

speech by

comrade walter sisulu

at the national welcome back rally
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Friends, Comrades, and the people of South Africa, I extend warm fraternal greetings to you from all of us who have been released recently, from Comrade Nelson Mandela and from the hundreds of our comrades-in-arms who still languish in apartheid jails.

We salute you, the people of South Africa, for the courage, determination and sacrifices you have made under the most difficult and repressive conditions, to ensure that the flag of our struggle is held high.

Your efforts acted as a constant source of inspiration during our long years in prison.

We salute, in particular, the rank and file membership of the African National Congress for earning our organisation the mantle of leader of the South African struggle. Let all gathered here send a special get-well message to our President, Comrade Oliver Tambo.

We salute, the United Democratic Front and the mass organisations of the youth, women, students and civics. You have played a decisive role in precipitating the crisis apartheid faces today.

In particular, we salute the young lions organised under the banner of SAYCO for taking the struggle to new

heights. We salute the Congress of South African Trade Unions for organising workers on a scale unequalled in the entire history of our struggle.

Your meteoric rise symbolises the centrality of the working class in our struggle.

We salute the students of our country whose heroic deeds were demonstrated in the 1976 uprising.

We pay special tribute to the high quality of these and other mass organisations and to the tremendous skill of the new leadership that has emerged.

Today we also remember those of our comrades who are on death row. We commit ourselves to sparing no effort in order to save them from the gallows.

We pay tribute to our combatants and the thousands of unarmed protesters - the real heroes of our struggle - who have paid the ultimate price in the struggle. I ask you to rise in a moment's silence in remembrance of our fallen comrades.

We congratulate our sportspersons and cultural workers for their role in our struggle against apartheid.

We pay tribute to our religious organisations. You have demonstrated

the powerful force of the good Christian, the good Muslim, the good Hindu and the good Jew in the struggle against evil.

Today we salute the international community for the invaluable role it has played in complementing the struggle of our people. The support we have received, and continue to receive, from the OAU and Socialist countries will be remembered by the South African people forever. We pay special tribute to the role played by the Non Aligned Movement, the member states of the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the Scandinavian countries in supporting our struggle against apartheid.

We also appreciate the contribution of the international labour movement and the World Council of Churches.

We salute the role played by the anti-apartheid movement in the United States and Europe in our struggle.

We salute the role played by the Frontline States and, in particular, the sacrifices Zambia has made, under the leadership of President Kenneth Kaunda, for housing our headquarters and thousands of our people. We salute the role that great African leaders such as Comrade Samora Machel, President Dos Santo, President Mugabe, President Chissano and President Masire have played in the unfolding liberation of our people. We salute President Fidel Castro and the people of Cuba for the heroic role they have played in the fight against colonialism in this region.

Today we see the apartheid regime facing a deep and irreversible crisis. All its political strategies of reforming apartheid have failed dismally. Corruption and scandals plague the ruling

class. The Bantustans are areas of instability. The tri-cameral system is in disgrace. Brutal apartheid repression under successive States of Emergency has failed to dent the spirit of resistance amongst our people.

The disastrous policies of successive Nationalist Party governments has resulted in economic chaos. Spiraling inflation is the order of the day. This crisis has been accelerated by the rejection by the international community of apartheid as a crime against humanity. Sanctions, boycotts and disinvestment have isolated apartheid South Africa as the pariah of the world.

The Labour Relations Act and other anti-worker measures have spurred the resistance of the working class. Great battles have been fought by the trade unions to defend the rights of workers. Let us not forget that. This crisis has been accelerated by the rejection by the international community of apartheid as a crime against humanity. Sanctions, boycotts and disinvestment have isolated apartheid South Africa as the pariah of the world.

The Labour Relations Act and other anti-worker measures have spurred the resistance of the working class. Great battles have been fought by the trade unions to defend the rights of workers. Let us not forget that there is more that unites workers than divides them. We call for the unity of all organised workers under the banner: one country, one federation.

Friends of the apartheid government argue that sanctions would result in black workers losing their jobs. We say that it is the abnormal situation in this country which produces such results. For us, the central issue is: what is the most effective strategy to remove suffering? We are in no doubt

that sanctions are to a very large extent responsible for making the government responsive to the demands of our people. We call on the world to intensify the sanctions campaign.

As the crisis against apartheid intensifies, the ruling class is becoming more and more fragmented. They no longer have any vision of the future. Today the ANC has captured the centre stage of political life in South Africa.

More and more people, black and white, are being inspired by the ideals of the ANC. The vision of a non-racial, democratic and united South Africa is shared by all sections of South African society. These ideas are permeating even through the very organs of repression.

More and more white youth are resisting military conscription. We embrace these objectors as true patriots. In the police force, Lieutenant Rockman and others have begun to show the way. We call on policemen to resist anything that is against the people. They should become part of the people.

In recent months millions of our people have united in mass action under the banner of the Mass Democratic Movement.

The sight of hundreds of thousands peaceful protesters using the streets of our cities and townships as ballot boxes should be an inspiration for us to intensify the struggle for total liberation. We call on our people to join the mass organisations under COSATU and the UDF.

The building of disciplined and accountable organisations of our people must remain one of our principle tasks.

