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A SHORT WELCOME ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF A VISIT TO ULUNDI BY H.E.  
MR. H. NICHOL, AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH AFRICA

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and  
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Black Alliance

ULUNDI, HOLIDAY INN TUESDAY 18 MAY 1982

This is our first, and I hope the first of many, consultations about South Africa and America and I need to say something at the outset in general. In South and Southern Africa, Blacks are in a very real sense American-watchers. America is a dominant super power and it has achieved that position through hard work and technological development. We are aware that it has paid a price and we do not necessarily idealise American society. We are watchers also in the sense that we do not know just how important America, in the final analysis, is going to be for this sub-continent.

For many a year America has not noticed South Africa; it had no South African policy. It appears that it is now evolving a South African policy. We do not know whether this is simply a by-product of this and your previous Administration, or whether South Africa has in fact shifted into focus as a vested interest of the United States. We watch to see what is happening.

I am aware that in the life and death issues which confront us, we need desperately to create more wealth. I am aware that we cannot simply redistribute the wealth by robbing White bank accounts. We can redistribute the wealth only by the redistribution of opportunity. This cannot be achieved by shouting slogans or posturing. It can be achieved only by hard work. I believe the best of the free enterprise system must be used to bring about development in South Africa. The free enterprise is probably the best idiom of translating Black and rural poverty into progress. We watch to see to what extent the free enterprise system will in fact be influenced by America to participate in the transformation of South Africa. We watch to see what the socialist experiments on our borders in Mocambique and Zimbabwe will produce.

I emphasise .../2.

I emphasise the importance I attach, Sir, and will continue to attach,

to a closer working relationship between ourselves.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the South African situation with you at this very critical time of the country's development. Because the mass media is white-controlled and serves primarily to protect White vested interests, I could not blame anybody from abroad who got swept off his political feet with this flurry of debate and discussion about the proposals from the President's Council. They would miss the point that it is not in fact the President's Council proposals which are being debated. The real political issue underlying everything being said is a desperate White move to co-opt Indians

and Coloureds into a laager system of excluding Blacks from power-sharing.

The President Council's proposals, however they are finally formulated, amount to the adaptation of the 1977 National Party blue-print for constitutional development. White survival in its present form depends on the success with which the National Party's felt sense to wheel and deal in Maverick politics is taken out of the Afrikaner debating chambers. In total, the proposals of 1977, which evolved under Broeders' supervision, and the President's Council proposals in political terms amount to giving the President very wide and unfettered powers to deal as he wishes with Blacks, while retaining the semblance of democracy and

democratic procedures in the White legislature.

The proposals, simply put, enable the President - in cahoots with some Indian and Coloured leaders - to shape the whole destiny of Southern Africa with extra-parliamentary freedom. One must look at the proposals being made in

the wider context of South and Southern African political interests.

As a Black politician I do not see it as my role to jump into the nitty gritty debate about this or that aspect of political philosophy or the philosophy of constitutional powers. I must remain rooted in our life and death situation in which I am deeply aware that the very fancy and emotive

debates which intellectuals, and particularly White intellectuals, indulge in will not shape history. There is the illusion being created that P.W. Botha is a Prime Minister initiating a new phase of South African history. It is just not true. In one very real sense this is Mr. Botha's finest hour and he will make the hour stretch out for a couple of years yet; but the leap he has to

make from his President Council footstool across the mass of Black opposition to his confederal .../3.

to his confederal system of Government and his constellation of states is politically impossible. From this footstool he must only leap into historical and political obscurity. The altered position for Coloured and Indian

communities is not going to change the face of South African politics.

White South Africa, in taking these steps - as far as we Blacks are concerned - is moving even further away from the possibility of power-sharing than we have ever been before. It is a political lie to regard the present proposals as a step towards real power-sharing. Politics is about now and the foreseeable future. In terms of these proposals now and in the foreseeable

future, there is no prospect of averting the tragedy of Black/White confrontation.

When the President Council was originally formulated, it was formulated in conjunction with a Black Advisory Council. Both these institutions were a slap in the face to a number of Black leaders who had approached the Prime

Minister soon after his appointment with a plea to establish a basis of common

agreement by formulating a Statement of Intent of which Blacks and Whites need

not be ashamed. While we were discussing this the Prime Minister was formulating his President's Council and Black Advisory Council proposals in secret. When they were first mooted I urgently pleaded for a moratorium on constitutional development until such time as we found one or another way to become joint

authors of the future.

