

TEXT OF A SPEECH
given to
THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY
on
17 MAY 1988
by
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"SOUTH AFRICA: NO EASY ANSWERS"

INTRODUCTION

"A caricature, not a living image of a multifaceted, dynamic, extremely complex and confused reality."

- That phrase is a recent criticism of Soviet reporting on South Africa. The commentator was not South African; not even Western; but a leading Soviet Academician, Boris Asoyan, now Chargé at the Soviet Embassy in Maseru. The quotation - and, above all, the identity of the author - epitomise the way in which the intellectual climate has been changing in the debate over South Africa since I last spoke here in 1985.

- There has always been a tendency to treat South Africa as if, unique among foreign policy issues, it posed a simple, clearcut moral problem, and no more. Of course apartheid is a moral problem. On her recent visit to Africa, the Prime Minister described it as an utterly repulsive and detestable system; a deep affront to human dignity and to basic human rights. We fully understand the anger and frustration of the black people faced with the humiliation of apartheid. We are appalled by the many insensitive and short-sighted actions of those who uphold and impose the system.

- But apartheid is more than a moral question. It cannot be seen in isolation from a whole range of complex and intractable political, economic and social problems, not all of which are unique to South Africa. Academician Asoyan has understood that fact. But it continues to elude some nearer home, who cling to an over-simplified and unrealistic view of the situation in South Africa and what outsiders can do to help.

- Neither the white nor the black community are monolithic. Many languages are spoken in South Africa. There are many political parties and groupings. No one group or party can rightfully claim to be exclusively representative.

These problems have no simple answer. There is no panacea.

- I do not question the sincerity and good faith of those who press for the British Government to do more towards the ending of apartheid. I recall that when the two Bothas, President PW and Foreign Minister Pik, came to Chequers in June 1984, the protesters in Whitehall included the daughter of our former Ambassador in Pretoria - Sir John Leahy - and my own son. I dare say that neither set of parents would have wished to dissuade them. Certainly we would not have dared try! But I sometimes wonder whether our more extreme critics do not deliberately misunderstand and misrepresent our policy. Our passionate desire to do something - anything - to help must be tempered by a sober assessment of what is likely to be possible, and what will actually help.

- With this in mind, I offer two propositions:

First: those responsible for making policy are duty bound to satisfy themselves that, at a minimum, their policies do not make the situation worse;

Second: no-one's good faith should be questioned because they disagree with advocates of punitive sanctions. There is nothing intrinsically moral about punitive sanctions: nothing intrinsically moral about disinvestment. Opposition to sanctions does not mean support for apartheid.

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

- British Governments of both parties have consistently opposed apartheid. When Harold MacMillan delivered his famous Wind of Change speech in Cape Town in 1960, he declared the British Government's commitment to:

"... a society which respects the right of individuals, a society in which men are given the opportunity to grow to their full stature ... a society in which individual merit alone is the criterion for a man's advancement, whether political or economic".

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- The present government endorse every word of that. As Margaret Thatcher said in Lagos in January:

"I know how strongly I would feel if I was discriminated against because of the colour of my skin".

- South Africa is not the only country where human rights are abused. It would be foolish to pretend - as far too many do - that it is the only country where there is ground for concern about racial discrimination. To do so smacks of double standards. But racial discrimination elsewhere does not justify racial discrimination in South Africa. And whatever injustices take place elsewhere, South Africa is the only instance of a society which has institutionalised racial discrimination in the constitution, at almost every level of society and government. And this in a state which proclaims itself as firmly part of Western society and upholding civilised, Christian values.

- Apartheid is neither western, nor civilised, nor Christian.

- And the practice of apartheid, as of oppression elsewhere, drives those in power with inexorable logic away from democracy to totalitarian methods. Many thousands of people - including women and children - have been detained without charge since 1986. There have been well-attested cases of torture. The overwhelming majority of the population cannot live where they choose. 73% of the population are confined by law to living on or owning only 13% of the land.

- Black people are still being evicted from their homes and forcibly relocated. There is a tremendous disparity in the way government funds are allocated as between blacks and whites - particularly in health and education.

