



19 April 1993

Mr Chris Hani

Speech by State President FW de Klerk in Parliament

I should like to begin by making a short statement about the funeral today of Mr Chris Hani.

The assassination of Mr Hani has revealed in the starkest terms the dangers which confront South Africa when passions and violence are permitted to determine events, instead of negotiations and reason. It points yet again to the peril which faces the great majority of peace-loving South Africans when the scene is temporarily dominated by small minorities on the left and the right which favour violence.

Mr Hani and I were at opposite poles of the political debate in South Africa. I deeply disagree with the policies and solutions which he supported. However, he had abandoned violence and was committed to negotiations and a peaceful resolution of our problems. This brought him into the mainstream of our national debate. I have deep sympathy for the family and friends of Mr Hani and have conveyed my condolences to them. I believe I speak on behalf of Parliament as a whole in doing it again now.

Mr Hani's death has once again plunged South Africa into crisis. It has unleashed radical forces at all ends of the political spectrum and has complicated the task of responsible leaders in exercising restraint and control. Last week, we saw once again the disruption which can be caused when these forces commit their acts of violence.

Two weeks ago our country was characterised by hope and good expectations. That hope and those good expectations are being overshadowed today by concern among some and anger among others. Waves of conflicting emotions are storming in from all directions on all and everything that are the bearers of the orderly value system which South Africa is building and which has placed her in the vanguard of the developing countries of the world.

The multi-party negotiating process and the economy are in the firing line. Emotions which vary from anger to fear, from aggression to despair, are threatening to destroy the hopes of all peace-loving South Africans.

We dare not allow that. We dare not play into the hands either of spokesmen on the left and the right who are trying to thwart the negotiating and peace processes.

The overwhelming majority of South Africans want peace. They are yearning for a negotiated constitutional settlement that will offer reasonable guarantees for stability, security and progress. They want an end to political violence and the accompanying crime.

From Parliament today I am directing an appeal to this peace-loving majority:

Do not allow yourselves to be carried away on a road of devouring emotion that will lead to growing conflict.

Support our security forces in the maintenance of law and order. They are there to protect the lives and property of all South Africans in an impartial manner. They are well equipped and have the ability to do it in a sensible and legitimate manner. The Government will continue to bolster them and supply them with the necessary means.

Curb your emotions, remain balanced and stay calm. That is the sensible way.

Cling to the Word of God which teaches us:

"A mild answer turns away anger,
but a sharp word makes tempers rise."

There is anger in our land. The cowardly assassination of the late Mr Hanu has caused it to flare up high among the leaders and supporters of the ANC. The equally condemnable murders of leaders of Inkatha incite anger and aggression among their leaders and followers. The senseless political murders of members of the public women and children, Black and White have the potential to spark raging racial conflicts. The murder of policemen and women leads to anger among all law-abiding citizens.

These facts place all leaders of the peace-loving majority of South Africans before the challenge to do something tangible to restrain the anger and break this destructive pattern of violence.

The solution to the pattern of violence and murders lies within the grasp of the leaders taking part in the negotiating process. It lies in the sincere and methodical implementation of all of the elements of the National Peace Accord. It lies in strengthening the Peace Accord. It lies in the moderation of language and the cessation of inciting, irresponsible political attacks and unfounded charges. It lies in refraining from any act or strategy which might damage the economy or disrupt education and other important services.

More than anything else, it lies in the early resumption of and progress in the multi-party negotiations.

It certainly does not lie in the resumption of an extended mass action campaign for the next six weeks, as was recently announced by the ANC/COSATU/SACP alliance. A further

drawn out programme of mass demonstrations in the present climate can only exacerbate the situation:

- * It can set the stage for further violence, looting and disorder.
- * It will further undermine national and international confidence in our economy and will damage the prospects for a better life for hundreds of thousands of South Africans.
- * It can further polarise South Africans at a time when it is essential that we should all be rallying around the political centre.

The reasons given for the resumption of drawn-out mass action are specious. Mass action over a long period will not defuse tension or anger. It will release new tension and anger.

There is and never has been any need to pressure the Government to proceed rapidly with negotiations or to move quickly toward the establishment of the Transitional Executive Council and the setting of a date for elections. We are irrevocably committed to this process and the target dates now demanded of us are the dates which we, ourselves, have already set. The delays which we have experienced so far such as the months-long deadlock last year were not created by us but by the last mass action exercise of the ANC. Further mass action will serve only to complicate the process and create further unnecessary obstacles.

It is also completely counter-productive to imagine that some parties can exploit the recent tragic events to pressure other parties into abandoning reasonable positions which they have maintained in the negotiating process. If negotiations are to succeed they must be in good faith. If solutions are to prevail they must be the result of genuine agreements and compromise and not the result of coercion of any kind.

At this critical time in our history I wish to appeal to all South Africans and to all South African leaders to give careful consideration to their statements and actions and to measure them against the simple standard of whether they will contribute to, or undermine the process of peaceful negotiations and reasonable solutions.

If the great majority of law-abiding people of all races in South Africa do not stand together now and make a definite commitment to peace, they stand the risk of allowing the troublemakers, the people responsible for the violence, for the murders and the assassinations, to drive us apart.

These are the points which we should be considering on this somber day.

In this connection it is clear to me from numerous contributions, comments and proposals that there is a broad need for something to be done, to give visible shape to such a renewed commitment to peace, as well as to everybody's feelings of sympathy with the victims of violence. The Government and the National Party are sympathetic to these needs and will submit suggestions to the National Peace Committee. They will include a proposal for holding a country-wide moment of silence at a certain time on a certain day

in remembrance of all the victims of violence and in commitment to peace. We shall also request again that all the signatories of the National Peace Accord be called together urgently.

In conclusion I wish to issue a warning against a tendency to seek the solution to all our country's problems in politics and a new constitutional dispensation. Violence is also fanned by the economic and social problems of our society. And we do not have to wait for a new constitutional dispensation to co-operate towards the solution of those problems.

Political and economic leaders could work together now already on plans to reduce unemployment.

It is urgently necessary that leaders within and outside the system should co-operate now already to prevent any further disruption of education. The interests of our youth have to be placed above our political interests.

The problem of the so-called lost generation of young people the marginalised youth is an important factor in the problem of violence. Something can be done about it now already. Interesting proposals have, in fact, been made already by various quarters.

And so I could continue. The Government's bona fide attempts to deal with these problems are, unfortunately, hampered continuously by activists. They abuse the social and economic problems as springboards for politically-inspired actions of disruption. And the youth, the unemployed and the poor suffer.

I, therefore, direct an invitation to every leader in every field to co-operate with the Government in existing forums to help relieve the plight of our people.

And where no suitable forum exists, the Government declares its willingness to co-operate in the creation of an appropriate mechanism.

It is urgently necessary, in particular, that something imaginative be done in connection with the marginalised youth. The honourable member for Groote Schuur has spoken about it already. The late Mr Hanu made proposals. Mr Mandela has also brought the matter to my attention, as has Archbishop Tutu. On its part, the Government already has instituted a working group which is examining the problem and which has already completed important preliminary work.

The Government is ready to co-operate with all who are able to make a contribution towards dealing with this vexed problem. We shall follow it up in bilateral and multilateral discussions in an effort to promote co-operation.