

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS  
TO ANC'S 75th ANNIVERSARY RALLY  
HOSTED BY IAAM  
DUBLIN AICWU HALL  
8th JANUARY 1987

JOHN HUME MP. MEP.

!

I am deeply honoured to chair tonight's anniversary rally. I look forward to hearing the distinguished speakers who are to address the rally and in particular to the contribution by Reg September of the ANC Executive who has come to talk to us. Some of you will be aware that it had been hoped that we would have Mary Benson to deliver a special commemorative lecture. Unfortunately illness has prevented this but perhaps there will be another opportunity in the course of events planned for the coming year.

I hope that such events and actions organised in the coming year by the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement in co-ordination with the programme outlined by the ANC will allow people here to deepen their understanding of the situation in South Africa, the nature of Apartheid and its role in the world and the ANC's role and leadership in the effort to end that evil regime. This year's events in Ireland hopefully will be not so much about commemoration as commitment as we use programme outlined by the ANC to focus on the important themes and issues in the ANC's agenda and sharpen our own activity on them.

It is appropriate that in tonight's rally the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement is displaying the broad base of its own work in Ireland spanning the political and social spectrum. That broad base parallels the span of membership and involvement which make up the ANC itself. It harnesses the basic commitment against the injustice of Apartheid shared by people of all religions and none, all colours and all areas of the normal political spectrum be they conservative, socialist, liberal, communist or whatever. In the ANC people who sincerely hold many different beliefs on a range of matters have united on the fundamental issue of democracy, human rights and social improvement. They have in that unity enriched each other in their thinking, strengthened their struggle and inspired the wider international community.

In Ireland we who oppose Apartheid and uphold the Freedom Charter proclaimed by the ANC must seek further to emulate that unity of purpose. I would hope that in this special anniversary year and this very telling period in Southern African affairs that the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement can enjoy the full participation of all who support its aims regardless of anyone's differences, however sincere, with any other affiliates. The primary concern is our difference with the Pretoria regime. It is

disappointing, at the very least, if differences with each other are allowed to dissipate the effectiveness of our stand against Apartheid. In 1987 let all who understand and respect the sacrifice, leadership, ingenuity and vision of the ANC subscribe fully to those organisations such as this Anti-Apartheid Movement which liaise with the ANC. This is important because this year is already witnessing a campaign against the ANC itself.

As a Westminster MP my mail-bag often includes various letters and publications from the South African embassy and its agencies and from the many dyed-in-the-wool Colonel Blimp institutes and foundations based in London. After experiencing the mixed emotions of anger and amusement which these daft, dishonest and dangerous publications promote I then post them to Kader Asmal. I do so not because I believe in chain letters and not because I would not enjoy dumping them but on the basis that it will help Kader's "propagandawatch" and ensure that he "knows the enemy" as it were.

These propaganda tracts now devote far less space to the ridiculous, but none the less contemptible, effort of sanitising the image of the Pretoria regime and its Apartheid network. Their main purpose is to rebuke the case for sanctions and to discredit the ANC.

One particular publication which I sent to Kader was from the Institute for the Study of Terrorism. This farrago of innuendo and misrepresentation is trying to create a "reds under the blacks" scare. It caricatures the ANC leadership outrageously, conducts a most distortive commentary on the Freedom Charter, calumnises the membership of the ANC and dismisses it as a Soviet Task Force. Predictably it also dismisses sanctions and tells us that Botha and Co are making great improvements in the political, social and economic circumstances of Black South Africa. It takes the line, prevalent among those sympathetic to or apathetic about Apartheid, that the international community has made its point with the whites and having done so should stop encouraging or supporting the blacks. You know the sort of message - "It's alright, we are handling everything, you can go back to your beds".

This booklet epitomises this year's propaganda campaign in support of Pretoria. It tries to throw dust in our eyes to prevent us from focussing on the realities of Apartheid and the present political situation. It

tries to promote faith in white South Africa and fear of black South Africa. What it does for us is indicate that for Pretoria the two big threats are sanctions and the ANC. Over the coming year we must make that connection. We must promote action in Ireland and the International Community which promote progress on both those complementary fronts.

Those of us who oppose the white - rule regime and its "red-scare" tactics need to be clear and purposeful about how we can help to secure democracy and justice for the people of South Africa. We must do all we can in solidarity with the struggle of the democratic people of South Africa to bring Apartheid down. That means total and comprehensive sanctions. Any level of trade or exchange with South Africa can only keep "Apartheid Inc" in business. It is quite clear from Pretoria's own references to their economic interests and activities that, that is how they see it. In reality perhaps the widest consensus in South Africa today is that international trade makes things easier for Apartheid.

