

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN, PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ON THE EMERGING AMERICAN POLICY OF CONSTRUCTIVE
ENGAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

WASHINGTON. 4TH FEBRUARY 1985

**SOME THOUGHTS EXPRESSED TO PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN, PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, ON THE EMERGING AMERICAN POLICY OF
CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA
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INKATHA AND CHAIRMAN, THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ALLIANCE
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Mr. President, Sir, the time that you can afford to devote to the South African questions must be counted in minutes per month, rather than in hours or days. Politically, you are indisputably the most powerful man on earth and your responsibilities extend into a multitude of domestic and foreign issues, and are global in scope. That you have taken the initiative to invite me to meet you here in Washington and are now devoting time to talk to me is a signal to every decent Black South African that you are genuinely concerned to do something constructive to bring about change in South Africa. On behalf of Black South Africa, I thank you for inviting me here and for the interest you are displaying in our plight. It would appear to us that the constructive engagement policy will necessarily involve the United States in a carrot and stick approach, and we have taken heart at glimpses of the stick in your recent statements, Sir. You have said: "There are occasions when quiet diplomacy is not enough." And you remarked that the United States "has said on many occasions that we view racism with repugnance..." Mr. President, we appreciate this forthright condemnation of apartheid.

You Mr. President must go down in our history as the first American President who had the courage to clutch the thorny South African nettle boldly and publicly. The United States never had a South African policy. It now has one. Those who follow in your footsteps will inherit your initiatives and will have to build on things that you have started. Your assessment is correct, Sir, that it is now time that the South and Southern African situation was placed permanently on the American political agenda.

Because your policy is about us and our country and because it is about our future and the future of our children, I have a duty and a democratic right to weigh up what you, Sir, are aiming to do and to comment publicly on the merits of what you and your Administration are attempting to accomplish.

You will hear conflicting voices from Black South Africa - some made strident by the media amplifying machine and others made cautious and sober by the demands which are placed on real leaders with mass followings. I hope, Sir, that you will listen to the latter, even if you have to take cognisance of the former in your own domestic party political situation.

The United States is a great democracy and the American people should feel obliged to give added weight to the views expressed by leaders who involve themselves in constituency politics where they sink or swim on their ability to gather demonstrable Black support

which can be directed towards political objectives. I, Sir, founded Inkatha as a liberation movement a short ten years ago and in the space of one decade Inkatha has grown to have nearly a million paid-up members. I am a leader chosen by millions of ordinary black South Africans from every walk of life and I represent people in both rural and urban areas. In addition, I am a leader by hereditary right and history itself demands that I remain as a committed leader in the struggle for liberation. What I say to you, Sir, is acclaimed by millions, and on behalf of Black South Africa I constantly reiterate that we need Western involvement in the development of South and Southern Africa. We need American engagement if it is constructive.

Western leaders should not gamble the future of South and Southern Africa nor should they jeopardise the role that the West can play in developing and stabilising Southern Africa as a region on the strident and dubious voices expressing radical rhetoric so often amplified by the media. I ask you, Sir, to continue weighing up your responsibilities and the responsibilities of America against the background of what effective Black leaders with real mass constituencies have to say.

History has taught me and Black South Africa that past Western democratic posturing and verbal condemnation have left apartheid intact. I see today in the United States an upsurge of genuine concern about apartheid. But I also see a great upsurge of verbal condemnation of apartheid and the kind of posturing which has been of such little significance in the past.

There is a storm brewing in the United States about American responses to apartheid and I think that time will tell that many of those who are involved are serving double agendas. They may well be indignant about the lack of even minimal human rights for Blacks in South Africa, and they may well be genuine in their indignation. For this indignation and genuineness I am deeply grateful. They may, however, have other agendas in which apartheid is being used as an issue to beat you, Mr. President, and to discredit your Administration. Some are making an American political football out of our suffering, and I ask you, Sir, to stand firm and to do whatever you can to de-politicise the question of what America can do to aid those who are involved in the struggle for liberation.

Apartheid has a kind of evil virulence and it has a proven durability. There are many who are making the tactical error of attempting to encapsulate this virulence in an isolated South Africa shut off from Western influences. The indiscriminate economic, social and political isolation of South Africa, applied mindlessly and regardless of consequences for each action, will deeply and adversely affect the non-violent, democratic struggle to bring about radical change. The total isolation of South Africa would favour those who aim to bring about change by violent means and to establish a socialist or even communist state.

It is indisputably true that Whites cannot manage mining, industry and commerce on their own and that the sustained economic growth to which they aspire can only be achieved by moving towards parity

between Black and White. White political apartheid is now under very real siege by economic reality and the non-violent transition from apartheid society to a society based on the principles of open democracy will be greatly enhanced by a sustained high rate of economic growth. Disinvestment and the economic isolation of South Africa will bring about increased immediate hardships and starvation, and will increase disease in the short term, without medium and long-term gains to balance deprivation and suffering.

I am acclaimed by millions when I say that while the struggle for liberation in South Africa needs Western inputs, it is primarily a Black South African struggle which we ourselves wage for our own future. I speak for millions when I say that we see tactical and strategic advantages in a rapidly growing economy. The West, Mr. President, must allow us to determine our own tactics and strategies and to charter our own course into the future of our choice.

Black South Africa knows that there are no easy solutions to the apartheid problem, and we certainly know that an armed struggle which continues to fail and which exacts terrible prices will destroy the foundations on which we will one day have to build a future. Quite apart from the moral issues involved, and quite apart from the fact that an armed struggle tends to shape society for authoritarian governments of the future, I have other concerns about the use of violence. Black South Africans know that without bases in neighbouring States, and without international diplomatic logistic and material support, and furthermore without areas inside South Africa which can be liberated, the armed struggle must fail.

Whether, Mr. President, your bold grasping of the South African thorny nettle in your formulated constructive engagement policy will bear the fruits that all true democrats hope for, remains to be seen. Experience gathered over generations makes me and my fellow Black South Africans sceptical about the role of the West in our struggle. I believe you are right in formulating a South African policy. I believe that within this framework Dr. Chester Crocker has played a positive role in Namibia but the vast majority of ordinary Black South Africans are not yet aware of anything meaningful in their own lives which has flowed as something new from America because of constructive engagement. I and all Black South Africans applaud the emphasis which has been placed on aid for educational programmes in South Africa. The struggle for liberation would be strengthened by the American-backed educational programmes and would be strengthened even further if educational aid were extended to health education and to educational programmes which are complementary to the in-service training programmes aimed at vocational advancement in work situations.

I am particularly aware of Black South Africa's appreciation for the aid which is given for humanitarian purposes. American assistance given to us for drought relief and to help us to meet the terrible plight of those devastated by floods after Cyclone Demoina was greatly appreciated. Mr. President, Sir, the responsibility to liberate South Africa is ours, but the West must not under-estimate the desperate need to provide humanitarian aid

to suffering communities involved in our struggle. When ordinary suffering humanity is sustained by aid programmes, morale in the struggle for liberation rises. The raising of Black South African morale is something that the West can do and should do, and will I hope accept as a very important input to the struggle.

Mr. President, may I in conclusion express the real fear that the value of educational and other aid programmes backed by the United States will have a greatly diminished value if they are based on partisan American assessments of the who's who in Black South African politics and not on needs and opportunities. The need to be blind to Black party political affiliations in South Africa cannot be over-emphasised. I plead for aid for Black South African organisations across a broad front of Black South African activity, and I ask you Mr. President and your Administration to do everything that can be done to remove aid to Black South Africa from the American party political arena.
