

**SPEECH BY FORMER PRESIDENT FW DE KLERK
TO THE FW DE KLERK FOUNDATION'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE
THE PROTEA PRESIDENT HOTEL
BANTRY BAY
3 FEBRUARY 2015**

**25 YEARS SINCE 2 FEBRUARY 1990: A QUARTER CENTURY OF BUILDING AND DEFENDING
NON-RACIAL CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY**

A quarter of a century has passed since 2 February 1990 when I rose in Parliament to make the announcements that would change South Africa forever. My speech was not the result of some Damascus Road conversion. Neither was it made because of domestic or international pressure. It was motivated by our realisation that if we wanted there to be a future for South Africa and for all our children, we would have to find real and lasting solutions to the problems that had for so long divided us.

We had tried reform within the framework of the broad National Party policies of the 1980s. From 1978 onwards PW Botha embarked on a wide-ranging process of reforms - including trade union rights and the Tricameral Constitution. By 1986 we had repealed many of the core apartheid laws.

However, by the mid-1980s we realised that such reforms were inadequate - that we had to embrace a new vision of inclusivity. We began to accept that the only solution to our problems lay in negotiating a new constitutional system that would protect the rights of all South Africans on the basis of equality and non-discrimination. We admitted to ourselves that the old system was morally indefensible.

In the end, my speech 25 years ago was motivated by my conscience and not by pragmatism. And that applies to my colleagues in the National Party too.

In addition, at the end of the 1980s there was also a conjunction of events that made it easier for us to break the political logjam:

- All the major South African parties - including the ANC and the Government - had accepted that there could not be an armed solution to the problems of the country.
- The Soviet Union had lost its appetite for surrogate wars in southern Africa. In 1988 South Africa, Cuba and Angola agreed on the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola and on the implementation of the UN independence plan for Namibia.
- The successful implementation of the Namibian independence plan showed that positive outcomes could be achieved through negotiations - provided that there was a strong constitutional framework.
- The collapse of Soviet communism created an entirely new geopolitical situation. It removed what had been our primary strategic concerns: the intrusion of the Soviet Union in southern Africa and the influence of the SACP within the ANC Alliance.
- Finally, the country was changing rapidly behind the scenes: between 1970 and 1990 the black share of disposable income rose from 28% to 45%. By 1994 there would be more



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blacks at university than whites and three times as many blacks as whites would be passing matric. Our political and economic destinies had become inextricably intertwined.

We realised that the balance of forces would never again be so favourable for constitutional negotiations. We had embraced a new vision of inclusivity and history had opened a window of opportunity. We did not hesitate. On 2 February 1990 it was my privilege to jump through the window and open the way for negotiations on a new constitution.

I spelled out the following goals in my speech:

- A new democratic constitution;
- Universal franchise;
- No domination;
- Equality before an independent judiciary;
- The protection of minorities as well as of individual rights;
- Freedom of religion;
- A sound economy based on private enterprise;
- Better education, health services; housing and social conditions for all.

Within four years we had agreed on an interim constitution that secured virtually all these goals.

The success of our constitutional process was one of the most remarkable achievements of the latter part of the 20th century.

Now, 25 years later, much of this achievement is discounted, disparaged or forgotten.

- Right-wing critics continue to believe that change was not necessary - that whites could have continued to rule over a disenfranchised majority forever.
- Others - the Monday morning quarterbacks - grudgingly admit that we had to change - but that we could have negotiated a better deal. They think we should have insisted on a minority veto. They should dream on.
- Finally, others have been rewriting history. The ANC is airbrushing out of the picture the contribution of all the other parties. It claims that it forced the National Party and the IFP to come to the negotiating table. What utter nonsense!

By extension, it is saying that the majorities in the white, coloured, Indian and Zulu communities that the NP and the IFP represented - deserve neither recognition nor respect for the role they played in creating our new society.

They are wrong. We could have resisted change for decades. Had we done so - and had the IFP decided to boycott the process - it is likely that South Africa would still be a battlefield; our economy would have been destroyed - and there would be no prospect of ever building a united non-racial nation. Hundreds of thousands of young South Africans would have died needlessly.

As things have turned out - and as our President continuously reminds us - we have, on the whole, a good story to tell.

- After decades of isolation, South Africa is a respected member of the international community.
- We are a functioning multi-party constitutional democracy with a strong Bill of Rights and independent courts.
- We have freed ourselves from the injustice and humiliation of apartheid.
- Our economy is three times larger than it was in 1994.
- The government, provincial governments, municipalities and other agencies have built 3.5 million houses and have provided much greater access to electricity and basic services.

At the same time a number of issues continue to cause increasing concern.

The first is the failure of our education system. We have failed dismally in providing proper education to millions of our children. Only one-eighth of the children who entered school since 1994 matriculated with a university entrance qualification.

The second concern is unemployment. Our official rate of 25% hides the reality that less than 40% of the black population between the ages of 15 and 64 are in employment. The reasons are not hard to find:

- We have the most employer unfriendly trade unions in the world;
- COSATU, as a member of the ruling alliance, dictates labour policy - and ensures that it is skewed in favour of the unions;
- Unions have raised minimum wages far above labour market levels - resulting inevitably in high unemployment.

The third concern is the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS. Despite the success of the world's largest antiretroviral programme, 170 000 South Africans died of AIDS last year. That is 20 times the number of people who died of Ebola. Infection rates - at more than 1 000 people per day - are still catastrophically high. Four million South Africans have died of AIDS since 1994 - making this by far the greatest human tragedy in our history.

The fourth concern is corruption.