I was aware then and I am now aware that a Whites-only future will be smashed up by Blacks. My whole life I have avoided the politics of destruction. The only difference that the President's Council proposals are making are to encourage Blacks to regard Coloureds and Indians as targets for Black anger, in addition to Whites. I refused to serve on the Black Advisory Council which

would do no more than carry Mr. P.W. Botha's White political bags.

There are too few words capable of expressing the depth of concern I feel about the future of South Africa. Blacks are South Africans first and foremost. They were South Africans before Whites came and they will be South Africans

after those who do not believe so have died.

When I look at Central, Southern and Eastern Africa the enormity of White political stupidity becomes clear to me. This sub-continent needs a

brotherhood of man shoulder to shoulder, gleaning from its rich environment

the necessities .../4.

the necessities of life. Together in brotherhood and neighbourliness, Southern Africa can be the beginning of the transformation of Africa from poverty and want to security. It can be a vital experience in the international community. Historically Whites have made this common endeavour impossible. The President's Council recommendations is yet another enactment of limitations which are prohibitive for the evolution of Southern Africa. I need to join with my brothers in Zimbabwe, Mocambique, Angola, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana and further afield in working towards the eradication of poverty, want and disease. Together with them we can reconstitute the life support systems

of Southern Africa.

It is historically impossible for me to abandon this role of mine in order to trot around P.W. Botha's power base to produce stage effects of political progress. He will find that he will be able to achieve very little without my co-operation. I am not saying this in the sense of self-importance. I am saying this simply because it is true that an essential part of White/ Black

rapprochement is a Buthelezi/Botha rapprochement.

I find it difficult to see parallels between the President's Council proposals and those of the Buthelezi Commission. Such comparisons as can be made to me amount to comparing an alligator with the buck it devours. We can look at them and say they have both got hearts and livers and so on and so they must be the same, but the comparisons of components are misleading and I

think it is politically very dangerous to see the President's Council proposals as a stepping stone towards the implementation of the Buthelezi Commission findings.

I am expressing myself very strongly on this matter because such comparisons will make me understand that the Buthelezi Commission Report is folorn. If the recommendations of the Buthelezi Commission were embarked upon, we would be moving into a radically new political situation. The President's Council recommendations leave unaltered the terrible consequences of political inequality for the Black people of South Africa. For me to go to Blacks massed at a stadium and to speak kindly of the President's Council recommendations would be political suicide.

I think it is insufficiently realised that I am not an ideological leader.

I hold what political authority I do have at the mercy of popular opinion.

Every now and again .../5.

Every now and again the disdain for Black popular opinion slips into view

when people ask me what my response to this or to that will be, or what my options are. These questions can be innocent if they bear in mind that my options are my people's options but they are not innocent when they are asked against the background thought that I have any options of my own which are

not the options of the people. At the expense of sounding arrogant I say, and

I say in all humility, that I am a pawn of history and the massive forces which are shaping Southern Africa are behind me and the people, and that they will eventually trample roughshod over White exclusivity if that exclusivity persists much longer.

My involvement in the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly and in Inkatha is under siege by White stupidity. It is time Mr. Botha realised this. In the moves that he is making he is hamstringing me politically; he is eroding my options; he is radicalising my followers and he is estranging me as a partner. It is politically stupid to do these things because my people in the final analysis will overwhelm him. Whether or not I live to see the outcome of all this is not material. South Africa does not depend on me. South Africa will be shaped by Blacks. My role if anything at all is to make that shaping of South

Africa by Blacks as comfortable as it is possible for Whites.

I know we need Whites, as Whites need us. We are used to hardship and death and destitution, and the tough political future will rest more easily on our shoulders than the shoulders of affluent Whites. I am totally appalled by the lack of any real political support from any White quarter; not only lack of support appalls me, but the lack of any prospect of that support in the future is even worse. My whole approach has been one of constructive engagement with Whites. Politically, I can only begin where I am. This beginning has been scorned by the Natal Provincial Council. It has been scorned by the New Republic Party. It has been scorned by the National Party. I was grateful for the PFP support in the Buthelezi Commission and what appeared to be an understanding of my position. A PFP re-think on the President's Council proposals and their future involvement in it will take place only because Liberal White self-interest has dominated over progressive thought in the PFP. One does not have to debate the President's powers in detail. One does not have to look closely at any one of the President's Council recommendations. One only has to understand right from the outset that it is no more than, a big stride towards confrontation and White suicide - a suicide I might add which threatens to have

a great number of Coloured and Indian casualties along with it.