

THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE RESISTANCE PARK

**REMARKS BY
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DURBAN : JUNE 8, 2001

It gives me great pleasure to be amongst those who share the responsibility and privilege of laying the foundation of this important monument of our history. I wish to thank Professor Fatima Meer for inviting me to this occasion which underscores the life-long relationship of friendship, mutual respect and co-operation she and I have had for many, many years. This is a further step in cementing a spirit of national unity in KwaZulu Natal which is essential to turning our province around and setting it firmly on a new path towards economic prosperity and social stability. Only through the unity of the people of KwaZulu Natal and their common efforts, will we be able to overcome the problems confronting us and secure a better future for our prosperity.

I say this because the monument to our history embodied in the Park whose foundation is being laid today, may have different meanings to different people. For me this shall remain as a monument to our divided past in this province and to our pledge to seek a common future in unity as equal citizens of KwaZulu Natal. The dedication of this Park brings back to me a flow of memories which span over more than half a century of struggle, social strife and division. As I stand here on this soil out of which such memories spring, I can feel the pain of what was. I can also feel the hope of that which is to come and I see a clear vision which tells me that good in this province can only come from our unity as people of goodwill acting under a common leadership dedicated to a long-term vision and progress.

Half a century of memories flow back to give us strength to map the future of our province and to the third millennium. All of us who carry in our minds and souls the brunt of past experiences and the pain of their memories, bear a special responsibility in ensuring that the future may fulfil the promise to which we dedicated our lives half a century ago. It was 1952 when we first embraced fully the path of passive resistance. At the time I was just 22 years old and yet my entire life was already wrapped around the calls and demands of our struggle. Even though I was a youngster, in those days I had the privilege to visit often with Inkosi Lutuli whom I regarded as my mentor. I was then an active member of the ANC Youth League and I take pride in saying that I was one of its most radical members. After my expulsion from Fort Hare University on account of my political activities, I came to Durban to complete my education and continue the struggle to which I dedicated my life.

I believe it to be fitting and proper that on this occasion we celebrate in Durban the stages of our struggle which had here their cradle and further stages of development. From Durban our struggle developed in many other regions and we shall not ever under-estimate the contribution that the City of Durban and its freedom-aspiring people gave to our shared commitment to resist apartheid. The resistance was not limited to Durban but undoubtedly in Durban it found an enormous momentum supported by intellectual commitment and personal dedication.

I remember how in those early days we drew from the experience of the legacy of the African National Congress and the Natal Indian Congress. I had then the pleasure of many profitable contacts with Mr Ismail Meer who was one of the young leaders of the resistance to apartheid. I

also met other stalwarts of the struggle at that early age in my life. Those contacts had an important bearing on my own future political development and upbringing as they brought me closer to the tradition of non-violence and passive resistance which was the precious legacy left in our country by the teachings and presence of the Mahatma Gandhi. They were also the legacy of the founding fathers of the ANC who in 1912 founded the ANC as a non-violent resistance organisation.

The seeds which we planted half a century ago laid the foundation for the development of our campaign of resistance for the decades which followed. Out of that shared commitment to resisting racial oppression, we then developed campaigns of civil disobedience and passive resistance with which we challenged the consolidation of apartheid when the pass laws were adopted. We seized the moral high ground which highlighted the contradictions of apartheid and its being morally bankrupt not only in the eyes of the vast majority of South Africans, but indeed in the eyes of the world.

As we conducted our struggle on the basis of passive resistance, we also built a moral fortitude within our people, which we knew we would need to turn the country around after liberation. On an occasion such as this, we need to go back to those seeds and re-open the flow of moral fortitude which our past deeds enshrined in our struggle. We need that moral fortitude now more than ever if we are to win the next stage of our struggle for liberation and finally free our people from the chains of poverty, unemployment, lack of essential services and ignorance. The seeds which we then planted as we committed ourselves to passive resistance were soon to germinate fruits of a different type.

As the apartheid government intensified its oppression of our people, the ANC opted for the armed struggle and centred the tactics of our liberation on military action. Violence became the method of liberation and the seeds of passive resistance became intertwined with the weeds of violence, and the blood of our people was shed in a fratricidal war. That set us back enormously, both in our struggle for liberation as well as in our quest to maintain an increasingly higher moral ground. Our society now needs the morality of commitment, endurance and intellectual rigour which shaped our initial resistance. We need to discover once again the legacy of leaders such as Inkosi Lutuli, Dr Monty Naicker, Dr Yusuf Dadoo, Mr Ismail Meer, Mr Debhi Singh, Mr JN Singh, Mr Masabalala Yengwa and others, who were the product of our original struggle for liberation before it became warped by the evil seeds of violence. The struggle continues and we must ensure that this time around we can eradicate forever the seeds of disunity, internal strife and violence.

We can only succeed by working together in unity and in joining hands in a revolution of goodwill. To me these are the seeds which I hope this Park will help to germinate. This is for me what the dedication of this Resistance Park should mean to those of us who are amongst the older generation of leaders, as well as to future generations who will come here to seek the guidance of our original inspiration. Our original inspiration took us thus far but there is much further to go. We consign to this Park our memories, our pain and our hope, for it to convey to future generations of leaders who may come here to seek inspiration. On this occasion we should dedicate ourselves to maintain our unity of purpose and action in the hope that this message may go down through generations to come, and enable the people of KwaZulu Natal and of South Africa to finally live together in freedom, harmony and peace.

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