- The release on 'medical parole' of Schabir Shaik, proclaimed that the President's friends were not subject to the rule of law;
- The government continues doggedly to defend the patently indefensible expenditure of R246 million on security upgrades to the President's retirement home.
- Courageous individuals and institutions dedicated to combating corruption have been systematically neutralised. The list includes
 - Vusi Pikoli, the former National Director of Public Prosecutions;
 - The appointment, time and again, of unsuitable people to take his place;



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- The dissolution of the Scorpions - the most effective anti-corruption unit that the country has ever had;
- Current efforts to get rid of Mxolisi Nxasana of the NPA, Anwar Dramat of the Hawks and Ivan Pillay of SARS because they have taken too keen an interest in the President's affairs; and
- The denigration of the Public Protector because of the negative report that she wrote on Nkandla.

To this list one could add crimes, the breakdown of service delivery and a number of other issues.

Education, unemployment and corruption - among other concerns - are supposed to be addressed by the National Development Plan. The government has given repeated assurances that it is committed to the NDP. However, the NDP is irreconcilable with the ANC's core ideological programme - the National Democratic Revolution. Many aspects of the NDP are also unacceptable to the ANC's Alliance partners, COSATU and the SACP.

All this goes hand in hand with the growing influence of the SACP within the ANC Alliance.

By the SACP's own admission, since 1994 "tens of thousands of communists have taken up the challenges and responsibilities of governance." Members of its Central Committee now hold the key posts of Secretary General of the ANC and Ministry and Deputy Ministry in the Presidency. In addition, they dominate ministries controlling economic policy and property rights.

The SACP acknowledges that, since the ANC's 2007 Conference in Polokwane, there has been a "considerable strengthening of the left's ideological positions on government economic and social policies and programmes."

The SACP has been the author of *all* the ANC's core ideological programmes: it wrote the *Freedom Charter*; it initiated and controlled the armed struggle; and it adapted the National Democratic Revolution from Soviet ideological theory.

It was also the main force behind the introduction of what is currently the ANC's core programme - "the radical implementation of the second phase of the NDR". And it continues to hide behind the ANC banner and to fail in seeking voter support in its own name.

According to Jeff Radebe the first phase of "our transition embodied a framework and a national consensus that may have been appropriate for political emancipation, a political transition, but has proven inadequate and inappropriate for our social and economic transformation phase". However, "changes in the balance of forces in South Africa and globally" had enabled the ANC to dispense with some of the cumbersome constitutional compromises on which the 'first phase' was based. In other words, parts of the 1994 constitutional accord could now be discarded.



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The SACP and COSATU openly proclaim their intention to move toward the imposition of radical socialism - and finally communism - on South Africa.

COSATU asserts that “the dictatorship of the proletariat is the only guarantee that there will be a transition from NDR to socialism” and the SACP states that “advancing, deepening and defending the NDR will require an increasingly decisive advance toward socialism.”

Manifestations of this “advance toward socialism” are reflected in the cancellation of bilateral investment treaties with European countries and the introduction last year of several pieces of legislation that seriously threaten property rights.

The growing influence of the SACP within the Alliance - and its openly proclaimed intention to establish a communist state - pose a potentially fatal threat to our constitutional democracy.

Non-communist ANC members - some of whom the SACP calls “constitutional liberals” and “emerging black parasitic capitalists” - should ask themselves what their role will be if the SACP achieves its goal? They should look at what happened to members of other national liberation movements following the communist revolutions in Cuba and Vietnam.

I am also concerned - that since the adoption of the second radical phase of the NDR - the ANC has abandoned any attempt to promote national reconciliation.

The core goal of the NDR postulates increasing racial confrontation. Consequently the ANC’s statements are full of references to the struggle of the past - to “the forces of colonialism and apartheid”, to “apartheid as a crime against humanity” and to “...the poverty trap and vicious cycle of inequality perpetrated by the legacy of apartheid and colonialism...”

Whites are indelibly tarnished by the past - while blacks are identified with the forces of freedom and democracy. Increasing use is made of the term “apartheid colonialism” - implying that whites are transient alien interlopers.

As illustrated by President Zuma’s recent remarks on Jan van Riebeeck, the “legacy of apartheid and colonialism” is routinely identified as the cause of most of South Africa’s problems - and particularly of the triple crisis of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Apartheid is even blamed for ESKOM’s current - or lack of current - crisis.

It would be surprising if this constant agitprop bombardment does not stir up some degree of racial animosity among black South Africans - or at the very least - reinforce perceptions of white moral culpability and black entitlement.

Unfortunately this is beginning to happen. There is a new, bitter and confrontational tone in the national discourse that is the antithesis of everything for which Nelson Mandela worked during his Presidency. It brings to mind the sad quotation from Alan Paton’s novel, *Cry the Beloved Country*:



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“I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good for their country, come together to work for it. I have one great fear in my heart, that one day when they are turned to loving, they will find we are turned to hating.”

25 years ago we started the process in which “white and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country” came “together to work for it”. Since then we have made significant progress in so many areas. In many other areas - some of which I have mentioned this morning - there are serious reasons for concern.

Waking up each morning worried about the future has always been a central element of being a South African. It means that there is no room for complacency - and no ceasing of our efforts to address our problems and to work for the good of the country.

If I had been woken early on the morning of 2 February 1990 and could have seen what South Africa would look like 25 years later with all its threats and shortcomings I would still have embraced that future with both hands and without any reservations. I would still have made the speech that I made on that day - not because I had to - but because my colleagues and I were convinced that it was the right thing to do - convinced that the road to a peaceful future was to bring justice to all.

What we have now is so much better than what we had in the past. All of us - all South Africans of goodwill - should redouble our efforts to work for the realisation of the values articulated in our Constitution - for a country based on human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. All of us should work to ensure that those who are committed to loving will prevail over those - on all sides - who are retrogressing into the old patterns of hating.