

**ADDRESS TO THE JOINT SESSION OF
THE HOUSES OF CONGRESS OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Washington, D.C., June 26, 1990

Mr. Speaker;

Mr. President;

Esteemed Members of the United States Congress;

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a fact of the human condition that each shall, like a meteor, a mere brief passing moment in time and space, flit across the human stage and pass out of existence. Even the golden lads and lasses, as much as the chimney sweepers, come, and tomorrow are no more. After them all, they leave the people, enduring, multiplying, permanent, except to the extent that the same humanity might abuse its own genius to immolate life itself.

And so we have come to Washington in the District of Columbia, and into these hallowed chambers of the United States Congress, not as pretenders to greatness, but as a particle of a people whom we know to be noble and heroic—enduring, multiplying, permanent, rejoicing in the expectation and knowledge that their humanity will be reaffirmed and enlarged by open and unfettered communion with the nations of the world.

Our aspirations

We have come here to tell you, and through you, your own people, who are equally noble and heroic, of the troubles and trials, the fond hopes and aspirations, of the people from whom we originate. We believe that we know it as a fact that your kind and moving invitation to us to speak here derived from your own desire to convey a message to our people, and according to your humane purposes, to give them an opportunity to say what they want of you, and what they want to make of their relationship with you.

Our people demand democracy. Our country, which continues to bleed and suffer pain, needs democracy. It cries out for the situation where the law will decree that the freedom to speak of freedom constitutes the very essence of legality and the very thing that makes for the legitimacy of the constitutional order.

It thirsts for the situation where those who are entitled by law to carry arms, as the forces of national security and law and order, will not turn their weapons against the citizens simply because the citizens assert that equality, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are fundamental human rights which are not only inalienable but must, if necessary, be defended with the weapons of war.

We fight for and visualize a future in which all shall, without regard to race, colour, creed or sex, have the right to vote and to be voted into all effective organs of state. We are engaged in a struggle to ensure that the rights of every individual are guaranteed and protected, through a democratic constitution, the rule of law, an entrenched bill of rights which should be enforced by an independent judiciary, as well as a multi-party political system.

Mr Speaker:

We are actually conscious of the fact that we are addressing an historic institution for whose creation and integrity many men and women lost their lives in the war of independence, the civil war and the war against Nazism and Fascism. That very history demands that we address you with respect and candour and without any attempt to dissemble.

What we have said concerning the political arrangements we seek for our country is seriously meant. It is an outcome for which many of us went to prison, for which many have died in police cells, on the gallows, in our towns and villages and in the countries of southern Africa. Indeed, we have even had our political representatives killed in countries as far away from South Africa as France.

Unhappily, our people continue to die to this day, victims of armed agents of the state who are still determined to turn their guns against the very idea of a non-racial democracy. But this is the perspective which Congress will feel happy to support and encourage, using the enormous weight of its prestige and authority as an eminent representative of democratic practice.

Economic objectives

To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity. To impose on them a wretched life of hunger and deprivation is to dehumanise them. But such has been the terrible fate of all black persons in our country under the system of apartheid. The extent of the deprivation of millions of people has to be seen to be believed. The injury is made that more intolerable by the opulence of our white compatriots and the deliberate distortion of the economy to feed that opulence.

The process of the reconstruction of South African society must and will also entail the transformation of its economy. We need a strong and growing economy. We require an economy that is able to address the needs of all the people of our country, that can provide food, houses, education, health services, social security and everything that makes human life human, that makes life joyful and not a protracted encounter with hopelessness and despair.

We believe that the fact of the apartheid structure of the South African economy and the enormous and pressing needs of the people, make it inevitable that the democratic government will intervene in this economy, acting through the elected parliament. We have put the matter to the business community of our country

that the need for a public sector is one of the elements in a many-sided strategy of economic development and restructuring that has to be considered by us all, including the private sector.

The ANC holds no ideological positions which dictate that it must adopt a policy of nationalisation. But the ANC also holds the view that there is no self-regulating mechanism within the South African economy which will, on its own, ensure growth with equity.

At the same time, we take it as given that the private sector is an engine of growth and development which is critical to the success of the mixed economy we hope to see in the future South Africa. We are accordingly committed to the creation of the situation in which business people, both South African and foreign have confidence in the security of their investments, are assured of a fair rate of return on their capital and do business in conditions of stability and peace.

We must also make the point very firmly that the political settlement, and democracy itself, cannot survive unless the material needs of the people, the bread and butter issues, are addressed as part of the process of change and as a matter of urgency. It should never be that the anger of the poor should be the finger of accusation pointed at all of us because we failed to respond to the cries of the people for food, for shelter, for the dignity of the individual.

We shall need your support to achieve the post-apartheid economic objectives which are an intrinsic part of the process of the restoration of the human rights of the people of South Africa. We would like to approach the issue of our economic cooperation not as a relationship between donor and recipient, between a dependent and a benefactor.

Mutual benefit

We would like to believe that there is a way in which we could structure this relationship so that we do indeed benefit from your enormous resources in terms of your capital, technology all-round expertise, your enterprising spirit and your markets. This

relationship should, however, be one from which your people should also derive benefit, so that we who are fighting to liberate the very spirit of an entire people from the bondage of the arrogance of the ideology and practice of white supremacy, do not build a relationship of subservient dependency and fawning gratitude.

