

Remarks of
Hon. Geo. W. Crockett, Jr.
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
August 1, 1986

In Support of House Resolution 373

Mr. Chairman: There are two basic efforts that must be made by South Africa if it is to avert a civil war. One, it must move quickly to end the race and color discrimination known as apartheid; and, two, it must create a government that is representative of its diverse population of 4.5 million whites and 27.6 million non-whites.

The stringent anti-apartheid act passed by the House several weeks ago addresses the first of these concerns; our proposal here today addresses the second.

House Resolution 373 expresses the sense of the Congress that the President of the United States should urge the Pretoria Government to free the jailed Nelson Mandela and recognize the banned African National Congress as a legitimate representative of the Black South African community.

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This resolution is bipartisan, with 107 cosponsors, and represents a good cross-section of the membership of the House. I am very pleased that 19 members of this committee are included among the cosponsors.

Mr. Chairman, the release of Mandela is mandatory for any peace initiative. His organization, the African National Congress, must be represented at any talks on the future of South Africa. Almost everyone agrees on this, except South African President Botha.

Exactly two years ago today, this Committee passed the first Mandela Freedom Resolution, calling for the release from detention of Nelson Mandela and the un-banning of his wife, Winnie Mandela. That resolution was passed overwhelmingly by the 98th Congress. The ban on Mrs. Mandela has been removed, and last week President Reagan publicly urged Mr. Mandela's release.

At the time of the passage of this earlier resolution, Mandela's name was not exactly a household word. Today, his name, and the conditions he was protesting and which resulted in his

incarceration, are known and recited the world over.

This great man, imprisoned for 24 years for an offense that carries a maximum of five years in our country, is regarded today by non-whites in South Africa and by the international community as one of the world's most respected symbols of resistance against race, color and ethnic oppression. His organization, the African National Congress, banned since 1960, continues to enjoy universal support in Black townships all across South Africa.

Mr. Chairman, it is generally agreed that there can be no genuine settlement of the South African crisis without the direct involvement of the African National Congress. Notwithstanding the Pretoria-inspired effort to smear the ANC as a communist organization, more than 13 high-level private groups of South African businessmen, religious leaders - including clergy from the Dutch Reformed Church - members of the legislature, university professors and students, diplomats and trade unionists have travelled to Black-ruled African countries to establish a dialogue with ANC officials.

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The need for such a dialogue was given even greater emphasis by A.H. Bloom, chairman and chief executive officer of the Premier Group, one of South Africa's five largest industrial companies, and one who has met with the ANC officials. In an article in the July 29th edition of the New York Times, Bloom declared that the prerequisite to negotiations between the country's Black majority and the Botha Government must be the unbanning of Black political organizations, including the ANC, and the release of Mr. Mandela and other political prisoners. Mr. Bloom went on to say, and I quote:

"I have met with the A.N.C. on a number of occasions since last year. Our fundamental differences have been debated in a sane and rational manner, without any underlying aggression. We share a common ideal of a democratic, nonracial South Africa, although we differ on the tactics to achieve that objective in the shortest possible time.

"I am desperately concerned that both Pretoria and Washington are making a historic and tragic mistake in refusing to negotiate with or recognize the A.N.C."

(end quote)

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The leaders of the European Economic Community, the nations constituting the Organization of African Unity and the foreign ministers of France, Spain and Britain, and, the seven British Commonwealth leaders known as the Eminent Persons Group, have urged South Africa to "unban" the ANC and talk with its leaders.

Chief Buthelezi, who has been described by the South African Government as an important, moderate leader with whom it could work, was reported in the June 3rd edition of the Washington Times as having said emphatically that he will not take part in talks unless the ANC is recognized as a negotiating entity.

Finally, Secretary of State Shultz has also urged the South African Government to signal its willingness to search for a political compromise with its Black majority by freeing Mandela and negotiating with his organization, the ANC. A State Department spokesman just recently indicated to our Africa Subcommittee that the United States maintains "regular contacts" with the ANC.

But these efforts stop far short of a public appeal by the Congress of the United States to the South African Government; and

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that, Mr. Chairman, is the purpose of House Resolution 373.

By passage of this measure, the Congress is enacting the necessary supplement to any anti-apartheid legislation: it is asking the President himself to use the influence and the prestige of the Presidency to publicly urge the South African Government to take these indispensable steps towards a peaceful settlement of its present crisis, rather than to continue down the path of violence, destruction and bloodshed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.