

'Black South African choices are becoming more stark by the day'

by Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi

The following remarks were delivered on the occasion of a meeting with the Danish Center Democratic parliamentary group by Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi, chief minister Kwazulu, president of Inkatha, the moderate South African liberation movement, and chairman, the South African Black Alliance, in Copenhagen on Jan. 22, 1986.

I am very pleased to have been afforded the opportunity of addressing you here on this occasion. I have passed through Denmark in the past on visits to other Scandinavian countries, but this is in fact the first time that I have specifically come to your country. I have had to travel fairly extensively in recent times to North America, Britain, Europe, and Israel, and Denmark has always been a place where I would like to have gone.

Black South Africans know that the Scandinavian countries generally are a place where there is great sympathy for our cause. The South African struggle for liberation has been a long, hard, grinding struggle against terrible adversity, and we have always been encouraged by the fact that in Scandinavia there are a great many who sympathize with us in our suffering.

Scandinavians, as people elsewhere in the world, are confronted with very conflicting views expressed by Black South Africans about the situation in our country, and wherever I have traveled in the West, I find that people are confused about our situation, because somehow they anticipate a suffering people to be bonded together in their suffering and to speak with one voice about central issues. They forget that Black South Africans are human beings and behave as human beings the world over.

Long history of struggle

It was as long ago as 1910 that Black South Africans were excluded from my country's parliamentary process. For generations, Black South Africans have been struggling against racist oppression and as the decades rolled by, our oppression deepened and successive South African governments took on

ever increasing powers to maintain White supremacy. When the National Party came to power in 1948, there was a phenomenal growth of oppressive measures, and now in South Africa, there are truly terrible draconian laws available to the government to enact its will against the wishes of the majority of the people of the country.

Ours is a very long history of struggling against terrible discrimination. For many decades after we were excluded from the parliamentary process, we struggled in isolation. The Western industrialized nations of the world themselves were either colonialists or accepted colonialism as inevitable in the order of things. It was only in the sixties that the international community began sensing the urgency with which the question of apartheid should be regarded.

During these many long decades, Blacks who demanded even minimal recognition as human beings with civic rights, were regarded as enemies of the State and were dealt with accordingly. Every tactic and strategy adopted failed to bring about change, until in the end, after the National Party took over in 1948, a great deal of confusion began reigning in Black politics. There never has been an easy solution to the South African problem and there is not now an easy solution to our problems. Faced with very difficult circumstances, which endured for generations, Black South Africans began disputing with each other how best to go about liberating their country. It is the very intensity with which Blacks demand the liberation of their country, which leads to views and counterviews being argued so vehemently. Ours is not the task of deciding which government policy we should adopt. Ours is not North American or European-type politics, where politics takes place within the framework of the acceptance of the kind of society in which people live. Ours is the kind of politics which needs to transform society. Ours is the politics which has to create a democracy where a democracy does not exist. Ours is the politics which has to face life and death issues. Europeans should accept that in these circumstances, where there is no blueprint, and where there is not a heritage which the people accept, that it is naive to

expect Black South Africans all to talk with one voice.

There is vast agreement amongst Black South Africans that we want an open, race-free democracy, where there is equality of opportunity for all, and where each is entitled with the other to pursue his or her life and to improve his or her lot as he or she desires to do so. There is a vast yearning for freedom and in this yearning, Black South Africans are bonded together. Across the broad spectrum of Black South African opinion, there is very considerable consensus that apartheid must be abolished for the scourge that it is; that the present constitution of the country must be rejected in part and in whole; and that any attempt to perpetuate racism by enshrining it in the constitution, which the ruling National Party has now done, must be resisted with all the means at our disposal. Over the generations, very considerable consensus has evolved that we do not want to exchange White oppressors for Black oppressors, and everywhere among ordinary South Africans there is a deep repugnance for racism.

It is about the means of bringing about change that disputes run so deep in Black South Africa. Every politician in the Western world knows that the pursuit of tactics and strategies in difficult circumstances involves one in the politics of gathering support for particular tactics and strategies in opposition to support for conflicting tactics and strategies.

In South Africa today, there is a fierce battle of minds going on, for Black South African support for the polar opposites of bringing about change through violence or bringing about change through the politics of negotiation and the utilization of non-violent tactics and strategies.

The Black South African political scene has, since the introduction of the new constitution in 1984 taken on a new dimension. Prior to 1984, Black South Africans could strive for inclusion in an existing parliament and in the existing institutionalized life of our country. Now we are faced with the need to strive, not for inclusion in the parliamentary system we accept, but for the rewriting of the very constitution of the land of our birth. This has radicalized politics, and the new constitution has dramatized differences of opinion about the kind of constitution we should end up with.

There is a great dividing line in Black South Africa between Blacks, on the one hand, who seek to further the politics of negotiation to produce the kind of national consensus which would result in a modern industrialized democracy which would take up its rightful place in the Western hemisphere of interests; and on the other hand, those who are committed now to the violent overthrow of the South African government, and adopt tactics and strategies aimed at reducing the country to chaos and ungovernability.

Black South African choices are becoming dramatically more stark by the day. We have to choose between tactics and strategies which will result in national reconciliation, while yet we struggle to bring about the liberation of our country with tactics and strategies which will consolidate the

For as far we can see ahead, the economic growth in South Africa will be entirely dependent on the continued inflow of capital, technology and managerial skills from the highly industrialized Western world. We need to create jobs, and whatever government rules South Africa, we need to create national wealth which will enable the government of the day to wipe out the backlogs and to wipe out mass poverty, ignorance, and disease.

power of the Black masses and achieve victories, regardless of whether or not those victories are victories against Whites or with Whites.

