



Thomas Nkobi Cemetery, Boksburg, 10 April 2013

Address by ANC President Comrade Jacob Zuma

on the occasion of the

20th commemoration of Chris Hani

*Members of the Hani family,
The General Secretary of the SACP, Cde Blade Nzimande,
The General Secretary of COSATU, Cde Zwelinzima Vavi,
ANC Secretary General and the Leadership of the ANC,
National Chairperson of MKMVA, Cde Kebby Maphatsoe,
The Executive Mayor of Ekurhuleni Metro,*

Comrades and friends,

I greet you all in the spirit of selfless struggle for total emancipation of all our people.

During the month of April, we mark Freedom Month and Heroes Month. We lower our banners and salute our selfless leaders who gave their all so that South Africa could be free.

Thus, we commemorate the lives of Comrade President Oliver Tambo, the General Secretary of the SACP and NEC member of the ANC Comrade Chris Hani and the young lion, Solomon “Kalushi” Mahlangu.

During the same month, we also gained our freedom from apartheid colonialism, from institutionalised racism and oppression. We began to build a new society, free of hatred

and vengeance. We began to build a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa.

In April, we therefore celebrate as well as take stock of the long arduous road travelled from a racist South Africa that excluded the majority to the new society we are building, of justice, human rights and freedom.

Comrades,

We have gathered here today in particular, to commemorate and celebrate the life of one of the leading personalities and leaders of the ANC and SACP, comrade Chris Thembisile Hani.

As we all know, the life of comrade Chris was brutally brought to an abrupt end exactly twenty years ago today.

Today we commemorate that vibrant life that was taken away too soon. We commemorate a life lived in struggle.

Like many revolutionaries, Comrade Chris grew up as a child under harsh conditions of poverty engineered by the apartheid regime to ensure that black people amount to nothing more than a source of cheap labour.

It was also during his childhood that the apartheid regime introduced Bantu education in order to further its heinous aims of entrenching the subservience mentality in the minds of black children.

At that time, the regime had also made illegal any political activity at African schools in order to suppress any form of resistance to its racist policies.

Despite, and in spite of these odds, Comrade Chris went on to join the ANC Youth league at the tender age of fifteen years. It was at this stage that he developed an unquenchable thirst for freedom, justice and equality.

In the following years, due to his unparalleled commitment to the struggle, he was to become one of the finest organic intellectuals in the service of the people of South Africa.

When he went to the University of Fort Hare, he learned and embraced Marxism. He understood the intersection of the class and national struggles and therefore the relationship between the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. He became a Marxist-Leninist who adopted a scientific approach to struggle.

This understanding led him to join the underground SACP in 1961 and uMkhonto Wesizwe in 1962.

Through dedication and diligence, Comrade Chris patiently rose through the ranks of our movement and became a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, Chief

of Staff of uMkhonto We Sizwe and General Secretary of the SACP later in 1991.

It is important to note that Comrade Chris Hani was a veteran of the Luthuli Detachment who fought gallantly and bravely during the Wankie-Sipolilo Campaign in Zimbabwe, which was a joint campaign of MK and ZAPU forces.

This was one of the major operations of MK where MK for the first time came face to face with the enemy in combat.

He was part of the command structure during that campaign, as a Commissar, and where he distinguished himself in bravery.

Comrade Chris was also instrumental in building forward structures of the ANC; he was deployed to Lesotho to strengthen the internal underground structures of the movement a task which he performed with distinction.

While in Lesotho he was a target of numerous assassination attacks of the apartheid regime.

In all these instances Comrade Chris proved without a doubt that he was a very courageous, fearless and a brave comrade.

During this time Comrade Chris also served in various structures of the ANC and MK including being part of the Politico-Military Committee (PMC) as well as also being part of the ANC NEC.

He served in all important structures of the organisation, including the Senior Organ which was in charge of preparing both the political and military aspects of our revolution.

Later, Comrade Chris was appointed to be an MK Commissar and Chief of Staff, he was very popular among MK cadres, the reason for his popularity among rank and file of MK members is because he was an honest comrade, he was forthright therefore MK combatants respected, loved and trusted him.

One of the strong qualities of Comrade Chris was the fact that he understood the Alliance very well as a leader and member of MK, ANC, and the Party.

He saw no contradictions in the alliance and was a living embodiment of what it meant to have many hats and dual membership within the Alliance.

Because of his understanding of the role of all these he never used his leadership in both organisations to sow discord and disunity, he never used the Party and ANC to attack each other, he never abused one structure over the other.

Comrade Chris did not regard his membership and leadership of the ANC as less important, as compared to that of the Party, he took his responsibilities very seriously in all structures and never confused the fundamental roles of the two.

Thus, in Comrade Chris, we had an embodiment of the Alliance as he belonged to the ANC and SACP simultaneously.

It reminds us of the words of Comrade Oliver Tambo at the funeral of Comrade Moses Mabhida, acknowledging his leadership of both the ANC and SACP.

He said;

“This combination of functions in one leader of our people upset our adversaries because it reflected the permanence and acceptability among our people of the idea and the practice of the unity of the revolutionary democratic, the socialist and the trade union movements in the South African struggle for national liberation.

“It was part of Comrade Mabhida's greatness that, having quite early on understood the importance of the unity of these great movements, he succeeded in ably serving each one of them individually, and all of them together, as a collective front for national and social emancipation”.

Indeed Comrade Chris played all his roles effectively. As General Secretary of our vanguard party, Comrade Chris tirelessly endeavoured to put the problems of the working class at the top of the national agenda.