One of the benefits that should accrue to both our peoples and to the rest of the world, should surely be that this complex South African society, which has known nothing but racism for three centuries, should be transformed into an oasis of good race relations, where the black shall to the white be sister and brother, a fellow South African, an equal human being, both citizens of the world. To destroy racism in the world, we, together, must expunge apartheid racism in South Africa. Justice and liberty must be our tool, prosperity and happiness our weapon.

Peace, process and present reality

Mr Speaker,

Mr President,

Distinguished representatives of the American people:

You know this more than we do that peace is its own reward. Our own fate, born by a succession of generations that reach backwards into centuries, has been nothing but tension, conflict and death. In a sense we do not know the meaning of peace except in the imagination. But because we have not known true peace in its real meaning; because, for centuries, generations have had to bury the victims of state violence, we have fought for the right to experience peace.

On the initiative of the ANC, the process towards the conclusion of a peaceful settlement has started. According to a logic dictated by our situation, we are engaged in an effort which includes the removal of obstacles to negotiations. This will be followed by a negotiated determination of the mechanism which will draw up the new constitution.

This should lead to the formation of this constitution-making

institution and therefore the elaboration and adoption of a democratic constitution. Elections would then be held on the basis of this constitution and, for the first time, South Africa would have a body of law-makers which would, like yourselves, be mandated by the whole people.

Despite the admitted commitment of President de Klerk to walk this road with us, and despite our acceptance of his integrity and the honesty of his purposes, we would be fools to believe that the road ahead of us is without major hurdles. Too many among our white compatriots are steeped in the ideology of racism to admit easily that change must come.

Tragedy may yet sully the future we pray and work for if these slaves of the past take up arms in a desperate effort to resist the process which must lead to the democratic transformation of our country. For those who care to worry about violence in our country, as we do, it is at these forces that they should focus their attention, a process in which we are engaged.

We must contend still with the reality that South Africa is a country in the grip of the apartheid crime against humanity. The consequences of this continue to be felt not only within our borders but throughout southern Africa which continues to harvest the bitter fruits of conflict and war, especially in Mozambique and Angola. Peace will not come to our country and region until the apartheid system is ended.

Sanctions must continue

Therefore we say we still have a struggle on our hands. Our common and noble efforts to abolish the system of white minority domination must continue. We are encouraged and strengthened by the fact of the agreement between ourselves, this Congress as well as President Bush and his administration, that sanctions should remain in place. The purpose for which they were imposed has not yet been achieved.

We have yet to arrive at the point when we can say that South Africa is set on an irreversible course leading to its transformation

into a united, democratic and non-racial country. We plead that you cede the prerogative to the people of South Africa to determine the moment when it will be said that profound changes have occurred and an irreversible process achieved, enabling you and the rest of the international community to lift sanctions.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the principled struggle you waged which resulted in the adoption of the historic Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act which made such a decisive contribution to the process of moving our country forward towards negotiations. We request that you go further and assist us with the material resources which will enable us to promote the peace process and meet other needs which arise from the changing situation you have helped to bring about.

Tribute to the United States

The stand you took established the understanding among the millions of our people that here we have friends, here we have fighters against racism who feel hurt because we are hurt, who seek our success because they too seek the victory of democracy over tyranny. And here I speak not only about you, members of the United States Congress, but also of the millions of people throughout this great land who stood up and engaged the apartheid system in struggle. The masses who have given us such strength and joy by the manner in which they have received us since we arrived in this country.

Mr Speaker,

Mr President,

Senators and Representatives:

We went to jail because it was impossible to sit still while the obscenity of the apartheid system was being imposed on our people. It would have been immoral to keep quiet while a racist tyranny sought to reduce an entire people into a status worse than that of the beasts of the forest. It would have been an act of treason against the people and against our conscience to allow fear and the drive towards self-preservation to dominate our behaviour, obliging us to

absent ourselves from the struggle for democracy and human rights, not only in our country but throughout the world.

We could not have made an acquaintance through literature with human giants such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson and not been moved to act as they were moved to act. We could not have heard of and admired John Brown, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King Jr., and others, and not be moved to act as they were moved to act. We could not have known of your Declaration of Independence and not elected to join in the struggle to guarantee the people life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We are grateful to you all that you persisted in your resolve to have us and other political prisoners released from jail. You have given us the gift and privilege to rejoin our people, yourselves and the rest of the international community in the common effort to transform South Africa into a united, democratic and non-racial country. You have given us the power to join hands with all people of conscience to fight for the victory of democracy and human rights throughout the world.

We are glad that you merged with our own people to make it possible for us to emerge from the darkness of the prison cell and join the contemporary process of the renewal of the world. We thank you most sincerely for all you have done and count on you to persist in your noble endeavours to free the rest of our political prisoners and to emancipate our people from the larger prison that is apartheid South Africa.

Let justice triumph

The day may not be for when we will borrow the words of Thomas Jefferson and speak of the will of the South African nation. In the exercise of that will by this united nation of black and white people it must surely be that there will be born a country on the southern tip of Africa which you will be proud to call a friend and an ally, because of its contribution to the universal striving towards liberty, human rights, prosperity and peace among the peoples.

Let that day come now. Let us keep our arms locked together so that we form a solid phalanx against racism to ensure that that day comes now. By our common actions let us ensure that justice triumphs without delay. When that has come to pass, then shall we all be entitled to acknowledge the salute when others say of us, blessed are the peacemakers.

Thank you for your kind invitation to speak here today and thank you for your welcome and the attention you have accorded our simple message.