

Speech Delivered by Popo Molefe at SAUJS National Seminar on 5/7/90

In one of his books the late Prime Minister of India, Pandit Nerhu wrote:

Fear builds its phantoms which are more fearful than reality itself; and reality when calmly analysed and its consequences willingly accepted, loses much of its terror."

These words could well be used to describe the South Africa of the 1990's.

Fear has a long track record in our country and has a symbiotic relationship with apartheid and racism.

The apartheid regime has survived for forty two years now. For years it has exercised the policy enunciated by a Transvaal local Government Commission that was to cause such pain and damage to Black South Africans : " The native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are essentially the white mans creation, when he is willing to enter and minister <sup>to</sup> the needs of the white man and should <sup>depart</sup> depend therefrom when he ceases to minister."

The fact that this separation and alienation of black from white, and the fear of each other that has set in as a result of this abomination, still continues to exist today is a measure of the tenacity of the forces of reaction which have sought to stay the process of democratic transformation.

We in the MDM understand some of the fears of whites about the future. The regime continues to lure you into the false belief that we will replace white democracy with black democracy and that we will do unto you as you have done unto us. You have also been brought up on an entree of propaganda that makes you believe that only whites know how to exercise democracy. I have no doubt that far from disintegrating, apartheid is working.

Fellow compatriots we want to assure you that when Mandela spoke his famous words in the dock "I will fight white domination and I will fight black domination", he spoke for a movement which proclaimed and practiced this message of non-racialism throughout its history.

Explaining the policy of the ANC with regard to its attitude to non-racialism, Oliver Tambo said:

" When the people decide to fight for their rights as blacks, as most deprived, people are reacting to the situation created for them....They are not fighting white people as white people. They are fighting a white system, but not because it is white, although it is presented in that form. Basically the struggle is for justice, for human rights... it is capable of being supported by all human beings who support just causes irrespective of what race they belong to".

We also need to take note that in a continent colonized by white settlers for centuries, we cannot find a single example where majority rule has led to discrimination or domination against white members of a community.

The non racial policy of the ANC is summed up in the opening statement of the Freedom Charter:" We the people of South Africa declare for all the country and world to know that South Africa belongs to all who live in it -black and white and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people".

The people of South Africa, not a hostile, ethnic, racial, tribal group but a vibrant nation conceived in liberty and equality, to contribute towards building a home where all South Africans feel they belong, a home that reflects the national and democratic character of our struggle, totally transforming apartheid South Africa into the new democracy that will secure peace - this remains the aim of the ANC and its allies. We are one nation in one country.

It is this belief which like a beacon draws us faster towards our goal. The darkness of racism which has shrouded our country for so long is now being lit by the determination of our people to consume and rid our land of this deviant and immoral system of apartheid once and for all.

The illusion that white minority rule will last an eternity has become a fleeting shadow with no substance.

It is precisely the ANC's steadfastness and determination to uphold its policy of non-racialism, democracy and justice, among other things, that has determined its moral authority and

strength both at home and abroad.

~~Who~~ Who can deny that today it is the ANC that occupies the centre stage and moral high ground in the political life of this country?

~~On the contrary~~ the past few years has seen the ideological disintegration of the regime.

The ruling ideology is not only rejected by the vast majority of the oppressed but by an increasing number of whites who have boldly joined the ranks of the oppressed. Nusas, JODAC, ECC, SACP and the Cape Democrats all stand as solid evidence of this courageous move by the white people of South Africa who, largely through the policies and approach of the MDM, have extricated themselves from apartheid's web and are now accepted as equal comrades in the liberation struggle.

We know fully well the love and admiration showered on white compatriots like Joe Slovo, Helen Joseph and Beyers Naude by the black oppressed in this country.

In the course of this struggle the Jewish people have produced some of the giants of our revolutionary movement, Comrades like Joe Slovo and Albie Sachs are among the most outstanding of these.

We must pay tribute to the hundreds of rank and file activists of Jewish origin who have emerged from different classes and strata, activists who have the capacity, determination and commitment, to mobilize the masses and to be accepted by the masses.

We cannot but <sup>applaud</sup> admire the almost unsurpassed contribution of the

Jewish community to the development of industry and commerce. Enormous contributions have been made by this small Jewish community to the broader South African society. Their contributions in the humanities, sciences and arts have all been woven into a rich tapestry of South African life.

However while it is true that the Jewish people are a minority it is politically and theoretically more useful to examine the position, role and function of this community as part of the national question, since the democratic rights of the Jewish people can best be defended in a country free from the scourge of racism and oppression.

This does <sup>not</sup> however mean that we are insensitive to the historical and contemporary experiences peculiar to Jewish people. We therefore join world wide condemnation of all anti-semitic activities.

In recent years we have witnessed a significant growth in overt anti semitic activities. Yet apart from customary words, warning and condemning, the government has done nothing to put an end to this evil phenomenon.

We have no choice ~~then~~ but to declare war on all forms of racist practices. Our country cannot afford to wait for a post apartheid society to start fighting this evil.