As a Soldier, Commissar and Chief of Staff of our glorious army MK, he fearlessly and fiercely fought in combat against the oppressive and murderous apartheid regime for the liberation of his people.

When he returned to the country from exile, Comrade Chris remained in touch with the people and knew their daily experiences and wishes. He knew and appreciated the aspirations of our people.

He was a dedicated soldier for peace, and there is a lot that the younger generation should learn from him.

Comrades,

The apartheid murderers robbed us a cadre who was robust yet respectful, conscious of his stature yet humble, and forthrightly outspoken yet mindful of organisational boundaries, while ensuring that the apartheid regime knew exactly what he thought of them at any given time!

Such revolutionary traits earned Comrade Chris an eternal place in the hearts and minds of our people.

It led President Nelson Mandela to say at his funeral:

"We worked together in the National Executive Committee of the ANC. We had vigorous

debates and an intense exchange of ideas. You were completely unafraid. No task was too small for you to perform.

“Your ready smile and warm friendship was a source of strength and companionship.

“You lived in my home, and I loved you like the true son you were”.

Comrade Chris’s role as MK chief of staff is by far one that endeared him to the youth of our country. He spoke their language, understood their anger and impatience.

But he was also always able to deal with difficult situations and decisions that he did not agree with. One of these was the suspension of the armed struggle which he believed was untimely, but he had to defend it.

He said;

"In the current political situation, the decision by our organisation to suspend armed action is correct and is an important contribution in maintaining the momentum of negotiation".

Thus he was able to rise above his disappointment and publicly defend a decision he had not agreed with.

Comrades,

We believe that our movement, since Mangaung, has begun to return to the basics and the values that many in Comrade Chris’s generation lived by, that of the discipline of the collective.

Once a decision is taken, all of us now spend our time focusing on how best to implement it for the good of the organisation and ultimately the good of the country.

This is the overriding principle which guided our movement and Alliance over the many years of unbroken unity.

We will continue to build this unity and the discipline that our forebears knew and understood. It would be sheer opportunism to use the name of Comrade Chris to do anything contrary to the maximum unity of the Alliance which he stood for.

We are building an ANC that all South Africans will be proud of and want to associate with.

We are rebuilding the ANC so that it captures the imagination of the youth which makes up a huge majority in the population of our country.

We want them to entrust their future to the ANC in the knowledge that what Comrade Chris and his contemporaries fought for, will be achieved for the good of the current and future generations.

Comrades,

We owe Comrade Chris Hani and indeed all our martyrs a debt that can only be repaid by the unwavering commitment and dedication to the betterment of our people's lives as displayed by our daily conduct.

We must therefore accelerate the transformation of our society and free our people from the shackles of extreme poverty, unemployment and inequality.

We must hasten to usher in the type of society which Comrade Chris lived and died for. This means that for as long as there are children who go to bed hungry, young people who have no jobs and no education, women who are molested in their homes or in the streets, people who still yearn for water, electricity, sanitation and decent homes, the struggle that Comrade Chris was waging is still continuing.

While wanting to see change happening fast in every corner of the country, we are under no illusion that South Africa will automatically and comprehensively change in only 20 years. That is impossible.

The legacy of apartheid runs too deep and too far back for the democratic administration to reverse it in so short a period.

However, as leaders and public servants in this fourth administration, we must work harder and faster and more efficiently, to ensure that true freedom reaches the poor and working class in a shorter time than colonialism and apartheid took to render them pariahs in the land of their birth.

We must honour the memory of Comrade Chris through delivering the better life for all that he believed in, as quickly as possible, working with our people.

Some of our goals which are also his goals, have been fulfilled. Twenty-years down the line, a progressive Constitution is in place and a vibrant multi-party democracy is firmly established.

We are able to say to him that we have taken huge strides to expand access to basic services such as running water and sanitation, electricity, low cost housing, public education and health, and also implemented a comprehensive social assistance system reaching over 16 million people and much more.

We say to him that we still face major challenges.

But the determination to find solutions remains high and we have a plan, the New Development Plan and action plans within it such as the New Growth Path, designed to help us achieve decent jobs.

We can also say to Comrade Chris that the Tripartite Alliance remains strong and

determined to tackle these challenges head-on.

As we mark the 19th year of freedom and democracy, we emphasise therefore, that leaders in government and public servants must work harder than ever, to improve the lives of the poor.

Other sectors such as business, labour and civil society in general, must also provide support as government cannot achieve a better life for all working alone.

Together, we must never lose sight of the ultimate goal of achieving prosperity and an improved quality of life for all the people of South Africa, especially the poor. And that quest for prosperity demands the unity of the South African people. It demands that we put differences aside and put South Africa first, in everything we do and say.

Comrades and friends,

Due to his immense contribution to the struggle against apartheid and for a better life, Comrade Chris was in 2008 posthumously bestowed the highest honour that the ANC can give to an individual, the honour of Isithwalandwe.

He has joined such greats as Chief Albert Luthuli, Govan Mbeki, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Helen Joseph, Lilian Ngoyi, Harry Gwala, Moses Kotane and a few others.

I want to end by again quoting the words of former President Nelson Mandela – may he have everlasting life - when he bid farewell to Chris:

“Now is the time for all South Africans to stand together against those who, from any quarter, wish to destroy what Chris Hani gave his life for – the freedom of all of us.”

Comrade Hani may no longer be with us, but his undying spirit and ideas continue to live in us and will do so eternally in future generations.

Amandla!

Matla!

All power!

I thank you

