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African National Congress

(south africa)

Office of the President

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

PNP FOUNDERS DAY BANQUET

July 4, 1987

Comrade Michael Manley, President of the People's National

Party of Jamaica

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Comrade P.J. Patterson, Chairman of the People's National Party

Comrade Paul Robertson, General Secretary of the People's National Party

Comrade Members of the Executive Committee of the People's National Party

Comrade Members of the National Executive Council of the People's National Party

Constituency Representatives and Councillors of the People's National Party

Distinguished Guests

Comrades and Friends

On behalf of the African National Congress, the National Executive Committee, our militants and activists; on behalf of our People's Army - Umkhonto We Sizwe - and its combatants; in the name of our workers and all the men, women and children engaged in struggle against apartheid and for a free united and democratic South Africa,

I would like to convey the warmest fraternal greetings to all of you.

In particular, I greet you on behalf of those of our finest patriots and leaders, such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu,

Govan Mbeki and Ahmed Kathrada, who, together with multitudes of others, have been forced to continue the struggle from within the prisons of apartheid.

We consider it a singular honour to the African National Congress and your struggling brothers and sisters in South Africa that we have been invited to participate in this year's Founder's Day Banquet. We are mindful of the fact that this year you are celebrating the 25th Anniversary of your Independence. This makes our presence here all that more moving and memorable to us. It provides us with the opportunity to express our gratitude to successive governments and the people of Jamaica as a whole, for the consistent support we have received over these many years. We are appreciative of the assistance of the government in facilitating this visit and the welcome extended to us.

We would also like to convey our heartfelt gratitude to you, Comrade President Manley, to the PNP, and to the people of this country for the warmth with which you have received us.

We are particularly happy that we have been asked to speak on this occasion named after that outstanding National Hero, your Father of Independence, Norman Washington Manley, a person whose legacy we hold in high esteem.

The passing away of Edna Manley, wife, colleague and companion of Norman Washington Manley is still fresh in our memory.

We remember her as a great sculptress who through the plastic image gave vivid artistic articulation to that vision of a truly free Jamaica in a truly free world, to whose realisation Norman Manley dedicated his entire life. We draw consolation from the fact that she bequeathed to us the body of her distinguished work, a palpable and poignant testament of her commitment to her husband's vision.

We also mourn, with no less intense a sense of tragic loss, the untimely death of H.E. Errol Barrow, the erstwhile Prime Minister of Barbados, a strikingly independent political voice, a dear friend of all oppressed and exploited peoples, a friend of President Michael Manley, the PNP and the people of Jamaica.

From this rostrum we wish to address our sincerest condolences to the Government and the People of Barbados. We wish also to congratulate his successor H.E. Erskine Sandiford on his assumption of the Premiership of Barbados. We wish him all the success in his office.

Our presence in Jamaica also gives us an opportunity to make our acquaintance with and to salute such National Heroes as Nanny, Tacky, Sam Sharpe, Paul Bogle, Marcus Garvey, Alexander Bustamante, and, of course, Norman Manley. We make this tribute not to satisfy any formal requirement of protocol, but because we truly feel that these outstanding fighters belong to us as well.

They are of that detachment of men and women whose example reaches beyond national boundaries and crosses the vast oceans to inspire all who are oppressed, to give hope and encouragement to those who are struggling.

And what is it that specifically ties them to us,

Comrade President? It is the vision that instructed their lives, that the voiceless can and must have a voice; that the downtrodden and the despised should have an unfettered right to shape their lives; that none has a prerogative to set himself up as a God presiding over the destinies of others. These National Heroes of Jamaica are tied to us because from these shores thousands of miles from our own, they stood up and even perished, to assert our own entitlement to a democratic future.

Comrades and Friends,

A strange contradiction besets the world of international politics. Those who strut the globe posing as the champions of democracy entertain the greatest dread of a truly democratic universe. Those who it is claimed are developing, and still but mere toddlers because they do not have a century or more of experience of democratic

practice, have become the standard-bearers of the same democratic practice of which they are supposed to know so little, and to despise.

As you know, the situation in our country is not dissimilar from what obtained in Jamaica 120 years ago. At that time, this country's Parliament, the Constituent Assembly, was elected by about 1790 voters out of a population of over 440,000! And, as in South Africa today, those who had the exclusive right to vote and could be elected to positions of power, were the white minority.

