



SPEECHES DELIVERED ON THE
OCCASION OF THE VISIT BY

The President
of The Republic of
South Africa

Mr Nelson Mandela

to

THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER

Thursday, 11th July 1996

Speech by the Lord Chancellor

President Mandela, as Members of the Lords and Commons in Parliament assembled, we welcome you most warmly to Westminster Hall. We should also like to extend our welcome to your daughter, Princess Zenani. We have long looked forward to the day when the first President of the new, democratic Republic of South Africa would address both our Houses.

This historic Hall has witnessed the slow evolution of our own democracy over the past thousand years. It was here in the Thirteenth Century that the Lords spiritual and temporal extracted an oath from King Henry III that he would not infringe the rights of the citizens, and that he would uphold the provisions of Magna Carta. Since then, it has witnessed countless events which have been central to our history and to the evolution of our monarchy, our Parliament, our Church and our laws. Over the centuries, this Hall has been the setting for spectacular ceremonial – as at the great coronation banquets of former times. It has also hosted far more sombre moments in our history, when patriots and martyrs have stood trial for their lives within these walls. I think especially of Sir Thomas More, my predecessor as Lord Chancellor. Mr President, being Lord Chancellor today is not entirely without hazard but I hope to a smaller degree than in former times.

In our own day, we can be thankful that the Hall has been, and continues to be, the scene of more peaceful events. It is the forum where both Houses of Parliament assemble to celebrate and give thanks for momentous events such as today. It is both my privilege and my great pleasure to welcome, in this historic setting, a guest who has himself been responsible for historic, dramatic, and fundamental changes in his own country.

The parliaments of the United Kingdom and South Africa have a long association, renewed and revitalised by the ending of apartheid in 1994. It was here in Westminster that an act was passed in 1909 which brought into being the Union of South Africa, and again in 1995 that the South Africa Act welcomed your country back into the Commonwealth. South Africa remains united today, but upon a dramatically different basis - one of universal suffrage. It is worth remembering that in 1909 Britain's electoral system was very different from the one we have today, denying women the right to vote. In the present day Britons and South Africans proudly share a common democratic right as citizens of societies based on the democratic principle of "one person, one vote".

Mr President, in May your Parliament adopted a new South African Constitution. That was an historic achievement. On behalf of both Houses of Parliament, I should like to offer our warmest congratulations to you, your government and the people of South Africa, for that, and for everything else that has been achieved in your remarkable country.

Mister President, you are most welcome. Only at rare intervals do our Houses of Parliament pay the highest tribute to a guest. That is to invite him to address both Houses of Parliament assembled in this Great Hall. May I invite you to address us now.

Speech by President Mandela

President Mandela: My lords, ladies and gentlemen, it is with a deep sense of humility that we stand here today to address the historic Houses of Parliament of the United Kingdom. The rare honour you have extended to a foreigner speaks to the great age, the extent, and the warmth of the relations between our two peoples. It speaks of the prospect of us further deepening these excellent relations.

Perhaps the fact that we are here today might serve to close a circle which is two hundred years old. I say “two hundred years” because the first time this country entered ours as a colonising power was the year 1795. There are some parts of our country which, to this day, have many towns and localities which bear the names of British places and personalities, some of whom played an important role in the process of British colonisation which started in 1795. To take only one of these – the Eastern Cape – it has such names as Port Elizabeth, East London, Grahamstown, King Williamstown, Alice, Albany, Somerset East, Fort Beaufort, Fort Glamorgan and, simply, Queenstown. Here, too, is to be found what is called the 1820 Settlers’ Monument, built in tribute to British colonists who came to occupy land seized from our forebears and to help guarantee the safety of the spoils for the benefit of Country and Empire.

Had those forebears had the advantage of education and access to your outstanding cultural heritage, they would have found that the words of one of the citizens in Shakespeare’s “Coriolanus” most apposite to describe their attitude towards the Great Britain of the day. Let us hear the disenfranchised and dispossessed citizen of the day:

“We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good;
What authority surfeits on, would relieve us us
The leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery,
Is as an inventory to particularise their abundance;
Our sufferance is a gain to them.
Let us revenge this with our pikes, ere we become rakes:
For the gods know,
I speak this in hunger for bread,
And not in thirst for revenge”.