- The adoption of apartheid was a terrible and tragic mistake. I believe that many thinking white South Africans know this in their heart of hearts. South Africa has tremendous potential to work together with other African countries and with the West for the economic development of the continent. South Africa could be a

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leader in Africa. It is only the failure to end apartheid which stands in the way.

- The problem of South Africa is not one of decolonisation. South Africa is a sovereign, independent country. The great majority of the white population and their forebears have lived in South Africa for generations. President Chissano of Mozambique said last year:

"The Afrikaner is an African as I am. We both belong here. There is no other place to which we can run."

- No outsider has the key to unlock a settlement. Nobody can look to Britain to solve the problem as though it were a second Rhodesia. We cannot deal with it as we did with those countries for which we had responsibility, and at least some of the power that went with that responsibility.

- Nor is South Africa likely to be pushed over the brink into revolution or imminent cataclysm. To overthrow the system by violence, if it were possible at all, would create a wasteland. It would in any case require resources which are simply not available to its opponents. But those who believe that violence has a part to play in ending apartheid should know our policy, as should those who seek to sustain apartheid by violence. We condemn the use of violence from whatever quarter in South Africa. Every bomb in a white supermarket; every raid against a neighbouring country; every necklace killing; every turn of the repressive screw: all these set back the process of reconciliation.

FORCES FOR CHANGE

- I believe that industrial interdependence in the modern South African economy, combined with demographic trends, will make apartheid increasingly unworkable. Projected population figures must make sombre reading for those who are still committed to white supremacy. In 1980, those classified as African blacks comprised 72.4% of the total, and the whites 15.7% - say four and a half to one. On a reasonable birthrate projection the ratio of black to white in ten years' time will be 8 to 1. The means of life, and

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basic economic and social rights, cannot be provided for numbers like these within the straitjacket of apartheid.

- Economically, apartheid is the antithesis of liberal economic thinking which is sweeping the world. Apartheid is not only wrong, it is wasteful. It requires a vast bureaucracy to sustain it. No less than 60% of the working Afrikaner population are in the public sector.

- Economic forces have already begun to tell. There has been a welcome shift in resources in favour of blacks. Almost all job reservation on a racial basis has now ended. The lifting of restrictions on small black business has enabled, for example, the black taxi owners' association to become a major economic force in South Africa. Average black per capita income has doubled in the past 15 years - during the same period white incomes have hardly increased at all in real terms. British and other European as well as American companies have played a major part in improving the terms of service of their black employees. Indigenous firms such as Anglo-American have also introduced imaginative share ownership schemes for their black employees.

- In 1976 there were some 126,000 black trades unionists. Their 26 unions had no legal status. In 1979/80 the unions were legalised. They are now estimated to have over one million members. In a society where the great majority of the population are wholly excluded from the democratic process, union membership is almost the only route for peaceful political expression. There is a clear parallel with Solidarity in Poland.

- The gradually growing economic power of the urban black community is welcome - both because it is necessary if economic catastrophe is to be avoided, and because the artificial barriers of apartheid can be weakened by the pressures of the market-place, and of economic growth. Economic decline on the other hand is a sure recipe for conflict.

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- There are also encouraging signs of change at the personal level. Many South Africans of all races are working for peaceful change. Some of them are well known: IDASA; the PFP; liberals within the Afrikaner community; Black Sash; the New Democratic Movement; the Independent Party; the proponents of the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba. But there are other unsung pioneers in all walks of life. The churches and universities have a crucial role to play. Action to build the future has started. The South African Conservative Party dream of a complete restoration of pure apartheid is not only physically impossible, but also sheer economic nonsense. Too many people in South Africa know this fundamental truth for the clock to be turned back, however hard the political Luddites on the far right of South African politics may try. The pity is that many of the best and brightest white South Africans, especially the young, are voting against apartheid with their feet by emigrating.

SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT REFORM

- F W de Klerk said recently that white security was

"tied to the extension of black rights and could not be built on their denial".

- He has urged Afrikaners to

"break with raw emotion, and impracticable and negative policies".

