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LUNCHEON ADDRESS AT THE ASPEN INSTITUTE'S
CONGRESSIONAL CONFERENCE

'SOUTH AFRICA IN TRANSITION: EXPLORING THE US ROLE'

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It with a sense of both honour and expectancy that I address you here today on what the Inkatha Freedom Party sees as the role the United States of America can play in South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy. You are elected representatives of a Western nation where democracy and a respect for human rights are jealously guarded, and thus have much to contribute to the building of a new South Africa - a South Africa free from apartheid, statutory discrimination and injustice.

Indeed, I am hopeful that you will use your knowledge and experience of democracy to accompany my country during this process of change. There would be so much to gain if the citizens of South Africa could show the extent to which they too have the equivalent of the Great American Dream in their hearts.

We want to achieve that same respect for life and property that could well be taken for granted in America. We also want the principles of equality and freedom not only embodied at the very core of our constitution, but we also want them enshrined in the hearts and minds of the South African people.

Those of you who have made a recent visit to South Africa, will no doubt have felt inspired by the renewed hope for peace and democracy brought about by the resumption of multi-party negotiations. After an all-too long impasse, negotiations are back on track, with promise for a successful outcome. Just a few weeks ago representatives of all the main political players met for the first time in months, some for the first time ever, for discussions to plan a newly structured negotiating forum aimed at arriving at a just and democratic South Africa.

For those who appreciate the tremendous divides and tensions evident in my country, it was extremely encouraging to see that the parties present reflected virtually the entire spectrum of South African politics, including even the ultra-right Conservative Party, and the ultra-left Pan Africanist Congress. A great step forward for democracy!

Yet behind the renewed commitment to negotiations, and behind this pledge to a peaceful transition to democracy, there are still areas of concern for the true democrat which demand immediate attention if we are going to survive the tensions and difficulties which inevitably accompany fundamental changes in any society. Unfortunately, there still lurks within certain political organisations that all too familiar 'winner-takes-all', authoritarian mind-set which was so intrinsic of the government of the apartheid era.

Although a sad chapter of our history might have been closed with the State President's promise to abolish apartheid in his momentous address to Parliament in February 1990, the book of fear and intolerance has still to be shut. While the prospect for a peaceful transition to democracy was given an historically important beginning by the unbanning of key political organisations and the subsequent suspension of the ANC's armed struggle, today much of that hope has diminished, and many of our old fears have re-emerged.

Intolerance has come to pervade the very fabric of our society to challenge the dream that we have for the future. It festers not only in the hearts and minds of those who brutally murder innocent civilians, but finds an outlet through the politics which supports violence that is practised. One needs to search deeper into the dynamics of recent political events to find the kind of deceit and distrust which so often manifests itself in the murder and mayhem that we have come to expect in our townships.

Instead of the transparent and open negotiations which are so crucial to the building of trust and confidence in our country, the South African public has been subjected to a process shrouded in a veil of secrecy. Rather than consulting and encouraging the participation of all parties concerned, we are expected to tamely endorse the outcome of secret deals struck between the South African Government and the ANC/SACP Alliance.

What has been particularly disturbing is that not only have other parties been excluded from these bilateral pacts, but even the supporters of these two major political organisations have been kept in the dark. And all the time the state-controlled media warn us that there is simply no alternative, and that objections by other parties are merely the rantings of the lunatic fringe.

Such deceit has a long history. Right from the outset we were served notice of the ANC's undemocratic intentions when, having been defeated at CODESA, it withdrew from the negotiating process and took to the streets in its campaign of mass action. By rendering CODESA without a quorum, the ANC destroyed the negotiating process. The achievements that were made, and the consensus reached, was wilfully sacrificed by this organisation, irrespective of this country's needs for responsible and effective leadership. In ANC language what could not be accomplished at CODESA through negotiation could always be achieved by the bludgeoning of the opposition on the ground.