For a century after that cry of despair would first have been heard, what defined the relations between our peoples was the continuous clangour of arms, one of whose military highlights was the famous Battle of Isandhlwana when the Zulu armies won the day.

Eight decades ago, my predecessors in the leadership of the African National Congress came to these venerable Houses to say to the government and the legislators of that time that they, the patricians, should come to the aid of the poor citizens. With no pikes to accompany them, because the British armies had defeated and disarmed them, they spoke eloquently and passionately of the need for the colonial power to treat them as human beings equal to the 1820 settlers and others who wafted down from Europe before and after 1820. As eloquently and passionately, the British rulers of the day spoke in these Houses to say that they could not and would not amend their agenda with regard to South Africa to address the interests of that section of our population which was not white.

Despite that rebuff and the terrible cost we had to bear as a consequence, we return to this honoured place neither with pikes, nor with a desire for revenge, nor even with a plea to your distinguished selves to assuage our hunger for bread. We come to you as friends. We

have returned to the land of William Wilberforce, who dared to stand up and demand that the slaves in our country should be freed. We have come to the land of Fenner Brockway, who, through his Movement for Colonial Freedom, was as concerned about our liberty as he was about the independence of India.

We are in the Houses in which Harold Macmillan worked: he who spoke in our own Houses of Parliament in Cape Town in 1960, shortly before the infamous Sharpeville Massacre, and warned a stubborn and race-blinded white oligarchy in our country that,

“the wind of change is blowing through the continent”;
he to whom a South African cartoonist paid tribute by having him recite other Shakespearean words,

“Oh, pardon me thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!”

We have come as friends to all the people of the native land of the Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, who in his gentle compassion for the victim, resolved to give no quarter to any butcher. His sacrifices for our freedom told us that the true relationship between our people was not one between poor citizens on the one hand and good patricians on the other, but one underwritten by our common humanity and our human capacity to touch one another’s hearts across the oceans. We come to you as friends, bearing with us to you and the nation you represent warm greetings from the hearts of millions of our citizens. Even in the most lifeless of historical seasons, two hundred years would be too long a period for the force of change not to break free.

Change has come to our country, too, perhaps at last, but bringing with it joy, the promise of a better future and a protracted festival of hope across the globe. Racism is a blight on the human conscience. The idea that any people can be inferior to another to the point where those who consider themselves superior define and treat the rest as sub-human denies the humanity even of those who elevate themselves to the status of gods.

The millions of graves strewn across Europe which are the result of the tyranny of Nazism, the decimation of the native peoples of the Americas and Australia, the destructive trail of the apartheid crime against humanity -- all these are like a haunting question that floats in the wind: why did we allow these things to happen?

It seems to us that, as the ordinary people of the world came to understand the real nature of the system of apartheid, they decided that they would not permit that their response to that question should be to hang their heads in shame. We take this opportunity once more to pay tribute to the millions of Britons who, through the years and like others everywhere else in the world, stood up to say no to apartheid.

Our emancipation is their reward. We know that the freedom we enjoy is a richly textured gift handcrafted by ordinary folk who would not allow their own dignity as human beings to be insulted. In the acceptance of that gift is contained an undertaking by our people that we shall never, never again allow our country to play host to racism. Nor shall our voices be stilled if we see that another elsewhere in the world is victim to racial tyranny.

But, above all else, we believe that our charge is to fulfil the wishes of all humanity, including our own people, to ensure that the enormous and sustained universal effort which translated itself into the defeat of the system of apartheid achieves its related purpose of

transforming South Africa into a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, peaceful and prosperous country.

No society emerging out of the grand disaster represented by the apartheid system could avoid the blemishes of its past. Had the new South Africa emerged out of nothing, it would not exist. The being it has assumed, dictated by its origins, constitutes a veritable school of learning about what needs still to be done to end the system of apartheid. The Jeremiahs who lie in wait, ready to blame the present for its past and seeing the ghosts of the past that still stalk our land, believe these ghosts to represent a failure of the new reality. These Jeremiahs represent a breed that has convinced itself that we cannot succeed in building the beautiful South Africa that we and millions of others, including yourselves, have dared to dream of. Yet, had we not had that capacity for success, South Africa would not be where it is today.

The first founding stone of our new country is national reconciliation and national unity. The fact that it has settled in its mortar needs no advertising. If it were not so, the blood in the streets would trumpet loudly that we had failed to achieve acceptance of the need for all our people, black and white, to live together in peace as equals and as citizens bound together by a common destiny.

Our second founding stone is the establishment of a democratic system which ensures that all citizens have an equal right and an equal capacity to determine their future. It prohibits the option of tyranny and dictatorship and it guarantees the fundamental human rights of all our people.

Within that broad framework, like other nations, we continue to struggle to find ways and means by which to involve the citizen as intimately as possible in the system of governance, cognisant of the historical process which is redefining the role of the politician, taking away from these professions the powers conferred by the notion that they, exclusively, have a special ability to govern.

Furthermore, recognising the diversity of our society, our new Constitution provides Cultural, religious and Linguistic Communities. This will ensure that our people as a whole have an additional instrument in their hands to enable them to avoid the emergence of any situation in which ethnic and other tensions might drive us back to apartheid solutions or to an imitation of the cruel example of Bosnia.

Our third founding stone must surely be that we end the enormous race and gender disparities in wealth, income and opportunity that we have inherited from our past and whose continued impact on our society necessarily subtracts from the achievement of the goals of national unity and reconciliation.

Here we are confronted with a protracted struggle which is intimately bound up with our fourth founding stone – the rebuilding and modernisation of our economy and setting it on a high, sustainable growth path to end poverty, unemployment and backwardness.

None of us can overestimate the complexity of the challenge that faces us with regard to the laying of these latter two founding stones. At the same time, relying on our own resources and people, and as part of the world community of nations, we have every reason to be certain that we will succeed.

In that context, we must refer to the mood of the masses of our people who correctly expect that freedom must be attended by a better life for all. But because they are poor, these millions understand the effort and time it will take to graduate from walking barefoot to the comforts of a truly decent existence. What they expect is not a great leap forward, but a steady and visible advance in the improvement of the quality of their lives, with them participating actively in the process of determining the pace and direction of that advance, and not merely waiting passively to be recipients of benefits that will be delivered by an authority from which they are otherwise alienated.

It may be difficult to understand the enormous creative force released among the people by the fact that, for the first time in centuries, they have a government which they can correctly claim as their own and whose very reason for existence is to serve the interests of those millions; and that they are builders of a society in which the individual is by law protected against any possible tyranny from the state.

It is from this well of hope, engagement and confidence in the future that the ordinary citizens of our country are appropriating the concept we have laid before them of “Masakhane”, a Nguni word which means, “Let us build one another together”.

As important a founding stone as the rest is the fact that we are an African country. With all our colours and races combined in one nation, we are an African people. The successes we seek and must achieve in politics, the economy and social development are African successes which must be part of an African renaissance. They are integrated within a process which must lift and banish the clouds of despair that continue to cast a dark shadow over our continent. Had we the peremptory powers, long would we have proclaimed “*Lux fiat!*”

It is perhaps in this regard that our presence here today might, as we have said, symbolise the closing of a circle which, for us, has been two centuries in the drawing. For centuries, an ancient continent has bled from many gaping sword wounds. At an earlier time, it lost millions of its most able sons and daughters to a trade in slaves which defined those Africans as fit for slavery because they were African. To his day, we continue to lose some of the best among ourselves because the lights in the developed world shine brighter.