In South Africa, this criminal charade still parades itself as democracy. It claims a place for itself within that cauldron of history, values and experiences which is sometimes described as western civilisation. The apartheid system in South Africa is perhaps correct so to describe itself, because it represents the perpetuation of the system of colonial domination under which you and all oppressed peoples in other parts of the world suffered for so long.

It is the direct successor and an inheritor of elements of the age of slavery which brought so many of our ancestors to Jamaica. Apartheid is also a particularly pernicious expression of the brutalities of the practice of the exploitation of man by man, of social systems whose motor of development is fired by the objective of the enrichment of the few at the expense of the majority.

All these, Comrade President, are very much part of what is proudly called western civilisation - slavery, white minority rule, colonial domination, and the super-exploitation of the oppressed.

It is firmly within this historical experience that the apartheid system belongs. It is itself bathed in the blood of the oppressed no less than its Jamaican counterpart in western civilisation was covered with the blood of those that fell during the early slave rebellions, the Maroon Wars, the 1831 Emancipation uprising led by Sam Sharpe, the Morant Bay Rebellion and the Workers Rebellion of 1938.

If the apartheid regime is right to assert that its ancestry derives from the system of imperialist and colonial domination, and from slavery and feudalism, we on the other hand have a right and a duty to claim as our progenitors all those who have risen against oppression, domination and reaction. These too are very much part of all civilisation, including that which describes itself as western.

We refer here as much to the French and the American Revolutions as to the historic revolution which liberated Haiti at the beginning of the last century. We are talking of the struggles led by such outstanding figures as Sam Sharpe, Paul Bogle, Jose Marti and Simon Bolivar. These, no less than the revolutions which liberated Cuba and Nicaragua from the Batista and the Somoza dictatorships respectively, are part of the human process by which injustice is abolished and more equitable social systems brought into being.

The contradiction to which we referred earlier arises from the fact that those who claim to represent democracy in world politics are intent to define democracy in a manner that serves the interests of the high and mighty, in a way that promotes the cause of a new oligarchy. To achieve this objective, the representatives, theoreticians and publicists of this new oligarchy will stop at nothing, including the denial of their own history.

Contrary to these, we uphold it as an undeniable historical truth that so-called western democracy owes everything that is progressive within it to revolution. And more, it owes many of its claimed achievements these 200 years, to the actions of the oppressed and the enslaved who fought and sacrificed in order to defend and maintain democratic principles and to expand the horizons of humankind.

7.

It is true that the abolition of slavery was enacted by a British Parliament, but it was the refusal of many thousands to acquiesce in their own slavery that created the imperative for the legislation. It is a distortion of the truth to speak of Britain, France, Spain or Portugal "granting" independence to this or that colony. Independence was achieved because the colonised struggled and made colonial rule untenable, and even where there were no formal wars of liberation, many died in the process.

The descendants of those who brought into being the Magna Carta, those who rallied to the cry of "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternit  ", and those who signed the Declaration of Independence, today demand recognition of the fact that they were prepared to die in order to fight fascism, to defend peoples against foreign occupation and destroy the scourge of Nazi racism. Yet we should not forget, that they were not alone in that war. In addition to the millions in the socialist countries who died, many hundreds of thousands of young black people from the Caribbean, Africa and Asia also sacrificed their lives for these objectives.

Nor; when these events are cited in support of the West's democratic credentials, can we fail to note that freedoms have been defended and racism challenged on a very selective basis. These same descendants have not hesitated to deny freedom to others, to occupy their countries and to condone and give active support to racists when it suited their purpose. Wars have been fought by the western powers to maintain colonial rule and in support of dictators and undemocratic governments.

In our own time, in this region, and in Southern Africa, we see this contradiction being spelt out. The government of the United States, which holds in trust the freedoms and independence its citizens fought for in their War of Independence and the Anti-Fascist War, now uses its political and economic power to try and maintain this area in neo-colonial subjugation, and, miles across the Atlantic in Southern Africa, it attempts to do the same.

It is not coincidental that the profits extorted from the sale of arms to Iran, are now revealed as having gone to those intent on overthrowing legitimate, popular and sovereign governments in Managua as well as in Luanda - governments that hold in trust for their peoples the freedom and independence they were forced to fight for at great sacrifice.