- President Botha himself has said that apartheid is an outmoded concept.

- And the South African Government have introduced a number of reform measures which we have been glad to welcome. These include:

- abolition of the pass laws, under which half a million people were arrested each year.

- the scrapping of influx control.

- the abolition of much "petty apartheid" such as the Immorality and Mixed Marriages Acts.

- recognition of the black trades unions.

- the granting of freehold property rights to blacks.
- increased spending on black education.

- These were brave initiatives, born of a genuine desire to break with aspects of South Africa's past. They have been carried through in the face of serious opposition. To dismiss them out of hand is not only unjust but also unwise. We should not give encouragement to those in South Africa who say that the South African Government will never get credit for anything it does. But no-one would claim that these changes go anywhere near what is needed. Basic pillars of the apartheid system such as oppressive security legislation, the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act remain in force.

- And there have been steps in the wrong direction as well. The continuing State of Emergency, harsh press restrictions, and on 24 February the banning from activity of a number of peaceful extra-parliamentary organisations and restrictions upon black trades unions. They have further narrowed the peaceful options for change open to the black community. They were steps towards, not away from the precipice of conflict.

- So I welcome President Botha's speech of 21 April. It appeared to mark a resumption of the reform process - a courageous turning away from appeasement of the far right. It also represents an overdue challenge to right wing orthodoxy on the involvement of blacks in central government. Only time will tell whether what is on offer is enough to tempt black leaders with real support to come forward. They will want to know what the speech means for the central question of black political rights. So will we. So will the rest of the world. And of course, the repressive measures of 24 February remain in force.

As in South Africa, so in the region. We welcome the recent steps taken by South Africa and its neighbours to ease tension in the region. We strongly support efforts by Mozambique and South Africa to settle their differences and cooperate within the framework and spirit of the Nkomati Accord. We also warmly welcome the recent US-led talks here in London, which marked a step forward in the search for peace in Angola and independence for Namibia, in

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accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 435.

MESSAGES

- So what can realistically be done in South Africa?

- I firmly believe that all those involved, white and black South Africans and outsiders too, need to absorb and act on the lessons of recent years.

- The first and most important message is that change is inevitable. South Africa cannot be sustained under apartheid - demographically, economically, politically. But change will not be rapid. Short timescales and artificial deadlines only raise and then dash false hopes. They harden differences. We have to take a longer view. We do not know how long. Not knowing, we must expect our patience to be stretched almost to breaking point. We are dealing with deeply entrenched attitudes. Changing them will take time. It will be an uneven process. There will be setbacks. But it is the only basis on which we can proceed.

- The task is huge - but it has begun. Many whites, including Afrikaners, already question the premises of apartheid. The fact that apartheid is under scrutiny, and under threat, is an important reason for the upsurge in support for the extreme right of Afrikaner politics.

- There is another message common to both black and white in South Africa. Avoid intellectual or political straitjackets. Be ready to think the unthinkable. Negotiation, when it comes, will not take place to rigid preset formulae. Catch phrases such as "transfer of power" and coded language such as "group rights" will have to be set aside. Compromise means give as well as take.

..... FOR WHITES

- I believe there are messages specifically for whites in South Africa: for the South African Government; for the National Party; for the Conservative Party.

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- It is not a choice between change or no change. No change is simply not an option. Change is coming, and the sooner the white community as a whole can face that fact the better the chance of negotiating a settlement in which their concerns will be met. As the Afrikaner Broederbond acknowledged in their strategy paper last year: "The greatest risk is in not taking any risks".

- Nor is it enough to say, as one South African Minister recently did, that "the pace of reform is a process that determines its own momentum". The pace of change in the white community is badly out of phase with black needs and aspirations. The South African Government have to take the lead. Dialogue cannot take place against a backcloth of violence and repression.

- Some South Africans argue that white rule is an essential bulwark against communism. They could not be more wrong: on the contrary, attempts to perpetuate apartheid will be the best recruiting sergeant for communism and extremism. Every government has the right - indeed the duty - to maintain public order. But extremism on one side breeds extremism on the other. Repression breeds violence, and sets back prospects for negotiation.

- It is not for us to prescribe the constitutional shape or form of the eventual system of government of South Africa. But we can say this. It must be non-racial and representative. And the sooner white South Africans accept the need for negotiation and change, the greater the odds that change will be peaceful and democratic.

- If the South African Government will not negotiate with the present generation of genuine black South African leaders - and even leading moderates such as Chief Buthelezi and Chief Mabuza have made clear they will not negotiate so long as Mr Mandela is in prison and the ANC remain banned - they will find succeeding generations more radical and more unpalatable to them.

- The problem is not just political. Over-direction of the economy thwarts individual enterprise, and prevents people - especially black people - building a stake in society, and thus in peaceful change and avoidance of conflict. We welcome the start the South

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African Government have recently made in addressing this problem.

- And crucially, without an end to apartheid, the South African economy can never hope to attract the foreign investment which is required if it is to achieve the growth rate needed to keep pace with population growth. As it is, bank lending has been severely curtailed and there is little confidence for capital investment. A clear commitment to ending apartheid, and solid progress towards that goal, are preconditions for investment and development.

- The agenda of reform to which the South African Government needs to address itself is clear enough:

- lifting the state of emergency and associated measures such as press censorship;
- revoking the repressive measures imposed in February;
- releasing Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and those detained without charge;
- unbanning the ANC and other political parties, and allowing a resumption of normal political activity;
- ending attempts to destabilise neighbouring countries.
- dismantling apartheid legislation, beginning with the Group Areas Act.

.... FOR BLACKS

- To black South Africans, I say:

We respect the dignity and persistence of those working peacefully, against the odds, for justice. We do understand and we support your crusade. And we firmly believe that one day it will succeed.

- But, as blacks plainly know through bitter experience, change will not be achieved overnight. Apartheid is not on the point of collapse. Indeed in purely economic terms, blacks in employment in South Africa are actually better off than many black people in other parts of Africa. There is no benefit in doing things which set back the process of change, or tip the balance further into hostile rejection. Blacks should acknowledge the pressures on those whites

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who are working for change, and the real dangers of an extreme right-wing backlash. If the extreme right wing parties in South Africa gained power, they would use every means to ensure that they stayed there - and they could hold on to power for a long time. That prospect would be truly terrible.

- When black frustration spills over into violence, this does not reinforce pressure in the white community to scrap apartheid. On the contrary, it actually strengthens the opponents of change. It strengthens the likes of Eugene Terre'Blanche and the AWB. And continuing communal violence between blacks will have the same effect.

- Intimidation too devalues the cause of black South Africans. Those who threaten violence against their political opponents should be aware of the damage they do to their cause elsewhere in the world. The practice of necklacing and subsequent gloating over it did immense harm.

- Violence is self-defeating. Violence is wrong. Bombing and burning are murder. The logical conclusion of those who advocate violence is civil war leading to ruin, death and destruction. Violence is the enemy of reconciliation. The path of non-violence which the ANC trod for so many long years is still the right path, and we urge them to return to it.

- When Martin Luther King accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 he said:

"Non-violence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence."

- As he said on another occasion "the means represent the end in the making".

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- Opposition groups need to formulate sensible and viable economic and social programmes. The white community will be more ready to countenance political change if they are convinced that a non-racial South African Government would avoid the Marxist muddles which are taking so long to rectify elsewhere in Africa.

- And if South Africa is to have a truly non-racial future, blacks will need to show a forbearance which has not been shown to them. The aim must be to ensure the political and human rights of all South Africans. It is not a simple question of transfer of power. Simply installing a black government in Pretoria - if that were possible - would not usher in the millennium. As Mac Maharaj of the ANC has said:

"Our struggle is not to replace white masters with black masters."

- My most important messages to the black community and black organisations are these:

- turn away from prescriptions which would increase polarisation or leave the land an economic desert.

- reject violence and terrorism: they are a counsel of despair.

- do not lose hope. Change must come. Change will come.

OUTSIDERS: THE UK ROLE

- The role for outsiders is certainly not in punitive action such as economic sanctions.

- A myth - fostered, I regret to say, by some elements in the South African Government - has arisen among many who disagree with our position on sanctions. This is that opposition to punitive sanctions amounts to support for apartheid, and that the only way to express opposition to apartheid is through support for sanctions. Whichever way you put it, the equation is false.

- Supporters of sanctions have almost come to see them as an end in themselves. A slogan, a touchstone of faith. The objective is not sanctions, but the peaceful elimination of apartheid, and its replacement by a non-racial, representative system of government. Sanctions are one of the means that some people have thought would help achieve that end. Whatever they are, they are not a litmus test of virtue.

- Our own view is that the implementation by some countries of punitive sanctions has actually hardened attitudes in South Africa. At the 6 May 1987 whites-only election, many of the familiar reflexes to sanctions were in evidence, and they strengthened the right. The fact that the South African Government continually need to emphasise to the South African public and others their defiance of the world is in part a result of sanctions pressure.

- Punitive sanctions would be ineffective, in bringing an end to apartheid. They would make for economic stagnation in South Africa. But not for economic collapse. They would force white South Africans back into the laager, to retreat into self-reliance. This would not help peaceful change. Some prominent black South African leaders call for sanctions: others oppose them. But whatever the balance, it is certain that ordinary black South Africans would suffer from sanctions.

- Some critics of the Government's policy claim that our opposition to punitive sanctions is immoral. But I cannot for the life of me see what is moral about throwing large numbers of people out of work and causing hardship and suffering to hundreds of thousands of black South Africans and people in the neighbouring countries -

FLS from imposing sanctions: but one could not exempt them from suffering the consequences of sanctions. South African retaliation could condemn the region to economic warfare which white South Africa is by far the best equipped to survive. The costs to black Africa, and to black South Africans, would be far greater than the rest of the world could ever offer in compensation.

- In short, punitive sanctions would not hasten peaceful change. They would delay it; sharpen differences; and increase violence. They could do nothing to hasten the end of apartheid.

- People ask, why then have we agreed to introduce selective restrictive measures against South Africa? But these measures are not punitive economic sanctions. They are not intended to destroy the South African economy. They are intended to bring home to the South African Government the political message that change is urgently needed. They are one element of a broader policy.

- Unlike many proponents of sanctions, we have large economic interests in South and Southern Africa. Of course punitive sanctions would damage those interests. Of course we do not want to sacrifice them in pursuit of a policy which we believe to be profoundly mistaken.

- In the end our economic interests in South Africa -like everyone else's - are best secured by peaceful change. If we thought comprehensive mandatory sanctions would bring rapid results, would catalyse peaceful change, then the best thing we could do would be to adopt them tomorrow.

DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION

- The power of outsiders to influence events in South Africa is limited. They have to find courses of action which will be effective. It is not easy. We know how difficult it has proved to forge multi-racial and multi-cultural societies elsewhere. Few countries have genuinely succeeded. The lead for change must come from inside South Africa. We can only give advice and encouragement. And the best form our help can take is pressure and persuasion, doing all we can to bring South Africans to start a genuine dialogue between the communities. That means persuading the South African Government. It also means persuading the ANC, PAC and others in opposition. There must be a role here for the black African countries close to them.
- We have to keep contacts open with all sides. There can be no purpose in severing links with the whites or with the South African Government. We will not do that. The ANC themselves have shown their readiness to talk to the whites of IDASA: and quite right too if white and black are ever to live together in harmony. We shall equally keep open our channels of communication with all the representative black opposition organisations. The ANC are one of those organisations. We acknowledge their role in any negotiation and we shall maintain contact with them as well as with others.
- Building bridges may be less spectacular than slapping on punitive sanctions. But the courses of action open to us are different from those of many of the most vocal advocates of sanctions and the most virulent critics of our policy. Often they have no significant links in South Africa or the region, and less scope for advocacy and leverage. The gesture is easy and painless for them, and for South

- We believe the objective of bringing about negotiation remains attainable. Some may argue that the time for negotiation has not yet come. They may well be right. But the time will come. Our policy remains, and will remain, to urge the peaceful, negotiated, end of apartheid. To do otherwise would be irresponsible. Our links with South Africa also give us some leverage. Our policy is designed to maximise that leverage. What we say to our critics is this: we all share the same objective. So let us all work together in the ways we each can.