We salute the great efforts being made to organise women so that they may occupy their rightful place in the struggle.

While we have made many strides, the carnage amongst our people in Natal is a blot on our noble struggle for liberation. It is the evil hand of apartheid that is behind the violence in Natal. Reports of police collusion in the killings abound. We know that it is the general characteristic of the ruling class to divide our people.

All who are committed to peace amongst the people must act jointly against the perpetrators of violence. We call on COSATU, UDF and Inkatha to continue their search for peace. All obstacles to the movement for peace should be removed.

We welcome the recent mass demonstrations for peace by the people of Mpumalanga, Kwa-Mashu, Richmond and Ntuzuma. Ultimately, peace lies in the hands of all the people, regardless of their political affiliation. We call on the rank-and-file of all organisations to work together for peace.

The ANC has consistently, throughout its history, been committed to the politics of peace and negotiations.

I would like to speak from my personal experience. In 1952, I, as Secretary-General of the ANC, together with Dr Moroka, the then President of the ANC, wrote to Prime Minister Malan, calling on him to negotiate.

In 1955 we invited all organisations including the National Party to the Congress of the People. They did not come.

In 1958 Chief Luthuli, the then Presi-

dent of the ANC, wrote to Prime Minister Strydom, urging him to negotiate. In 1960, the ANC was banned and thousands of leaders and members were jailed or forced into exile.

In 1961, Comrade Nelson Mandela, who was underground at the time, wrote to Prime Minister Verwoerd and urged him to call a National Convention.

Our pleas fell on deaf ears.

That is why we formed Umkhonto we Sizwe, the Spear of the Nation, to defend our people and to fight for our freedom.

We stood for peace in 1912 when we were formed, we stood for peace in our long struggle of resistance, we stand for peace today, and we will stand for peace tomorrow.

In spite of countless bitter experiences, we will not allow the past to stop us from constantly searching for the shortest possible path to freedom.

We are in agreement with the recently adopted Harare Declaration which says:

"We believe that a conjuncture of circumstances exist which, if there is a demonstrable readiness on the part of the Pretoria regime to engage in negotiations genuinely and seriously, could create the possibility to end apartheid through negotiations.

"Such an eventuality would be an expression of the long-standing preference of the majority of the people of South Africa to arrive at a political settlement.

Together with the rest of the world, we believe that it is essential, before any

negotiations can take place, that the necessary climate for negotiations be created."

We call on the regime to:

- release all political prisoners and detainees unconditionally.
- lift all bans and restrictions on all proscribed organisations and persons.
- remove all troops from the townships.
- end the state of emergency and repeal all repressive legislation.
- cease all political trials and political executions.

If such a climate is created, the ANC is prepared, as the Harare Declaration says, to discuss the suspension of hostilities on both sides. There can be no question of us unilaterally abandoning the armed struggle.

To date, we see no clear indication that the government is serious about negotiations. All their utterances are vague.

Now the government talks about ethnic elections to choose the leaders of the black people. This is unacceptable to us.

We are looking forward to the election of a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of universal adult franchise. This is where the true representative of the people will discuss the future.

If the government is serious about a lasting solution, they will agree to this logical step.

In the meantime, our duty is to intensify the struggle until we are able to get the regime to discuss the issue of the normalisation of the situation in South Africa. At this stage we cannot

relax on the basis of mere statements.

We must concentrate on building mass organisation and working class leadership in our struggle for freedom.

We must unite in action with the broadest range of apartheid's opponents. We should not allow ideological and other differences to stand in the path of our unity against apartheid.

Education is a vital part of our struggle against apartheid. Parents, students and teachers are objective partners in education. We call on you to work together in promoting the education of our youth which is inseparable from our liberation struggle.

The Defiance Campaign must continue. We cannot wait on the government to make changes at its own pace.

We call on traditional leaders to join us in our struggle. You must continue to resist apartheid in the proud traditions of Ceteswayo and Sekhukhuni and Hintsa.

We call on those people who are in government-created structures to seize the moment and join the great struggle for freedom.

Let us strengthen our solidarity with SWAPO and the people of Namibia. A victory for SWAPO will be a victory for Southern Africa as a whole.

We call on our white brothers and sisters to join us in the struggle for democracy so that we may shape the future together.

Let all of us who love this country engage in the task of building a new South Africa, one which would be truly democratic, in which a new People's Culture shall flourish, in which People's Education will develop the human potential of our people, in which access to People's Health will be a right and not a privilege and in which our environment will be protected for the generations which come after us.

The vision of the ANC has been shaped by the struggles of millions of our people against injustice. The struggle against apartheid is a struggle of all humanity. At the same time we recognise the interdependence between ourselves and the peoples of the world. We share the ideals of peace loving people the world over. We are interested in the new phase of political openness and peace that is unfolding all over the world. By eradicating apartheid we will be contributing to peace at home and to world peace. We dedicate our lives to this end.

In conclusion we reiterate that the stage we have reached in the struggle is irreversible. Hence the need for unity, consolidation and discipline in order to intensify the struggle for liberation.

FORWARD TO PEACE AND DEMOCRACY!

LONG LIVE THE ANC!

**LONG LIVE OUR ALLIANCE WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN
COMMUNIST PARTY!**

LONG LIVE THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT!