

NELSON MANDELA'S *Message to* BRITISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

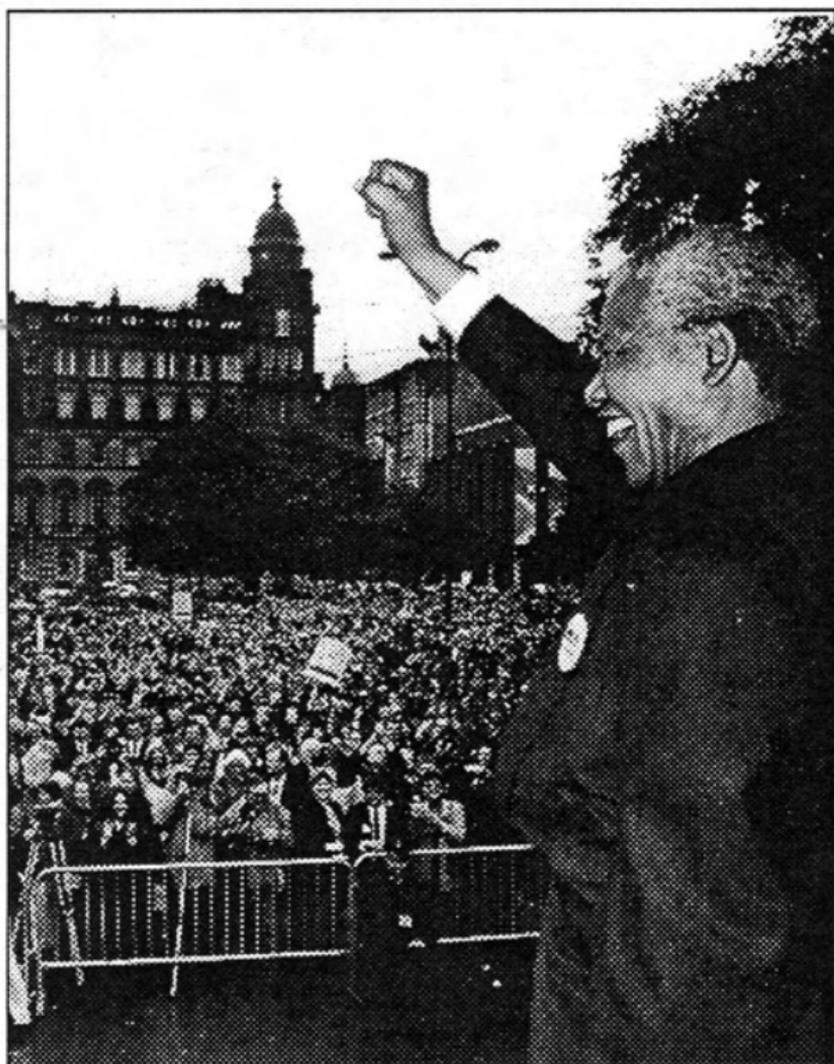


PHOTO: DAVID PRATT

Mandela salutes a crowd of 9000, George Square, Glasgow, October 1993.

**“We need your continuing commitment
for our vision of a new South Africa to
become a reality”**

October 9th 1993, Glasgow

Nelson Mandela, President of the African National Congress of South Africa addressed a National Assembly of representatives of British Local Authorities and the wider community.

Nelson Mandela paid a warm, tribute to the contribution which local authorities in Britain have made to the international campaign against apartheid. He commended the work of the National Steering Committee of Local Authorities Against Apartheid (NSC) and the Local Authority Resource Unit on Apartheid (LARUA) and urged local authorities, through the NSC and LARUA, to continue to engage with the people of South Africa in their struggle to transform their country into a non-racial democracy.

“We hope that you will continue to have faith in our cause as we move from being anti-apartheid to pro-democracy”

Nelson Mandela went on to outline the three key challenges posed to British local authorities by the transformation of South Africa from an apartheid state to a non-racial democracy.

"The first challenge is to ensure that the elections take place on 27th April next year, that they are genuinely 'free and fair' and that all parties accept and respect the result as such.

We need you to remain engaged in support of this process in such a manner that everybody concerned in our country is left in no doubt as to the absolute determination of the international community that the elections proceed as planned.

However there are forces in our country which refuse to accept the inevitability of democratic change. They are prepared to resort to brute force to deny us our liberty and to create an atmosphere of fear, insecurity and destabilisation.

It is all the more essential, therefore, that the international community should play a role to assist us in the process of supervising, monitoring and verifying the electoral process.

We have appealed to the United Nations, the OAU, the Commonwealth and the European Community to co-operate together to make an effective contribution. We remain convinced that we can count on public opinion, as expressed through democratically elected local representatives, to make sure that the necessary human and financial resources -are made available by the international community to make this a reality".

'The second challenge is the need to ensure that the elections result in a decisive majority committed to a democratic future for South Africa. We in the ANC lead the struggle for democratic change and we must have the necessary financial resources if we are to contest the elections on an equitable basis.

We therefore launched the Votes for Freedom campaign here in Britain in order to raise £1 million towards the ANC's election fund.

The task before us is immense. The ANC has never contested an election in its history. The great majority of our potential supporters have never voted. Many are illiterate. Many still fear that the vote will not be secret and that they will face reprisals if they vote for the ANC. Many others fear the consequences of political violence. Only a massive programme of voter education and effective organisation and mobilisation will enable us to overcome these challenges.

Yet our resources are minimal compared with our main adversaries".

"The third challenge is even greater. We want you to look beyond the coming elections to the task we face of transforming the South African society and of embarking on a programme of reconstruction and development which will be capable of burying both apartheid and all its legacies.

In this regard local authorities in Britain have a wealth of experience and talent in the field of housing, education, social services, sporting and cultural facilities, municipal services and indeed the full range of services which we will wish to provide for our people at a local and regional level".

Finally Nelson Mandela urged local authorities, through the NSC and LARUA, to give detailed consideration to the task of preparing for a new agenda of solidarity.



Nelson Mandela at the joint Freedom of The Cities ceremony, Glasgow, October 1993.

“The new non-racial South Africa must also become a beacon of hope for all those resisting racism wherever it raises its ugly head”

The Local Authority Resource Unit on Apartheid

The Resource Unit on Apartheid was set up as an initiative of Local Authorities Against Apartheid which represents over 200 local authorities in Britain with positive anti-apartheid policies. The Unit exists to provide an information, advice and research service for its members, to pool resources and avoid duplication of effort. It relies entirely on membership subscriptions in order to carry out its work.

Developments within South Africa, to the effect that there is now real hope for a democratic future for the country, are creating a new context for the work of the Local Authority Resource Unit on Apartheid - currently and in the immediate future, the Unit is focusing on facilitating the contribution of British local authorities to ensuring that the elections in South Africa, scheduled for April 27th 1994, take place and are free and fair.

Looking ahead to the post election period the Local Authority Resource Unit is engaged in identifying the role of British local authorities within a new agenda, addressing the challenges of the future for both South Africa and the region, and in particular the development of linking and technical assistance projects.

The Local Authority Resource Unit on Apartheid thus aims to continue to play a key role in facilitating local authorities to make an effective contribution to the eradication of apartheid, its injustices and its legacies and particularly to the development of a new non-racial and democratic South Africa which will have a positive impact on race relations throughout the world.

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