

Statement

Déclaration

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Secrétaire
d'État aux
Affaires
extérieures

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

NOTES FOR A SPEECH

BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,

ON SOUTH AFRICA

CONFERENCE CENTRE

OTTAWA

January 15, 1990.

Affaires extérieures et
Commerce extérieur Canada
External Affairs and
International Trade Canada

Canada

Archbishop Scott,

Distinguished Guests,

The events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union mark a profound change in world history - a change made more dramatic because it is sudden, surprising, spontaneous. Those changes are far from over; indeed, the next steps - of securing lasting reform and freedom - will be even more difficult. And it is both natural and right that the world should turn its attention urgently to how we help the people of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

But it is equally important that we maintain policies and priorities that are leading to evident progress in other parts of the world. The Berlin Wall is a vicious symbol, and there is joy everywhere that it is coming down. But there are other walls - walls of ignorance and poverty, that programs of Official Development Assistance are helping to bring down; walls of resolute prejudice that will be broken only by the kind of campaign that we have waged together against apartheid.

I particularly welcome the occasion you provide me today to reiterate the high priority we attach to bringing down those other walls, in Africa and elsewhere, and to offer some reflections on developments in South Africa.

The fight against apartheid is a central element of the foreign policy of this Government, both because the cause is so compelling, and because we believe this is so clearly one of those international issues where Canada can make a difference.

That is because Canada enjoys a good and strong relationship with South Africa's black neighbours. We do not carry the colonial baggage of some other Western countries. We are active members of the Commonwealth, La Francophonie and the G-7 - indeed, the only country to belong to all of these groups. That is important where co-operative action is the most effective force for change.

The Commonwealth has been in the vanguard of the fight against apartheid, as it was in setting the framework for the evolution of Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. From the Nassau Conference onward, Canada has played a leading role in that Commonwealth campaign, whether in meetings of the Heads of Government, or in the Eminent Persons Group, or in the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa.

Looking back just two years ago, to the early days of the South Africa Education Trust Fund, it is worth recalling that hope had all but disappeared for peaceful and fundamental change in South Africa. Apartheid's cruel face had not flinched in reaction to the popular uprisings of 1985 and 1986, and in February 1988, additional draconian measures were imposed.

Virtually all of the extra-Parliamentary groups were restricted, along with many individuals. Thousands remained detained without trial under a continued State of Emergency. Censorship was intensified and, ironically, was particularly effective outside South Africa, in taking apartheid out of the spotlight.

But South Africans did not give up. Neither did Canada.

There were periods of intense frustration, when some Canadians believed we should close our Embassy and cut our ties. We made it clear that, if other measures failed, we were prepared to take those final steps. But we knew that the price would be to drastically diminish our influence. So we chose not to walk away, but instead to increase our help to apartheid's foes within South Africa, to step up our involvement in events within that country, and increase our work with our friends outside to mount and maintain international pressure.

And now there are signs that we may be at a watershed in South Africa. Both the Government and the black majority recognize the need to move forward. Both are willing to contemplate peaceful change. The atmosphere is better than it has been for decades.

But there should be no illusions: apartheid is still very much with us. Optimism about what may happen must not cloud our understanding of what still exists. The pillars of apartheid - the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, the Land Act, segregated education and health care, the homelands system, and above all, the denial of the vote to the black majority - those pillars still stand, cemented in law.

Repression is less intense but it has not stopped. The State of Emergency remains in force. Political trials and detentions have not ended. Although "whites-only" signs have been removed from the beaches, life remains essentially unchanged in the townships, squatter camps, rural farms and the homelands. The lives of ordinary blacks remain constrained and constricted by an unacceptable web of discriminatory regulations covering virtually every aspect of their lives.

Still there is reason to hope. Speculation has intensified concerning the imminent release of Nelson Mandela, with whom President de Klerk recently met. Mr. De Klerk has deliberately created expectations that he will announce significant political changes when Parliament meets at the beginning of February. He has said he is prepared to undertake fundamental change through genuine negotiations with representative leaders. He has warned fellow Afrikaners that only through such a process can they move to a secure future. The release of Walter Sisulu and other political prisoners is welcome, as is the decision to allow peaceful political marches, rallies and the recent Conference for a Democratic Future.

Most of the changes Mr. de Klerk has introduced have been symbolic rather than substantive. They change selectively the application of regulations rather than the regulations themselves. But the first steps have been encouraging.