It was then that the South African Government, anxious to get the ANC back to the negotiating table, jointly agreed to certain national binding principles enshrined in The Record of Understanding, which banned the display of cultural weapons and called for the fencing in and policing of hostels. Not only were these agreements conducted in secrecy, but they directly impacted on the Zulu nation, without prior consultation and negotiations.

Just weeks before this agreement was publicised, I, in my capacity of Chief Minister of KwaZulu, personally informed the State President of our rejection of the ANC's demands. I was blatantly ignored. This was to set the stage for the undemocratic and high-handed manner in which politics has been conducted in the past months.

The South African Government has found it difficult to break away from their old habits of unilateral decision making that has plagued South African politics, and come to dog the democratic process, for decades. And true to the communist ethos, the ANC were negotiating with their enemies, whilst at the same time trying to undermine them in their own fight for political hegemony.

In our hurry to reach a peaceful settlement in this country, these and other transgressions cannot simply be swept under the carpet. They must be exposed and condemned. It is up to all of us gathered here, as true democrats, to speak out; to express our outrage, not only when parties are exposed for their dirty tricks, or when organisations retaliate in anger against the violence, but also when key organisations persist with their campaign of marginalising their opponents or threaten to withdraw from the negotiation process when they cannot get their way.

For you as visitors to our country and interested parties to the negotiation process, there rests on you a further obligation. That is to seek out the truth and to propagate that truth to all concerned, to both our local audience as well as internationally.

As lawmakers schooled in liberal-democratic values, there rests on you that abiding duty of the democrat to voice objection to any process or procedure which is unjust or undemocratic. This role more than anything else is what is needed of the United States and its representatives if South Africa is to emerge from the transition a prosperous and democratic country.

On a more fundamental level, a successful transition to democracy not only demands tolerance and respect for human life and property from the South African people themselves, but also an objectivity and impartialness on the part of all observers to the process. Favouritism and selective morality will succeed only in building up resentment and hate, and dividing our society still further.

For the United States to play a constructive role in South Africa's transition to democracy that role must also be an active one. As a superpower, and therefore as big brother, the United States could do much to assist developing countries like South Africa go through the painful democratic process. We, who are caught up in the period of radical transformation, are heavily reliant on the outside world not to look the other way or resignedly accept some outcome where democracy has been sacrificed for the sake of a speedy political settlement.

Gone are the days when the world could bury its head in the sand whilst Africa exchanged their colonial masters for repressive one-party regimes. Does not Africa bear testimony to the folly of that belief? Witness the efforts of your country and the United Nations to desperately save the Somalians from themselves. Witness the death and destruction in Ethiopia, Liberia, Sudan, Mozambique and Angola.

As your country's desperate attempts to restore peace and stability to Somalia illustrate, the problem of developing countries often end up the burden of the Western world to solve. The United States and the rest of the world cannot allow South Africa to destroy itself. South Africa is, in many ways, Africa's last chance.

As violence and anarchy have broken out in all corners of the world, more are looking to the United States for aid and relief. What our country needs, is a more effective role played by the international community as watchdogs during the process of South Africa's transition. The importance of political accountability needs to be emphasised.

The international community can scrutinise the moves made by delegates to the negotiating forum to determine whether their actions are consistent with democracy as the Western democracies know and understand it. Action against those organisations could then be taken in the form of public disapproval and condemnation by the outside world.

Much of the problem in my country rests on the inability of South Africans to put their trust in their own leaders. All too sadly it has become increasingly clear that democracy in this country means different things to different people. This term has been brandished far too glibly, and moulded to suit the interests of the various organisations concerned.

Democracy, apartheid government style, was of course telling South Africans where they could or could not live, who could or could not vote, and what could or could not be said or heard. Democracy for some liberation movements, on the other hand, was to proclaim themselves the sole and authentic representative of the people of South Africa, and then to unilaterally and undemocratically decide what is best for them.

It is these anti-liberal and undemocratic tendencies which, far from buried, are today embodied in the constitutional proposals tabled by the South African Government and the ANC.