An outline of Inkatha's position

I would like simply to give you an outline of Inkatha's position in the Black struggle for liberation. Inkatha is the largest Black political movement ever to have emerged in the history of South Africa. Inkatha has now over one million card-carrying paid-up members. No Black leader has ever gathered the constituency support in Black South Africa which I today enjoy. This massive membership of Inkatha is dominated numerically by peasants and workers. It has branches scattered across the length and breadth of the country, and it is as representative of Blacks in urban areas as it is of Blacks in rural areas. It is as representative of the old as it is of the young. Inkatha's Youth Brigade is the largest youth organization ever to have emerged in the history of the country. Its Women's Brigade is the largest women's brigade ever to have emerged in the history of the country.

Inkatha is intensely democratic. Its supreme authority is the Annual General Conference, where policies are determined and where tactics and strategies are accepted and rejected. Inkatha's leadership is elected by its ordinary members. At branch, regional, and national levels, Inkatha's representatives are chosen by the people, and its Annual General Conference is a conference of representatives chosen to be there by the people. I never speak for myself on public issues. I reflect only that which Inkatha's membership has endorsed. There is nothing that I have said today which does not have the solid endorsement of Inkatha.

The point I am making, is that when Black South Africans are given the freedom to choose and are given democratic machinery through which to exercise their choices, and through which to determine tactics and strategies in the Black struggle for liberation, choices are made which make a mockery of the media representation of South Africa.

Inkatha's mass membership has been drawn to it primarily by two factors. One is the democratic nature of Inkatha. Ordinary Black people know that it is their organization. They know that it is an organization where the general membership determines tactics and strategies and in which the leaders are appointed by the people. They are also attracted to Inkatha in their masses, because Inkatha's aims and objectives meet with their approval, and our tactics and strategies are tactics and strategies which ordinary people believe in the end will win.

Inkatha has read the lessons of history in Africa and elsewhere, and we know that the way a country sets about liberating itself, determines the kind of country which comes into existence after liberation. Inkatha has the advantage of being an organization in the last country on the African continent to throw off racist domination. The lessons that are there for us to learn as South Africans all combine to teach us that it is far easier to produce an empty victory after which people remain in terrible want, than it is to produce a victory which results in a better way of life for ordinary people.

We face the realities of a Black population growing at something like 3% per annum, which has produced a huge population bulge now moving towards the market place. Over 50% of all Black South Africans are 15 years old and younger. This statistic has very far-reaching consequences for us, which are pertinent to the manner in which we liberate our country. For us it would be suicidal to destroy the South African economy in the process of liberating our country from racism. The truly horrendous vast backlogs that exist in Black housing, education facilities, and health and welfare services, demand that we flee from purely ideological motivations and seek to keep our feet on the ground of reality. I do not make an ideological statement when I say that the free enterprise system is the most efficient system which mankind has devised with which to translate natural resources into human wealth. That is not an ideological statement because I have never argued that it is a universal truth. It is simply a pragmatic statement about our own circumstances.

For as far as we can see ahead, the economic growth in South Africa will be entirely dependent on the continued inflow of capital, technology, and managerial skills from the highly industrialized Western world. We need to create jobs, and whatever government rules South Africa, we need to create national wealth which will enable the government of the day to wipe out the backlogs and to wipe out mass poverty, ignorance, and disease.

For us, the struggle for liberation must therefore be dom-

inated by the politics of reconciliation. South Africa will only survive the future if it makes a truly national effort to make life worthwhile for ordinary people. That is what politics is all about for me. I am committed to ordinary people. I am committed to the victims of apartheid. I am committed to the poorest of the poor.

For me it is absolutely imperative that the process of liberating South Africa should be a process of uniting the people. That is one of the pertinent reasons why I rule out bringing about radical change through violence; and what is more, there is still no reason to believe that we cannot bring about radical change through the politics of negotiation and non-violent tactics and strategies.

The politics of reconciliation

Apartheid set out to balkanize South Africa into separate Black and White states, but White survival meant the ever-increasing incorporation of Blacks into the economic life of the country. Today Whites are totally dependent on Blacks for their very survival, and the vertical mobility of Blacks through society resulting from their economic incorporation, has given Blacks immense bargaining powers. For me the politics of reconciliation demands that we make every effort to translate economic interdependence into political interdependence.

The threat of escalating violence and the threat of the international isolation of South Africa has always played a positive role in the struggle for liberation in my country. Scandinavians have a long track record of making their contribution to these threats. It would, in my opinion, be tragic if the West now overplayed its hand. The actuality of violence much beyond the levels which already exist in South Africa, and the actuality of the economic isolation of South Africa, would in my opinion be extremely counter-productive. There are in South Africa already Blacks who are adopting a scorched-earth policy to bring about radical change, and who are committed to the destruction of the economy and to making the country ungovernable through violence on our streets. They in turn are inviting a scorched-earth policy from the government. We who know our government, know that they are quite capable of doing just this, and they most certainly have the means of doing so. White South Africans cannot be battered into being democrats, and the continued upward spiraling of the levels of violence in our society, both from the State and from those who oppose the State, will result finally in a race war and in the production of a Beirut situation in which there will be no winners. South Africa has not yet witnessed anything but a small proportion of the total brutality which White racism could mount. Things are dangerously poised, and right now there is a very urgent need for the Western world to support Black forces working for national reconciliation through the politics of negotiation and non-violent tactics and strategies.