by imperialism or fighting for their freedom have been able to count on the support of Cuba?

10. I was still in prison when I first heard of the massive help which the Cuban international forces were giving to the people of Angola. The help was of such a scale that it was difficult for us to believe it, when the Angolans were under attack by the combined forces of South Africa, the FALA [Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola] who were financed by the CIA, mercenaries, UNITA [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola], and Zaire in 1975.

11. In Africa we are used to being victims of countries that want to take from us our territory or overthrow our sovereignty. In African history there is not another instance where another people has stood up for one of ours. We also acknowledge that the action was carried out by the masses in Cuba and that those who fought and died in Angola are only a small portion of those who volunteered to go. To the Cuban people internationalism is not only a word but something which they have put into practice for the benefit of large sectors of mankind. We know that the Cuban forces were ready to retreat after driving back the invasion in 1975 but the continued aggressions of Pretoria did not allow them to do so. Your presence there and the reinforcements sent for the battle of Cuito Cuanavale has a historical meaning. The decisive defeat of the racist

army in Cuito Cuanavale was a victory for all Africa. This victory in Cuito Cuanavale is what made it possible for Angola to enjoy peace and establish its own sovereignty. The defeat of the racist army made it possible for the people of Namibia to achieve their independence.

12. The decisive defeat of the aggressive apartheid forces destroyed the myth of the invincibility of the white oppressor. The defeat of the apartheid army served as an inspiration to the struggling people of South Africa. Without the defeat of Cuito Cuanavale our organizations would not have been legalized. The defeat of the racist army in Cuito Cuanavale made it possible for me to be here with you today. Cuito Cuanavale marks the divide in the struggle for the liberation of southern Africa. Cuito Cuanavale marks an important step in the struggle to free the continent and our country of the scourge of apartheid.

13. Apartheid is not something that started yesterday. The origins of the racist white domination go back three and a half centuries from the moment that the first white colonizers began the process of division and eventual defeat of the Khoi-Khoi, the San, and other African peoples, the original inhabitants of our country. This process of conquest, from its beginning, engendered a series of resistance wars which are the origin of our national liberation struggle. Fighting under great disadvantages, the African peoples tried to defend their lands, but the material base and the firepower of the colonial aggressors led the divided kingdoms and tribal chiefs to defeat. This tradition of resistance is still alive and serves as an inspiration to our current struggle. We honor the figure of the great prophet and warrior (Machana) who died while trying to escape from the prison on Robin Island in 1819. (Insa), (Secumpune), Dingaana, Moshesh, (Mambata), are other resistance heroes from the anticolonial struggle.

14. It was with this history of taking lands that the South African Union was created in 1910. From the outside, South Africa looked like an independent country. But, in reality, the British conquerors gave power to the whites who had located in the country. Thus, the new South African Union could formalize the racial oppression and the economic exploitation of the blacks. After creating the union, the adoption of the Law on Territories, which legalized the land seizures of the 19th century, accelerated the process that would lead to the creation of the African National Congress [ANC] 8 June 1912.

15. I am not going to relate to you the history of the ANC other than to say that the 80 years of our existence have witnessed the evolution of the ANC from its beginnings, when it attempted to unite the African peoples, until it became the principle force in the struggle of the oppressed masses to end racism and establish a nonracial, nonsexist, democratic state. Its membership has evolved from a small group of professionals and leaders to a true mass, popular organization. Its objectives have evolved from the search for improved conditions for the African peoples to the fundamental transformation of all of South Africa into a democratic state. The methods used to obtain the main goals have acquired over the years a greater mass character, which is reflected in the growing popular participation in the ANC and in the campaigns carried out by the ANC. At times, some say that the initial objectives of the ANC and its original composition were those of a reform organization. The truth is that, since its birth, the ANC has had profound revolutionary implications. The formation of the ANC was the first step in the creation of a new South African nation. With time, this concept developed until it found, 36 years ago, clear expression in the Freedom Charter where it says that South Africa belongs to all who live there, blacks as well as whites. This constituted both an unequivocal rejection to the racist state and the affirmation of the only alternative that is acceptable: that racism and its structures be, finally,

abolished.