Whereas the National Party at CODESA fought for the protection of minorities and the autonomy of the regions in any new political dispensation, the newly constituted government negotiating team has capitulated to almost every ANC demand. Together they have worked out a plan which would guarantee the control of both their parties during the period of transition. They have devised a constitutional framework that preserves the unitary state and provides no effective guarantees against any abuse of power.

In January this year, the Government and ANC publicised the details of their 5 year plan, which embodies a popularly elected Constituent Assembly, subjecting the interests of regions and parties to its control. This scheme would offer the South African Government a measure of control for a 5 year interim period - a heavy price to pay for the sacrifice of constitutional guarantees for South Africa's future.

What is particularly disconcerting is that the process envisaged by the Government is open-ended and there is ambiguity about the date by which the final constitution would be drafted. This would mean that the National Party would be entitled to a share in government, no matter what support they gathered in an interim election.

We, in the IFP, believe that democracy is, and always should remain the will of the people. Democracy is to the IFP a system of government where the people themselves are given the right to decide. Constitutional decision making must not be left to party political functionaries.

As a starting point the IFP is opposed to any constitutional process which includes any form of popularly elected interim government to act as a constitution-making body. We are convinced that interim government rule would be characterised by increased economic uncertainty and social and political unrest.

We believe that there is no reason why a set of constitutional principles for a final constitution cannot be negotiated and then be given to a body of constitutional experts to draw up a constitution for endorsement by an all-inclusive national Multi-Party Negotiation Forum, and to be accepted by the people through referendum. This would ensure finality about our constitutional future before the constitutional deadline of September 1994 - without resorting to any type of transitional government. This approach, far more than those proposed by the Government and the ANC, would serve to speed up the transition and bring about democracy far sooner.

It goes without saying that a constitutional outcome will reflect its process. Consequently, if the process is flawed then one can expect the outcome to be flawed. It is this expectation that is the driving force behind the IFP's insistence that the transitional process itself be negotiated so as to ensure a final democratic outcome.

Before we could embark on multi-party constitutional negotiation talks, we argued, a Multi-Party Conference of Review was needed to decide on the structure and process of future negotiations, allowing for the widest possible representation of political parties, traditional structures, self-governing territories and governments.

After months of prevarication the South African Government and the ANC finally agreed to a Multi-Party Planning Conference to bring parties together to charter the way forward. That took place and led to the Multi-Party Negotiation Forum. We are now poised to make meaningful strides forward. Violence remains a formidable problem however.

So utterly mindless has the violence become which is destroying the fabric of our society that even innocent children are murdered in cold blood. Children as young as 10 years old have been gunned down. The brutal murders of children going to school in the Mboyi district last month were not the first children to be murdered. The Mboyi murders were particularly brutal because they were carefully planned. The assassins lay waiting for them along a steep winding road, where the bakkie carrying these children could only travel slowly.

What kind of training do these killers receive that they have no moral conscience whatsoever? This is where the violence in South Africa has brought us, and yet the South African Government refuses to take heed of our demand for the immediate disbandment of all private armies, and the surrender of their arms caches.

The unacceptability of secret accords and agreements between the Government and the ANC about the handling of Umkhonto weSizwe is a matter of grave national concern for all South Africans. Umkhonto is a revolutionary army on active service. We have irrefutable proof of the ANC's continued use of Umkhonto. The precision with which IFP leaders are slaughtered in attacks by trained guerillas has been established beyond all reasonable doubt. How are we meant to participate in a negotiation process with a gun to our heads?

Until a mood of tolerance and acceptance has been created, through the active commitment of all organisations concerned, there is no hope of this country achieving a future democracy.

The issue of the form of state is for us a vital issue. Until we have decided on the form of state we will not be able to finalise the negotiation process. Negotiations for a federal future would be entirely different to negotiations for a unitary state. The forum would lay great stress on bottom-up negotiations and the latter could rely dominantly on top-down negotiations.