- I can only speak for Britain. And I believe that our strategy is valid for Britain. It is a realistic strategy designed to achieve as much as we can, but acknowledging the limits of our influence.

OUR POLICY

- We are implacably opposed to apartheid. We want to see its total abolition.

- We shall continue to denounce violence, whoever its perpetrator: terrorism in particular is a crime, and self-defeating. We shall continue to use all the advocacy at our disposal to persuade the South African Government of the need for fundamental political change. We shall press them to move forward again with a programme of genuine political reform. We shall make frequent representations to bring home our opposition to repression and to abuses of human rights.

- We give practical assistance to black South Africans. We are committing some £3 million each year to European Community schemes

restrict the flow of aid funds from abroad. I hope that the South African Government will see sense on this issue.

- We shall also maintain our considerable programmes of economic and security assistance to South Africa's neighbours. We shall give £103 million in the period 1986-1990, as our share of commitments to the region by the Sixth European Development Fund. Since the formation of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference in 1980, we have spent £819 million in bilateral aid to the countries of the region and have committed £45 million to projects of the SADCC organisation itself. Our objective is to help ensure the survival of the neighbouring countries, and to reduce their dependence on South Africa. Support for the neighbours sends a strong message to the South African Government. Again, they know where we stand. We call on others to join us.
- The economic independence of the neighbouring states depends on their ability to defend the security of their transport routes to the Indian Ocean and ensure their internal security. We continue to provide military training to the Zimbabwean Army, and are training company-sized units of the Mozambican Army at Nyanga.
- We carry out scrupulously our restrictive measures against South Africa. We shall maintain them. But we have also said that we stand ready, with our Commonwealth and EC Partners, to review and possibly to rescind those measures if the South African Government take the steps we have called for.
- We are active in our contacts throughout South African society. We shall put across the frank message of this speech to all sides.

- We shall maintain contact with the business community in South Africa - both foreign and indigenous. They have an important role to play. We shall continue to urge those British companies involved in South Africa to pursue employment practices designed to eradicate apartheid in the workplace. The withdrawal - through disinvestment - of foreign employers from the South African labour market has done nothing to hasten the end of apartheid. It has often led to the ending of liberal employment practices and a setback for the cause of emancipation.

- We shall maintain close contact with the Commonwealth, the Twelve and our other Western partners. We shall work for coordinated and effective international action. We shall continue to examine the options for constructive and effective international mediation against the time when an opportunity may recur.

- We continue to support the negotiating concept first put forward by the Eminent Persons Group. It is the most promising working formula so far identified to get dialogue started in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides. That, of course, means that we shall continue to press for the ending of the State of Emergency, the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and an end to the ban on the ANC and other political parties.

- We shall continue our efforts to support the stability and security of South Africa's neighbours. We condemn attempts by the South African Government to undermine them. That is our message. We shall press it home. Our contacts will continue in private and in public. Our Embassy in South Africa; our Mission at the United Nations; and Ministers and officials in London, are actively and continually engaged

Africa.

- As I say, change in South Africa is inevitable. If justice is to be achieved, if South Africa is to remain a modern economy and to retain its prosperity, apartheid must go. The economic cake will have to be shared more equitably. The majority must be granted full political rights. Their dignity as human beings must be respected. They will never settle for less - nor should they.
- The path will be slow and difficult. There is hope, but we all need to be realistic. Whites must have the courage to see where their long term interests lie. Blacks must temper their understandable anger and frustration. Both sides must renounce violence. Outsiders must work together for what is attainable in a step by step progression towards peace and justice.
- The whole world wants to see a just society established in a South Africa which will be able with pride to assume a respected place within the international community. We have great admiration for those South Africans on all sides who keep working for a peaceful solution. We are ready to help where we can. But it is the people of South Africa itself, and their leaders, who must demonstrate the vision and the will to move forward.

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