16. It is well known that the response of the state to our legitimate democratic demands was, among others, to accuse our directors of treason and subject our people during the 1970's to indiscriminate massacres. These facts, and the banning of our organization, left us no other road than the one followed by any self-respecting people, including Cuba, that is, to rise up in an armed struggle to retake our country from the hands of the racists.

17. I should mention that when we wanted to take up arms, we approached numerous Western governments in search of help and we could only talk with the lowest level officials. When we visited Cuba we were received by the highest authorities who immediately offered anything we wanted and needed.

18. That was our first experience with Cuban internationalism. Even though we took up arms, it was not our preferred option. It was the apartheid regime that forced us to take up arms. Our preferred option has always been to find a peaceful solution to the apartheid conflict. The combined struggle of our people in the country, as well as the growing international battle against apartheid during the 1980's made possible a negotiated solution to that conflict. The decisive defeat in Cuito Cuanavale changed the status of forces in the region and reduced considerably the capacity of the Pretoria regime to destabilize its neighbors. This fact, along with the struggle of our people within the country proved to be crucial so Pretoria would understand that it had to go to the negotiating table. [applause]

19. It was the ANC that initiated the current peace process that we hope will lead to a negotiated transfer of power to the people. We have not initiated this process for goals any different from that when we pursued the armed struggle. Our goals remain the achievement of the demands of the people and we will settle for nothing less than that. No process of negotiations can succeed until the apartheid regime realizes that there will not be peace unless there is freedom and that we are not going to negotiate away our just demands. They must understand that we will resist any constitutional scheme that aims at continuing white privileges. There is reason to believe that we have not yet succeeded in bringing this home to the government and we warn them that if they do not listen we will have to use our power to convince them. That power is the power of the people. And ultimately we know that the masses will not only demand, but win full rights in a nonracist, nonsexist, democratic South Africa. But we are not merely seeking a particular goal. We also propose a particular route for realizing it, and that is a route that involves the people all the way through. We do not want a process where a deal is struck over the heads of the people and their job is merely to applaud.

20. The government resists this at all costs, because the question of how a constitution is made, how negotiations take place, is vitally connected to whether or not a democratic result ensues. The present government wants to remain in office during the entire process of transition. Our view is that this is unacceptable. This government has definite negotiation goals. It can not be allowed to use this power as a government to advance its own cause, and that of their allies, and to use those same powers to weaken the ANC. And this is exactly what they are doing. They have unbanned the ANC, but we operate under conditions substantially different from that of other organizations. We do not have the same freedom to organize as does Inkatha and other organizations allied to the apartheid regime. Our members are harassed and even killed. We are often barred from holding meetings and marches.

21. We believe that the transition process should be controlled by a capable government that has the will to create and maintain the conditions necessary for free political activity. A government that works with the goal of assuring that the process be an effort to create a true democracy and nothing less. The current government has not shown the willingness and has been incapable of creating a proper climate for negotiations. It is hedging on its agreement to free political prisoners and to permit the return of exiles. Recently, it permitted the creation of a situation in which a true reign of terror and violence was unleashed against the African communities and the ANC as an organization. In this scenario of violence, 10,000 people have been killed since 1984, 2,000 of those in this year alone. We always said that this government, which glories in its professional police forces, is perfectly capable of putting an end to the violence and judge those responsible. But, they do not only not demonstrate the willingness to do that, but now we also have irrefutable evidence, and this has been published in the independent press, of their complicity in the violence. Violence has been used a systematic effort to strengthen Inkatha as a potential ally of the National Party. Now, we have evidence that proves the payment of monies by the government to Inkatha. Money that comes from its contributors.

22. All of this proves the necessity of creating an interim government of national unity that can preside over the transition. We need a government that enjoys the widest popular confidence so it can govern during this delicate period to assure that they do not permit the counterrevolutionaries to change the process and that can guarantee that the constitution is written in a climate that is free of repression, intimidation, and fear. We believe that the constitution itself ought to be written in the most democratic form possible. In our opinion, the best way to achieve this is through the election of representatives to a constituent assembly with the mandate to write a proposed constitution.