Other changes are more significant. Notice has been given that the Separate Amenities Act will be scrapped. Of great long-term importance is the imposition of substantial curbs on the pernicious state security system.

The opposition outside Parliament is working out its own concept of how to construct a non-racial democracy. At every opportunity it reminds the de Klerk government, clearly and forcefully, that apartheid cannot be reformed; it must be abolished. Three million South Africans protested the exclusion of blacks from the September elections by staying away from work. Throughout the autumn, the Mass Democratic Movement organized peaceful and orderly mass protest marches. In December, the Conference for a Democratic Future demonstrated an encouraging degree of unity of purpose among the two thousand organizations represented.

Negotiations will not be easy. Nor will they be short. But they must begin, and the preliminary stages must not be prolonged. It is clear that meaningful negotiations cannot take place as long as legitimate parties to this dialogue are jailed, banned, or otherwise prevented from consulting with their constituencies.

The "Possible Negotiating Concept", drawn up by Archbishop Scott and the other Commonwealth Eminent Persons, called on Pretoria to remove the military from the townships; provide for freedom of assembly and discussion and suspend detention without trial; release Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and detainees; unban the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress, and permit normal political activity. It called on the ANC and others to enter into negotiations and suspend violence. That concept remains as valid today as when it was first put forward, and has found resonance in subsequent proposals aimed at creating the necessary climate for negotiations.

For its part, the ANC has indicated, in the 1989 Harare Declaration, its clear preference for a peaceful, negotiated settlement. In the several meetings I have had with ANC leaders, they have confirmed that to me directly. The imperative of a peaceful solution was also recognized by Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze in our recent discussions in Moscow.

Canada believes it is particularly significant that, last month, a unanimous resolution was adopted at the United Nations Special Session on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa.

The entire world community joined together in unprecedented fashion to urge that a climate be created in South Africa for genuine negotiations towards a non-racial democratic society, a society based on essential fundamental principles and human rights.

With that consensus declaration, the South African Government can be in no doubt that the world stands united in demanding that negotiations begin with genuine representatives of all the people, unfettered by restrictions, bannings or imprisonment.

It must understand that the release of Nelson Mandela must be accompanied by these other measures, in order that it may lead to genuine negotiations. It should also know that, when that occurs, the international community will be there to provide the assistance required to speed the peaceful transition to a truly non-racial democracy.

The pre-requisite for progress in South Africa has always been the acceptance of the necessity and inevitability of serious and meaningful negotiations. We may now be at this historic juncture.

How do we move the process forward?

Two requirements seem clear.

First, we must maintain international pressure, including sanctions, until there is clear evidence of irreversible change.

The sanctions imposed by Canada and the Commonwealth in 1985 and 1986 marked a turning point. There were closely followed by similar American and European sanctions.

Canadian measures were designed to hit major export sectors of the South African economy, particularly those sectors conducive to joint international action, and Canadian exports of sensitive goods. From the introduction of Canadian sanctions in 1986, until now, Canadian two-way trade with South Africa has dropped by almost a third.

Sanctions have worked. That has been well-documented and acknowledged by South African government and business leaders alike. Hit in their pocket books, South Africans increasingly recognize that change is vital. But until that recognition leads to action, pressure should not be lifted. There should not even be discussion of dismantling sanctions until we see evidence of clear and irreversible change. Indeed, it must be clear that new measures will be introduced if there is no change.

The second requirement is to recognize that, while sanctions are necessary, they are not sufficient. The ultimate goal is negotiation leading to change. It is appropriate, in present circumstances, to give relatively more priority to assisting the victims and opponents of apartheid, and to promoting dialogue among South Africans across the racial divide about a non-racial future.

Education is a major focus. In 1985 we launched the first phase of the Canadian Education Program for South Africa. This \$8 million initiative is comprised of four components: internal scholarships; initiatives in areas such as adult education and alternative schooling; labour education; and the in-Canada scholarship program. That latter program is implemented by the South Africa Education Trust Fund.

The Trust Fund plays an invaluable role. Promoting education and skills development among black South Africans is crucial to a successful, post-apartheid South Africa. But it also helps the process of change itself. In Canada, all levels of government, trade unions, business, universities and other institutions have risen to the challenge and offered, through the Trust Fund, work experience and educational opportunities to black South Africans.

