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ADDRESS BY DR. A.B. XUMA, PRESIDENT GENERAL, AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, IN OPENING THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE TRANSVAAL INDIAN CONGRESS at GANDHI HALL, on APRIL 25th, 1948.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I must thank you for your kind invitation to me to open the Annual Conference of the Transvaal Indian Congress. When the telephonic invitation reached me thirty six hours ago, I was tempted to decline since I realised that with the nature of my work as Medical Practitioner there would be no time for me to prepare a speech befitting the occasion. I must, therefore, apologise for not having prepared a speech.

There are, however, certain factors which compelled me to accept the invitation in spite of the obvious difficulties. One was that I admire your great work and sacrifices for the liberation of South Africa. The other was the memorable experience of work with your able and indefatigable representative Messrs. Sorabjee Rustomjee and Maidoo. The third and final reason was that your kind invitation compensated for my refusal of a similar invitation to open the Natal Indian Congress Conference in Durban on the 29th May, 1948. Unfortunately for my Indian friends in Natal, but fortunately for me on that day I expect my wife to arrive by air in Johannesburg after about 10 months absence. I cannot be blamed for remaining in Johannesburg in anticipation of such a great event.

There is something ominous for racial and colour relations in the circumstances under which your Conference assembles and will deliberate to-day. You are without your President Dr. Y.M. Dadoo. Likewise in Natal the Conference of the Natal Indian

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These men are not dead. They are not out of the country. Yes, they are out of the land of the free. They are not criminals. They have committed no crime. They have been committed in gaol because they have organised and led their people to fight colour discrimination and oppression. They have demanded freedom of movement for their people. In fact they have demanded human rights for their people. They have demanded that human rights be extended to their community as well thereby making South Africa a democracy in word and in truth.

During the war people of other colours committed acts and publicly expressed views that were tantamount to treason especially in a state of emergency, but nothing happened to these leaders because they were white and above all they and their followers have the vote which determines who shall govern and who shall legislate.

Unfortunately for your leaders, their followers and most other Non-Europeans have no vote. They therefore have no constitutional means of recording their displeasure against an act of Parliament, the Government or individual Parliamentarians as is the case in a democratic State.

As I said before these men are not criminals. They are heroes for human rights. They are champions of right and justice. Although they are undergoing privations and hardships in gaol, they must have one consolation in that the whole civilised world and right thinking people know that these men are in gaol for a righteous cause.

One wonders whether those who are responsible for their imprisonment have a clear conscience for this anti-democratic and anti-Christian act. Hitler and Mussolini, in the heyday of their respective regimes brooked no opposition. They put out all opposition or put them in gaol. But the forces of right prevailed.

Although our forces composed of all races and colours said...

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The promises of the Prime Minister and other leading South Africans are now forgotten because the hour of danger is past. We were called upon to die together to crush the evil that threatened human rights all over the ~~same~~ world. The "threat to world freedom", as the philosophies of Hitler and Mussolini were looked upon, has been destroyed. In spite of these conditions I have just described obtained in our post war South Africa, the United Party Manifesto has been issued with the following points, among others, (2) "The maintenance of white civilisation and of the way of life known as Western Democracy with answerving opposition to Fascism, Nazism, Communism and all other forms of undemocratic government" (5) Protection of the fundamental rights of the individual especially freedom-of speech, religion and the press."

I wonder if words have their real meanings in South Africa. The arrest and conviction of Drs. Dadoo and Naicker for leading their people against discrimination raises a fundamental point for all leaders of oppressed and discriminated sections. It is a dangerous precedent. It is more akin to fascism than democracy.

The sacrifices of your leaders are a great challenge to you for more sacrifices and devoted following. Your struggle, your sacrifices and your determination has been an object lesson to us in loyalty to your own leaders and to the cause. Your resolution on the Mahatma shows devotion and loyalty to leadership.

Your campaign made it possible for our case - the Africans' case, the case of South West Africa to come before the United Nations. I want to thank you and the Government of India through you for the leading role their delegation played for the cause of human rights on behalf of the non-represented Africans.

Through your struggle in the past 18 months, you have severely wounded colour discrimination and domination in South Africa. There will never be a recovery from this blow. There will be

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distorted and misrepresented. You must remember with William Cullen Bryant that Truth crushed to earth will rise again
The eternal years of God are hers
But error wounded wreathes with pain
And dies among her worshippers.

In conclusion, I want again to emphasise that in your struggle you are not fighting for the Indians alone. You are fighting for the freedom of all South Africa - white and black. The Europeans in South Africa cannot be free while three-fourths of the population - the Non-Europeans are not free. You are fighting to make South Africa a democracy. You are fighting to save our country from committing national suicide.

In these few words, I have the honour and the pleasure of declaring your Conference open -