For the IFP the principles of federalism and pluralism are inviolable and, therefore, should be thrashed out at the Multi-Party Negotiation Forum. Pluralism, itself, should be viewed in the widest sense and is taken to include not only political pluralism but also social, economic and cultural pluralism which would then be manifested in the limited role of government, the acceptance of free market capitalism and the respect of the integrity of civil society.

It is because these principals are unlikely even to be considered by a Constituent Assembly that the IFP argues for them to be negotiated at the Multi-Party Negotiation Forum.

The ANC's proposal for a popularly elected Constituent Assembly would pave the way for the ANC to decide on the structure of the future constitution of this country. For us a constitution is all about curbing the power of the state, and maximising the freedom of the individual. Parties in power just do not develop constitutions which severely limit their powers.

A Constituent Assembly established to draft a new constitution would end up being vested with the powers to negate any agreements reached before it came to power. Unilateral and undemocratic decisions to discard things previously agreed to would no doubt be labelled the 'will of the people'. Once a Constituent Assembly is empowered and provided with the strength of popular suffrage, it will recognise no limitation and feel bound by no political promises made before elections.

It is no wonder the ANC want an interim government unfairly elected into place before a new constitution is drafted. They do not want to be limited with legislative restrictions on the power of the state. I say unfair elections, because elections in South Africa's present state of violence could not be fair and free. International intervention could do little to stop the tide of intimidation and brutal violence that would surround elections in a country fraught with conflict and hostility.

This is why the IFP has demanded the entrenchment of rights and civil liberties in the constitution before elections take place. Elections should not take place before the freedoms of speech, assembly and movement were guaranteed to all. We need to constitutionally entrench a voting system which will remain consistent with accepted democratic practices. A constitution must be in place to protect our citizens against the intimidation and ruthless domination we are witnessing in our townships today.

The IFP demands that the drafting of the future constitution for South Africa must involve all political parties as equals. The ruling party in a Constituent Assembly would ensure that it has advantages over all its opponents. The shape of our destinies will not be subject to the whims and vested interests of one party alone.

In KwaZulu/Natal we have achieved much in establishing the importance of regional negotiations. On December 1 last year, the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly adopted the Constitution of the State of KwaZulu/Natal. I believe that it will serve the needs, wants and aspirations of both KwaZulu and Natal.

KwaZulu/Natal is, however, but one region which has expressed a desire for greater autonomy in a new constitutional dispensation. Negotiations should determine a set of parameters and guidelines to allow the continuation of the ground-up democracy building process in all regions in South Africa.

If we are to have a prosperous and democratic South Africa then a federal constitution, such as we propose, is needed. Such a constitution would significantly improve the level of accountability and cater for the diverse needs of South Africa's population.

But while there is now renewed hope for consensus, the struggle for democracy demands that further safeguards are guaranteed. Democracy will remain unsustainable unless underpinned by economic growth. This has been the experience of other developing countries, whose transition to democracy during a state of economic stagnation failed, whilst those where the democratisation process went hand in hand with economic growth, succeeded.

Thus in addition to ensuring that South Africa comes up with a democratic constitution which embodies a respect for human rights and democracy, the United States can also, through its financial muscle, ensure that democracy remains entrenched in South African society by playing a crucial role in this country's economic development. That role must however not be confined to promoting trade between the two countries.

Whilst the United States needs many of our mineral products, we desperately need investment. What better way to place confidence in the future of this country than to encourage American corporations to invest in this country? In this regard, incentives to invest should be developed to encourage US corporations to invest in South Africa

The future facing South Africa need not be uncertain. The immediate threat that violence and economic stagnation pose to the transition process must now be tackled. We also need to deal with the threat to democracy that a winner-takes-all political future would entail. Whether South Africa can successfully transform itself from a society based on discrimination and injustice, to one where tolerance and respect for human life prevail, will depend on the triumph of the forces of liberal democracy over those of authoritarianism.

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