Starting this year Canada will provide about \$15 million for an expanded second phase of the Canadian Education Program. These funds could not be better spent. The crisis in black education has never been as acute as it is now. Figures released this month show that only forty-two per cent of black students passed matriculation in 1989. The pass rate for whites was ninety-seven per cent. That is the legacy of separate education - which for blacks has meant a lack of facilities, a lack of qualified teachers and a lack of funding which has crippled black schools.

It is one thing to say that the future of all South Africans rests in the hands - and hearts and minds - of those students. But the more compelling reality is that those hands and hearts and minds must be prepared to meet the challenges of exercising power.

One challenge is to learn the technical skills of a modern economy. An equal challenge, perhaps even more important, is to encourage the attitudes of tolerance and co-operation which will be so essential in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Apartheid does what it says. It keeps people apart, and helps them fear one another, perhaps hate one another. Those walls of fear and hatred must be brought down.

Dialogue among South Africans of different races and backgrounds, on a common future, is vital to the creation of a non-racial society. Canada has supported scores of projects to this end through the innovative \$1.6 million Dialogue Fund.

Our contacts within South Africa have focussed almost exclusively on a majority that is out of power. We have sought to demonstrate our solidarity and support in practical and constructive ways, and we will continue and expand those activities.

It may now be time for us also to seek more contacts with white South Africans to encourage them to approach negotiations with generosity, without fear. Those in the white community who are embracing real reform need to know how much we respect and encourage them. Those who fear change should be reassured.

One activity which Canada intends to continue to pursue vigorously is the encouragement of the media in South Africa. We support virtually all of the alternative press in one form or another, as well as being the principal funder of both the Anti-Censorship Action Group and the Media Defense Trust Fund.

Our efforts have made a difference. Vrye Weekblad, the outspoken Afrikaans-language weekly, which recently broke the story on the operation of death squads, would not be in existence today were it not for Canadian Government support. On Christmas eve, 1988, the moving men were in Vrye Weekblad's offices to repossess their rented computers. The Canadian Embassy stepped in and bought the computers on the spot so that publication could continue. That newspaper has since become a crucial catalyst for change in the Afrikaner community.

Canada has also been effective in supporting newspapers which are key vehicles for the black community in South Africa. Our provision of training, and the purchase of equipment, for the New Nation and Saamstaan has been a concrete expression of our support for the embattled opposition press.

The fight against apartheid is not a quixotic exercise in moral diplomacy. It reflects a sober analysis of the economic potential of the southern Africa region, a potential which has been sadly stunted by apartheid.

Apartheid has imposed enormous social and political costs on South Africa. Segregating the social services under apartheid - apart from being abhorrent - is grossly inefficient. The massive security structure has come at great financial cost. And as we have seen in the current education crisis, apartheid is also tragically expensive in blighted lives and wasted human resources.

Apartheid has also been an enormous drag on the economic potential of South Africa's neighbours. But a southern Africa freed of apartheid would be a southern Africa open to business. South Africa could be a more important engine of growth. Indeed, the abolition of apartheid could trigger the long-sought economic development of the entire, impoverished African continent.

But there is another important point to be made here. The fight against apartheid is also important for the future of relations between the developed and developing world. To a degree which must not be underestimated, the Third World regards Western attitudes towards apartheid as a crucial test of our commitment to the values we profess.

A new political atmosphere appears to have taken root in South Africa - one that recognizes that only a negotiated political settlement can turn that country around. A golden final opportunity exists, but it must be grasped now and grasped firmly. If the dosages are too small, political change will lose momentum, and the moderation generated thus far will evaporate.

The world - including Canada - has been prepared to pause these past few months; willing to give Mr. de Klerk a chance to prove his declared intentions; willing to give rhetoric a chance to become reality.

On February 2, Parliament will reconvene in South Africa. In early May, the CFM, which I chair, will meet in Nigeria to discuss developments since Kuala Lumpur. These two dates bracket a period of immense significance for us all.

For during this period that Mr. de Klerk must prove he is not offering another "false spring". It is during this period that the majority in South Africa expects concrete progress towards real change. It is reasonable that, in the six months since his election, Mr. de Klerk has been preparing his hand. Now he must begin to show it.

We are entering a period when Mr. de Klerk's courage and imagination will be tested. And we are entering a period where flexibility and moderation will be required on all sides.

Canada, along with the majority in South Africa, expects a true Spring, not a false one.