23. There are organizations that reject the claim of the ANC to be the most representative group in the country. If this is certain, let them show their popular support at the ballot box. To assure that the popular masses are included in this process, we are distributing and discussing our own constitutional proposals and a proposed law of rights. We want these to be discussed by all the organizations in our alliance, that is, the ANC, the South African Communist Party [SACP], and the Congress of South African Labor Unions, as well as by the people in general. In this way, when the people vote for the ANC to represent them in a constituent assembly they will know not only what general principles the ANC defends, but they will also know what type of constitution we want. Naturally, these constitutional proposals are subject to revision upon the basis of consultations with our members, with the rest of our alliance, and with the people generally. We want to achieve the writing of a constitution that receives wide support, loyalty, and respect. This can only be achieved if we truly go to the popular masses.

24. In an effort to stop these just demands, various efforts have been made to undermine and to destabilize the ANC. Violence is the worst of the efforts. But there are other, more insidious methods.

25. Currently, both in the press and among our political adversaries, and many Western governments, there exists an obsession concerning our alliance with the South African Communist Party [SACP]. The press constantly publishes speculations over the number of communists that are in our National Executive and says that we are directed by the SACP. The ANC is not a communist party, but rather a broad liberation movement which has among its members communists

and non-communists. Whoever wants to be a loyal member of the ANC, whoever accepts the discipline and the principles of the organization, has the right to join its ranks. Our relation with the SACP, as an organization, is based upon mutual respect. We are united with the SACP in those objectives that we have in common. But we respect each other's independence and individual identity. There has been no attempt whatsoever on the part of the SACP to run the ANC. To the contrary, we have gained strength through the alliance. We do not have the slightest intention of paying attention to those who suggest and counsel us to break away from this alliance. Who are those who offer these unsolicited suggestions? They come, mainly, from those who have never given us any assistance whatsoever. None of these counselors have ever made the sacrifices that the communists have made for our struggle. [applause]

26. This alliance has strengthened us and we will make it even more firm. We are now in a phase of our struggle in which we can smell the victory. But we have to assure that this victory is not stolen from us. We have to assure that the racist regime feels the greatest pressure down to the end so that it understands that it has to cede power; that the road to peace, liberty and democracy is inevitable. This is the reason why sanctions should be maintained. This is not the moment to hand out awards to the apartheid regime. Why should they be rewarded for repealing laws that are recognized as international crimes? Apartheid still exists. The regime must be obliged to eliminate it. Only when this process is irreversible can we begin to evaluate the removal of pressures.

27. We are profoundly concerned by the attitude that the Bush administration has adopted on this matter. This was one of the few governments that was in close contact with us on the question of sanctions. We made them see clearly that the elimination of sanctions would be premature. Despite that fact, this administration, without even contacting us, simply informed us that the U.S. sanctions were going to be lifted. We consider this as totally unacceptable.

28. It is in this context that we value our friendship with Cuba very, very much. When you, Comrade Fidel, yesterday said that our cause is your cause, I know that that sentiment came from the bottom of your heart and that that is the feeling of all of the people of revolutionary Cuba. [applause]

29. You are with us because both of our organizations, the Communist Party of Cuba and the ANC, are fighting for the oppressed masses to insure that those who make the wealth enjoy its fruits. Your great apostle, Jose Marti, said, and I quote: ``With the poor people of this earth, I want to share my fate.'' [sustained applause]

30. We in the ANC will always stand with the poor and rightless. Not only do we stand with them, we will ensure sooner rather than later that they rule the land of their birth. That, in the words of the Freedom Charter, the people shall govern. And when that moment arrives it will have been made possible not only by our own efforts, but through the solidarity, support, and encouragement of the great Cuban people. [applause]

31. I must close my remarks by referring to an event of which you all have witnessed. You have witnessed the event in which our Comrade Fidel Castro conferred upon me the highest honor this country can award. I am very much humbled by this award. Because I do not think I deserve it. It is an award that ought to be given to those who have already won the freedom of their people. But, it is a source of strength and hope that that award is given for the recognition that the people of South Africa stand on their feet and they are

fighting for their freedom. [applause] We sincerely hope that in the days that lie ahead we will be proved worthy of the confidence which is expressed in this award. [applause]

32. Long live the Cuban Revolution! [Viva!] Long live Comrade Fidel Castro!
[Viva!] [sustained applause]

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