The Reagan Administration has supported the Unita Bandits both covertly and with public funding and the supply of sophisticated arms. It condones and encourages South African aggression and the continued occupation of parts of Angola and all of Namibia. The responsibility for having prevented the Namibian people from achieving their independence must be laid firmly at Washington's door. The U.S. government has intervened not to secure South African compliance with U.N. Resolution 435, but to support Pretoria's intransigence by offering a totally unrelated linkage with the presence of Cuban troops who are assisting the Angolan government to defend the country against South African aggression.

Pretoria's illegal actions, its state terrorism in the region, the attacks on neighbouring states, the murder of Zambians, Zimbabweans, Swazis, Batswana and Mocambicans, its open warfare against the black people the trade unions and other democratic organisations of our country, and the military occupation of our townships receive no more than the formality of a mild rebuke.

For here, as in the Caribbean, western policy is less concerned with promoting democracy, removing alien occupation, or destroying racism, than with a profitable return on the investments of multinationals, and with a crusade against communists perceived or imagined.

10.

The sheer duplicity is no where better illustrated than in a recent U.S. Senate Resolution requiring as a precondition for aid that the Frontline States who are the victims of South African aggression, act against the ANC if it does not renounce the so-called practices of terrorism. This demand is almost identical with that made by Pretoria.

And so, our peoples, in the Caribbean, and in Southern Africa share not only our heroes and leaders, who are standard-bearers in our common struggle, but also a common threat which challenges the inalienable right of peoples to choose their governments, and of popular governments to defend their independence and advance the economic development and social emancipation of their people.

Norman Washington Manley said: "Out of the past fire and suffering and neglect, the human spirit has survived - patient and strong, quick to anger, quick to love, and a deep capacity for steadiness under stress and for joy in all things that make life good and blessed" - an observation made in different circumstances, but valid in the South Africa of today, where daily our people are demonstrating their capacity for "steadiness under stress". The reimposition of a state of emergency last month, the third in two years, testifies that despite unparalleled repression, cloaked behind a curtain of censorship, the spirit of resistance in the South African people flourishes with growing vigour.

The struggle continues for the attainment of our historic objective. Our people are ready and willing to pay the highest price

- already over the past two and a half years, close on 3,000 have laid down their lives^ J hundreds o(- chtldrctn .

The struggle will continue for, we know from our life's experience that violence and destruction are inherent in the apartheid system. So long as it is allowed to exist, so long will racism, repression and exploitation, and death, be the lot of the South African people; and so long too will our neighbours be subjected to political and economic destabilisation, subversion and open aggression. While apartheid persists, no one will know peace.

For years, nay for nigh on three decades, we have been told to be patient by western governments who claim to have perceived signs of the regime's intention to end apartheid. We have been urged to abandon our armed struggle and to seek a negotiated settlement.

There is no logic in the expectation that the apartheid regime will destroy itself. The recent white elections and the events thereafter confirm our long held view, and that of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, that Botha is interested neither in negotiations nor in ending apartheid. Rather, he seeks to engage Black nominees, so-called moderate African leaders, in the process of working out the best structures and mechanisms to attain his objective of involving Blacks in the joint administration of white domination. That's what he means by reform.

For us, negotiations are not, and can never be, an end in themselves. They must be based on the recognition by both parties of a common objective: namely the establishment of a non-racial, democratic, united South Africa - a society based on the very principles so often proclaimed but not practiced by the Western powers.

Should not all those concerned with democratic solutions address themselves to the regime that denies their validity in what it describes as a unique South African situation? If the stated preference for a negotiated solution is to be taken as more than a pious platitude, where are the measures which will create a situation in which the regime will be compelled to negotiate?

Now that the continued links with Pretoria, the influence that friendship with the regime was supposed to buy, and Western diplomatic persuasion have all proved to no avail, should not these governments learn from experience? Is it not overdue - long overdue

- that they cease shielding the Botha regime from international action? Is it not time that they address Pretoria now in the only language that is likely to be effective? Is it too much to hope, even at this late stage: that when the U.S. Congress re-examines its sanctions legislation, when the Commonwealth Summit once more considers apartheid in South Africa and the protection of Commonwealth

and other countries in Southern Africa from Pretoria's aggression,

13.

and when the Security Council next addresses itself to the questions of Namibia and South Africa, - is it too much to hope that the voices from the White House, from Downing Street, the Elysee Palace, and the Bonn Chancellory will join the overwhelming majority of the international community and impose comprehensive mandatory sanctions against the apartheid regime?