If we argue that the foundations of a post apartheid order should be laid today, then there is much to be done.

While we recognize and appreciate the fundamental Jewish princi-

ples of human justice and equality before the law and the tradition of Jewish involvement in the struggle against injustices both inside and outside South Africa, we want to call on Jewish organisations to come forward with renewed determination and propagate an anti apartheid consciousness among the people as well as to expose the Jewish community to the thoughts and processes of the democratic movement.

Perhaps a statement by Chief Rabbi Harris is instructive here:

"World Jewry will judge the South African Jewish community not by its institution or its commitment to Israel but by its contribution to the solution of the grave, but well known problems of our country, South Africa".

Because we are aware of the fears of majority rule we want to reiterate:

1. The ANC has since its inception been committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict that plagues our country. Our appeals to successive racist regimes to come to the negotiating table were met with gunfire. Even though the ANC reluctantly decided to adopt the armed strggle after 5 decades of non violent struggle, the ANC is willing to continue with its tradition of commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

2. Our approach to the negotiation process is spelt out in the Harare declaration which has the support of the international community. According to the Harare declaration the next step would be the establishment of an interim government. The ANC believes that the body to decide on a new constitution would be a constituent assembly elected on a basis on person one vote under

a common voters roll. Elections to such a forum cannot be based on apartheid's racial classification of so called groups or nations. Such an approach can only have the effect of entrenching discrimination and perpetuating the racial and ethnic divisions fostered by apartheid. <sup>We are one people, one nation - we want to be one people for all South Africa and be one</sup> Pallo Jordan of the ANC explains the concept of "nation" as not being defined by skin colour or racial designation; its parameters are set by individual acts of voluntary adherence, which adherence requires the submergence of other loyalties to this larger unit; they are defined by a commitment to the country, its people and its future. Since committed racists could never accept such an arrangement, they too voluntarily exclude themselves from this definition of the nation."

When De Kleik calls for a minority veto it is with the intention of allowing minorities to veto the decisions of the majority. What conception of democracy allows for this?

On the other hand we believe that religious groups, cultural groups, civic associations, youth organisations, trade unions etc will not only be acceptable but actively promoted. The ANC recognises that owing to the diverse origins of the South African population, there are inevitably and will continue to be cultural expressions of this diversity. The ANC assures you that it will give legal protection to those who wish to give expression to their cultural uniqueness, provided that this does not entail attempts to conscript others to such efforts against their will. The ANC sees no reason why diversity should be opposed to unity. I would like to make the following points in this regard, which might be of concern to the Jewish community.

- a. The freedom of worship is a non negotiable for the ANC.
- b. The right to linguistic and cultural activity will be guaranteed.
- c Individual rights will be protected by an entrenched bill of rights.

The practice of any racist activities will be made a criminal offense under law.

These rights however must be followed by reciprocal duties:

- 1. We should promote the habits of non racial and non sexist thinking, the practice of anti-racist behavior and the acquisition of genuinely shared patriotic consciousness.
- 2. We must meaningfully participate in democratic organs and judiciously exercise the franchise.
- 3. We must share the burden of building and strengthening the economy so that all may receive its benefits.
- 4. We must be committed to defending and protecting the nation when it is under attack.
- 5. Above all we must promote the growth of a single national identity and loyalty, which must be binding on all South Africans.

What then are the main tasks facing us today?

Our main task is to organize and mobilise the people to act together to bring about a united, non racial and democratic South Africa. This task has become more than the cutting edge of our struggle. Success at the negotiating table will depend on what all South Africans do to bring an end to apartheid.



The eradication of apartheid requires organised mass action. The demand for transformation must be backed by calls and actions to bring such a transformation into being.

As part of the South African nation, history has placed a responsibility and a challenge on your shoulders to help <sup>and</sup> ~~purge~~ our country <sup>of apartheid</sup> and lead it onto a path of peace and democracy.

Let us dedicate ourselves to fight side by side for:

1. A democracy in which every adult person has an equal vote and plays a part in running our society
2. A non racialism which ends all political and economic privilege
3. A non racial, united, democratic South Africa.

<sup>In conclusion,</sup> Let ~~me conclude by saying,~~ that let this period be a time <sup>that</sup> your children will remember as a time you took hold of the reins and helped eradicate from this country the depraved and brutal system of apartheid, and put it <sup>established</sup> ~~on its feet to~~ a condition of peace, democracy and fulfillment of a people who have suffered far too much, for far too long.

Let us strive for a time when the world can <sup>no</sup> longer proclaim that there is "something rotten in the state of South Africa".

Let us make South Africa safe for all, especially the generations <sup>of the future</sup> to live in.

Let us together help <sup>South Africa</sup> ~~our country~~ to take her ~~its~~ rightful place, as a respected country amongst the community of nations.

Let us together, brothers and sisters - black and white speed up the demise of apartheid and build on its ruins a free, non-racial democratic South Africa.

<sup>Amanulla</sup>  
Thank you.