In boycotts or sanctions we are not simply making a moral point but trying to strip away the economic fabric which protects Apartheid. You and I, Ireland, Britain, Europe and the whole International Community must be able to give a total and honest commitment to the democratic people of South Africa on this issue. The people who can most sincerely say that they have tried to do so are the "Dunel's Stores Strikers" the integrity of whose stand has been a source of admiration and perhaps embarrassment to the rest of us.

I have argued in Europe, Westminster, Ireland and platforms in America for total sanctions in solidarity with the struggle for democracy in Southern Africa. In doing so I have heard many of the arguments for doing nothing. It amazes me how intensely some people have fallen for the "red-scare" line for instance. These are the same people who invariably tell me that the arms race, stockpiling nuclear weapons, nuclear power and war mongering interventions in the affairs of developing regions make the world secure. Apparently this great international security in which they claim such confidence can all be threatened by the fact that there are members of the ANC who are communist and black. The only element of that view which I share is the scale of international importance which it attaches to the struggle to end Apartheid.

I have often said that I regard the dismantling of Apartheid as the most urgent issue facing the world today. In saying that I am not relegating the importance of famine, world poverty and the issues of wider international inequality. Rather I relate the importance of removing Apartheid to properly addressing those issues. Apartheid is a crime against humanity as it seeks to deny the basic recognition of others as humans let alone respect any rights they might have. It is a crime against justice with its calculated social deprivation and its repressive measures. It is a crime against democracy as it puts all power and resources in the hands of an oppressive minority. All those issues internal to South Africa itself should be sufficient to justify concerted international sanctions. But there are wider dimensions. "

There should be no doubt that Apartheid is the ball and chain of underdevelopment which ties the feet of the African continent. (That is not to dismiss the yoke imposed on that continent by international economic structures). Apartheid's warmongering hurts other African states and imposes demands on them which stifle their own economic tasks. With its strategic position it can poison the economic tissue of other African countries. By operating as the Western World's Enterprise Zone in Africa it has helped to undermine the development of more appropriate economic integration between Africa and other areas. We can see the effects of all this in the condition of Africa today.

The global picture is one of inequality and tension. It demands new international structures which will provide for a more equal power relationship and economic development in the world. But we will never develop such international structures and re-alignments if we cannot find a way as a global community of ending Apartheid. When we think of all the international bodies which have expressed strong opinions against Apartheid and hinted or promised at action we must ask why the effective blow has not been struck. The failure of the international community in the face of Apartheid which is so globally abhorred renders any hope of meaningful international co-operation on other important human issues fanciful.

If, however, strong international unity working in solidarity with those who are working for freedom in South Africa did serve to rid this world of Apartheid then we would have taken a big step not just towards human rights in that region but towards new perspectives in global relations. Those new

perspectives would open up the realities and requirements of the global condition and could lead towards new international political and economic arrangements if pursued. I suspect that this is one reason why the leadership of certain states refuse to co-operate in serious international action.

It is worth noting that the "Meeting of the Seven" has more power over people's lives than the UN has. It is worth noting the approach to South Africa which some of that seven have taken and how some leaders in it have lectured us about the immorality of sanctions. The highlight of their last meeting in Tokyo was sanctions against another state. We were told that the message from the seven was to Gadaffi, "You have had it, pal. You are isolated". Why then is it immoral to say the same thing to Botha? They tell us it is because sanctions might lose blacks jobs. The sincerity of that might be credible were it not for the fact that they are content to preside over an international trade and economic system which specifically deprives half the world's population.

If they want to help social conditions in Africa then they should be working to make the Freedom Charter a political reality. That Charter underlines for us in a fairly unique way that freedom is not simply about a flag or about government structures or about political expression but that it must also be about the quality of the human condition, physical well-being, mental development, cultural expression and social equality. The ANC's Freedom Charter is a model for us all. The vision of the ANC's leadership over the past 75 years has not received the recognition which it merits. It is often forgotten that the ANC refined and practised the doctrine of non-violence in a most powerful way. Albert Lutuli was a source of inspiration to Martin Luther King in his quest for equality. Some of us in Northern Ireland were inspired in turn by King perhaps not realising that our approach had much of its origin in South Africa.

We recognise the ANC not just for the qualities of its membership but also as the best approximate representation of the real wishes of South Africa. They are pursuing a dedicated path in circumstances where they are denied every right of expression or organisation. Their patience, discipline and morale in a situation where they have been refused any democratic avenues is remarkable. Their diversity and their unity of purpose provides the promise of a new, tolerant and just South Africa in which people can enjoy the common esteem of humanity and live in the security of true community.