Perhaps it is - but we are not deterred. Norman Washington Manley's perceptive observation that "men stand strongest when their own master" explains the resolution of the oppressed, the resiliance of their struggle and confirms the certainty that regardless of the odds we will triumph.

Comrade President,

Our presence here tonight[^] is a recognition of the fact that the people of Jamaica are united and make common cause with the people of South Africa in the quest for a free prosperous and peaceful future for all humankind.

14.

Making allowance for the differences dictated by the specifics of our respective situations, our world views intersect in a significant number of ways. We have followed with admiration your input into the campaign of the peoples of the developing countries for a New International Economic Order and in calling for the countries of the South to give collective consideration to their problems and find solutions in self-reliance and cooperation. We hold in common with you, Comrade President, and with the PNP, a number of fundamental convictions, namely: that freedom and oppression cannot co-exist, for the presence of the latter will inevitably imperil freedom itself; that the freedom of all humanity is the essential pre-condition for the progress of all humankind; and, that the best, because the most enlightened, interests of the exploiters and oppressors lies in the eradication of the practices of exploitation and oppression in all their forms.

Corroboration of these insights is furnished by the experience of the nations of Southern Africa. The racist regime has, over the past decade, sought to penalise neighbouring states who support our struggle by subjecting them to military attacks and invasion, political subversion, as well as economic blackmail and sabotage. This has caused damage to the infrastructure of the Southern African states amounting to over Fifteen Billion US Dollars in a decade. It has led to the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians and swelled the number of displaced persons in the region.

The situation which continues to deteriorate, has in fact become so grave that support for these countries has become an imperative component of any effective support for the liberation struggles of the peoples of Namibia and South Africa. On the other hand, all the resources Pretoria has expended as well as the time it has devoted to wreaking death and destruction has not brought it any closer to resolving its domestic crisis. On the contrary, as I have already indicated, the challenge to the regime's survival grows more pressing as the struggle continues to escalate.

In a historical sense also, Comrade President, our presence here represents an act of coming home. Though the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean separates us, never for a moment have we ever allowed the accident of geography to blind us to the strength of the historic bonds which tie us to a common circumstantial origin as well as bind us to a common fate.

The 15th Century witnessed the onset of European expansion and colonisation. European historiography has euphemistically named it the Era of European Exploration and Discovery. Of course, we know better. That regrettable development directly impacted on our country in 1652, interrupting our independent history. It is still with us in the form of apartheid. Between 1650 and 1870, it also seized over 750,000 Africans from our continent and forcibly relocated them as slaves on this island of Jamaica. These uprooted Africans constitute the most demographically significant ancestry of the people of modern Jamaica.

16.

We all began our exodus from European expansion and colonisation, oppression and exploitation at almost the same time and on the same continent, Africa. We have all gone a long way, covering different distances according to our particular circumstances, moving in the same strategic direction towards the recovery of our right to determine our destiny and make our own history. For all of us, along with the other fraternal peoples of the Third World, though the "promised land" is a continually approaching prospect, it remains nevertheless in the future.

In leaving their continent against their will, these pioneering forbears of the Jamaican people did not divorce themselves from the tragic consequences of the European scourge that had befallen Africa. On the contrary, they bequeathed to their descendants an unquenchable urge to struggle for freedom, which because of its origins in dispossession and slavery would be considered as inseparable from the just struggles of the African people and all oppressed and exploited peoples everywhere.

It is therefore no accident that when the spirit of freedom moved Marcus Garvey, that great Jamaican patriot and illustrious son of Africa, he turned his eyes towards Africa, believing that the liberation of the Black person in the diaspora would have to go hand in hand with the decolonisation of the Mother Continent.

Marcus Garvey, whose centenary we mark next month, made his appearance at the very peak of colonial power, when it was anathema to even entertain the thought of Black liberation. It is not surprising that the powers of the time spared no effort in hounding him into the ground. However, even as his time ended, he was not a defeated man, for his vision of freedom was intact, and because it had its roots in the distinguished and rich Jamaican tradition of struggle, it endured. In the wake of the passing of Marcus Garvey, other stalwarts would emerge to pick up the banner of freedom. In this panoply we count the likes of A.G.S. Coombs,

Sir William Grant and Alexander Bustamante.