An ancient continent disgorged into the hands of foreigners what lay in its bowels and in the fertility of its soils, seemingly so profusely that it had to send scouts here to ascertain whether it was true that the streets of London are paved with gold! The continent bleeds still, struggling to service a foreign debt it can neither afford nor afford to repudiate.

The louder and more piercing the cries of despair, even when that despair results in half a million dead in Rwanda, the more these cries seem to encourage an instinctive reaction to raise our heads so as to close our eyes and ears. Both of us have been part of this unfolding tragedy, watching, waiting, troubled, not knowing what beast born of this superhuman suffering slouches towards Bethlehem to be born, to borrow the words of an Irish poet.

But this we must know; that none of us can insulate ourselves from so catastrophic a scale of human suffering. In the end, the cries of the infant who dies because of hunger or because a machete has slit open its stomach will penetrate the noises of the modern city and its sealed windows to say, “Am I not human, too?”

To close the circle, let our peoples, the ones formerly poor citizens and the others good patricians -- politicians, business people, educators, health workers, scientists, engineers and

technicians, sports people and entertainers, activists for a charitable relief, join hands to build on what we have achieved together and help construct a humane African world whose emergence will say a new universal order is born in which we are each our brothers' and our sisters' keeper.

And so let that outcome, as we close the chapter of two centuries and open a millennium, herald the advent of a glorious summer of a partnership for freedom, peace, prosperity and friendship.

I thank you.

Speech by Madam Speaker

Mr President, Lord Chancellor, my lords, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my duty, Mr President, formally to thank you for the address to which we have just listened. But I want to thank you for so much more. We are nearing the end of a century which has seen major horrors – two world wars – great famines – the deliberate suppression of human rights. But there have been great triumphs too. And one of the greatest belongs to you and the new South Africa.

It is not too much to say that you represent an outstanding victory of the human spirit over evil. For among the major immoralities of this century was apartheid. The system was, of course, long established in the old Union of South Africa but it was legalised and sanctified by a new government soon after the last war. Ironically, that war was fought in the hope of establishing justice and stamping out racialism – an aim that your country notably failed to achieve.

Mr President, as a result of your determination to end apartheid you spent more than a third of your life in prison, though your spirit was freer there than that of your captors outside. And when you were released, it was remarkable to see you emerge with no feeling of personal bitterness towards those who had denied you your freedom. In the end you not only held the key to your own release but also the key to establishing a new and multi – racial nation.

But, as we know, others also played their important roles. You provided the symbolism, the inspiration, but many more had to be involved before victory was possible. Above all, there were your comrades in the African National Congress. But let us not forget the white South Africans, brought up to believe in apartheid, who finally admitted that the solution for their country was a matter for you as well as them. Then there were the white South Africans who openly opposed separation long before it was safe to do so. I refer particularly to Jean Sinclair, who died shortly before you came to London. I was moved when I read your tribute to her. She was the founder of the Black Sash movement whose aim was to shame the supporters of apartheid. Its members were not revolutionaries – they were ordinary white women driven by a sense of decency and fair play.

Jean Sinclair and her sisters inspired some of us in this country. Along with some others of my generation, I stood with black sash outside South Africa House in the hope of instilling some sense of shame among government supporters inside. We were realistic. We had no great hopes of influencing their policy but it was a matter of principle. And you were one of those in our minds throughout silent vigils. I certainly never thought I would travel, as I did recently, to a free South Africa and sit in at local government meetings where members of all races would be represented in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Most of all, I never expected to stand here under the famous hammer beams of Westminster Hall, which have witnessed so many of the great events of British history, and see you honoured so rightly and so full – heartedly by both Houses of Parliament.

Tomorrow, Mr President, you will walk across Trafalgar Square to South Africa House where once you were vilified and which now you will enter as Head of State. I have no doubt that some of my old Black Sash colleagues will be among the crowds paying their tribute.

My thoughts will be with them and with you – one of the men of whom our twentieth century is justly proud.

ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

09.45 The North Door and other doors to Westminster Hall are opened to admit Members and their guests.

The Band of the Grenadier Guards begins programme of music (*page 6*).