In 1938, a century after the formal abolition of slavery in Jamaica, that great son of the Jamaican people, a distinguished jurist, accomplished orator, and above all, a man of vision and deep humanity, Norman Washington Manley came to the fore, wedding his considerable personal gifts to the Jamaican peoples tradition of struggle and forming the People's National Party, which under his stewardship led the Jamaican people to Independence. As early as 1940, realising that political independence without economic substance was empty, he had already begun to speak of the possibility of a socialist future for Jamaica. He had realised that for independence to be real, there would have to be more than roofs over the peoples heads, food in their stomachs and clothing around their bodies. He knew that they would have to have education and enjoy good health. They would have to have gainful employment as well as edifying leisure. He realised that there could be no self-determination so long as people had no democratic control over the natural wealth of their country.

Tonight, we honour Norman Washington Manley and the political party he founded - the People's National Party. In the same vein we must honour the present standard-bearer of that Party, my beloved brother and friend Michael Manley. Comrade President, in honouring you, we believe we express the will of all the oppressed people, all peoples yearning for a just and equitable dispensation for all humankind, all who believe, like you, that man's cruelty to man is cruelty to all humanity and that the salvation of the oppressed lies in a unity that transcends race, colour, creed and gender.

We have watched with fascination the flair with which you succeeded to the helm of the PNP and adapted and developed the vision
s
of Marcus Garvey and Norman Manley, emerging with a world view in keeping with the changes that have since defined the challenges of our time. Consistent with this world view, you have correctly insisted that the struggle for liberation cannot be divorced from the struggle to make the IMF more realistically responsive to the needs of the economies of developing nations, and that both cannot be separated from the struggle for a New International Economic Order. Throughout, you have underlined the need to abolish extant pockets of oppression and exploitation and bigotry such as apartheid, as an essential condition for the forward movement to a more humane future. Like you, Comrade President, we believe that such outrages are not only an impediment to progress, but also a threat to peace and security. It is with this sense of your history and with an acute awareness of your traditions of struggle that we feel at home here this evening.

Now it is time to address a final word to the people of Jamaica in recognition of their role in keeping alive and advancing not only the visions of Marcus Garvey and Norman Manley, but also the great tradition of struggle they represent. Every freedom fighter is a warrior in any and every struggle for liberation and justice. You are soldiers of all humankind and for the freedom of all peoples. Thus like those who have gone before you, like those who will follow in your footsteps, like the very destiny of Jamaica, you are inexorably linked to the struggle of the South African people against apartheid and for freedom, non-racialism, unity and democracy. You are warriors in the struggle for a New International Order: a struggle in which the oppressed, the economically exploited and deprived will cooperate and fight together for a free prosperous and peaceful future for us all. Like Comrade President Michael Manley, and his distinguished predecessors,

you have a special place in the heart of our struggle as well as in all other just struggles.

Never forget that we all have a rendezvous with history. Remember that even as slavery, colonialism, racism, apartheid and imperialism imposed artificial divisions between the peoples of South Africa, Jamaica and all other fighting peoples the world over, we must overcome these divisions. The struggle has entered a most difficult phase - but we must stand firm. We must struggle hand in hand so that when we triumph, we shall be reunited in freedom. That is the "promised land" for which we must fight. When that vision is realised, we shall have finally arrived - then our mission will have been accomplished.

The Morant Bay massacre and the Soweto massacre as well as every other massacre of the oppressed people any and everywhere will finally be laid to rest and all the people shall take their rightful place as citizens of this earth. Then we shall pay full tribute to Marcus Garvey, Norman Manley, and to John Gumedé,

Pixley Ka I Seme, Albert Lutuli, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Sojourner Truth, Ida Weekes, Kwame Nkrumah, Wilmont Blyden, W.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson,
Amílcar Cabral, Aostinho Neto, Samora Machel, Antonio Maceo,

Camillo Cienfuegos, Lilian Ngoyi, Antonio Mel Iá, Augusto Sandino, Maurice Bishop, Henry Winston and all other stalwarts in the struggle for human freedom.

Once again, thank you to my brother, Comrade President Michael Manley, to the entire leadership of the PNP and to the people of Jamaica.

The struggle continues
Forward to peoples power.