10.40 The doors are closed. All Peers, Members of Parliament, Guests, Staff and Press to be seated.

10.42 The Queen's Body Guard of the Yeomen of the Guard and Her Majesty's Body Guard of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen at Arms enter by the North Door and proceed to the southern steps and landings. The State Trumpeters take up their positions below the Memorial Window.

10.50 A fanfare announces the processions of the Speaker of the House of Commons, The Rt. Hon. Betty Boothroyd MP, and the Lord Chancellor, The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern. The processions enter Westminster Hall by the East Door.

The assembled company stand for the processions

THE SPEAKER'S PROCESSION

Doorkeeper
(Mr T Dann)

Serjeant at Arms
(Mr P N W Jennings)

THE SPEAKER
(The Right Honourable Betty Boothroyd MP)

Speaker's Trainbearer
(Mr P L Warwick)

Speaker's Secretary
(Mr N Bevan CB)
TD)

Speaker's Chaplain
(The Reverend Canon D C Gray)

Clerk of the House of Commons
(Mr D W Limon CB)

Principal Clerk, Table Office
(Mr G Cubie)

Clerk Assistant
(Mr W R McKay CB)

THE LORD CHANCELLOR'S PROCESSION

Doorkeeper
(Mr A Dobson)

Lord Chancellor's Private Secretary
(Mr P Kennedy)

Pursebearer
(Mr R Moy)

THE LORD CHANCELLOR
(The Right Honourable The Lord Mackay of Clashfern)

Trainbearer
(Mrs N A Dobinson)

Clerk Assistant
Fourth Clerk at the Table (Judicial)

Clerk of the Parliaments
(Sir Michael Wheeler – Booth KCB)

Fourth Clerk at the Table (Judicial)
(Mr P D G Hayter LVO)

Reading Clerk
(Mr P D G Hayter LVO)

When the Speaker and the Lord Chancellor move from the lower landing and proceed up the steps the assembled company sits

11.00 THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, MR. NELSON MANDELA, the Princess Zenani Mandela – Dlamini and the Suite in attendance arrive outside St Stephens's Entrance. The President is met by the Lord Chamberlain (The Marquess of Cholmondeley), with the gentlemen Usher of the Black Rod in attendance.

11.01 Preceded by the Gentlemen Usher of the Black Rod, the Lord Great Chamberlain conducts the President towards St Stephen's Entrance, where the President is greeted by the Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. John Major MP, who presents the Leader of the House of Lords, The Rt. Hon. The Viscount Cranborne DL and the Leader of the House of Commons, The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton OBE MP.

11.02 The Lord Great Chamberlain presents the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker of the House of Commons.

During the presentations, Princess Zenani Mandela – Dlamini and the President's Suite, the Prime Minister and the Leaders of both Houses take their places in Westminster Hall.

A fanfare is sounded

The assembled company sits

11.05 Preceded by Black Rod and the Lord Great Chamberlain, the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker conduct Mr Nelson Mandela into Westminster Hall.

11.07 The band of the Grenadier Guards plays the South African National Anthem.

The assembled company sits

THE LORD CHANCELLOR welcomes the President.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA addresses both Houses of Parliament.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS thanks the President.

A fanfare is sounded

The assembled company stands

The Lord Chancellor and the Speaker conduct the President through Westminster Hall to the North Door preceded by the Gentlemen Usher of the Black Rod and the Lord Great Chamberlain, and followed by the Prime Minister the Leaders of both Houses, Princess Zenani -Madela Dlamini and the Suite in attendance.

The Leaders of both Houses, the Prime Minister, the Speaker, the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Great Chamberlain take their leave of the President outside the North door. The President, together with Princess Zenani Mandela – Dlamini and the accompanying Suite, departs from the Palace of Westminster by car.

Peers, Members of Parliament, guests and staff are requested to remain in their places until the President has left Westminster Hall and until the Gentlemen at Arms and the Yeoman of the Guard have processed out of the Hall.

