

UNITED STATES CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS

WASHINGTON. FEBRUARY 1985

AIDE MEMOIRE FOR DISCUSSION WITH UNITED STATES CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS BY MANGOSUTHU G. BUTHELEZI, CHIEF MINISTER KWAZULU, PRESIDENT OF INKATHA AND CHAIRMAN, THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ALLIANCE WASHINGTON. ??TH FEBRUARY 1985

Meaningful political dialogue is notoriously difficult to pursue, even in the most propitious of circumstances. Even where there are common objectives and there is a traditionally defined system of social, political and economic values, political groups can be at loggerheads and experience grave difficulties in discussing things meaningfully and rationally. One has only to listen to parliamentary debates in Western democracies to take the point that I am making. As soon as vested interests are associated with power struggles, situations are represented and misrepresented and it becomes extremely difficult to have meaningful conversation.

When political dialogue takes place across oceans and it is dialogue between people in vastly differing circumstances, with disparate objectives, dialogue becomes well nigh impossible. There are, I am sure, men and women of integrity on all sides of the United Nations debating chamber, and yet the integrity of parties does not safeguard truth, and the fair representation of situations is often problematic. Dialogue between Americans and South Africans is dialogue in the most difficult of all circumstances, and it is my plea today that we do everything in our power to hear each other and to surmount the barriers inhibiting meaningful communication. I will be talking about life and death issues; I will be talking about a struggle for liberation in which millions stand on the brink of disaster; I will be talking about what is happening in South Africa and I will be talking about the implications of what is happening, not only for South Africans but for millions in neighbouring States and in the wider region of Southern, Eastern and Central Africa.

The South African situation is an explosive situation which has ramifications for the whole sub-continent. It has ramifications for East/West relationships, and it certainly has ramifications for the role that Western industrial societies could possibly play in improving the lot of so many millions in such a vast area.

Political struggles in the United States are struggles over access to power and the right to wield power in the defence of national objectives on which there are widespread agreements, and the right to wield power to direct America as a dominant force in the free world.

Political struggles in South Africa are struggles in which people not only seek power but they are struggles first and foremost about people's rights to seek power. They are also struggles to

establish the kind of society in which political power can be made meaningful to ordinary people and in which the abuses of power can be minimised.

The struggle for liberation in South Africa must necessarily re-write the nature of society in which people are living. We have in South Africa the grossest imaginable abuse of parliamentary procedures and the wielding of political power. Colonial conquest led to an entrenched White minority which enjoys a total monopoly of social, economic and political power which they refused to share with the majority of South Africans who happen to be Black. The current political dispensation is one in which the country's five million Whites appropriate 87 per cent of South Africa as their own domain, in which they aspire to exercise exclusive White political control in perpetuity. The country's 22 million Black citizens are expected to seek their political future in ten fragmented so-called homelands which together comprise something like 13 per cent of the country.

I exercise my political leadership in the struggle for liberation in the total refusal to co-operate with a government which thus abuses the sacred charge of wielding power for the benefit of the nation as a whole. I exercise my political leadership in the struggle for liberation in which Blacks have got a historical role to play as Blacks, and I have again and again experienced very fundamental difficulties when talking to Americans and other Westerners about my responsibilities as a Black leader and about the tactics and strategies which we feel should be employed.

There has in recent times been an upsurge of American indignation about apartheid, and we are receiving signals in South Africa that American Congressmen, Congresswomen and Senators are seeking anew to express their abhorrence to apartheid. Decent Americans are expressing their indignation in numerous ways and the dramatisation of this indignation foretells possible realignments and the reformulation of stances both within and between the Republican and Democratic Parties. It is therefore most opportune for me at this point in time to make a number of fundamental observations.

Indignation is something I understand, and I understand that it is related to legitimate anger, and the fundamentally important point I want to make today is that indignation and anger are human assets when properly employed, but a human curse when abused or misdirected. I am angry myself for having to suffer the indignity of being a Black man in the country of my birth - South Africa. In the country of my birth I am not allowed to vote for members of parliament; I am not allowed to live where I choose to live; I am not allowed to pursue the education of my choice; I am not allowed to pursue the values I hold dear in the company of the people of my choice; I am not allowed to associate politically with members of other race groups by becoming a working member of a party which is not a Black party; I cannot worship where I choose to worship; I

cannot educate my children where I would have them educated; and believe it or not, there are still towns in South Africa where curfew bells ring at night to drive Blacks off the streets. My human dignity is affronted every day of my life and I pursue political objectives amongst a people who suffer these indignities and worse; who are deprived economically, socially and politically and who are ready to die for what they believe, in attempts to bring about the fundamental changes which will turn inhuman insanity into civilised respectability.

All my life I have been committed to the eradication of apartheid and the mantle of leadership rests heavily on my shoulders. I talk today as a Black leader pursuing great democratic values so entrenched in the United States as the world's leading democracy. I speak as the President of Inkatha which in the short space of just under ten years has amassed nearly a million card-carrying members and which is supported by millions more. I talk as a democrat because Inkatha is first and foremost a democratic organisation in which there is real and effective machinery which enables ordinary people both to elect their leaders and to determine the policy and the tactics and strategies within which that leadership must act. Inkatha's aims and objectives and its tactics and strategies accord with millions of Black South Africans.

We in Inkatha believe that the struggle for liberation in South Africa is a multi-faceted struggle in which it is essential to employ a multi-strategy approach. I have never claimed to be the sole spokesmen for my country's 22 million Blacks, and Inkatha has never claimed to be the only Black group capable of wielding real influence in the struggle. In fact, we perceive ourselves as playing a part in the ongoing process of bringing about change, but the role we play is we believe a vital role, and it is judged as such by the millions who support Inkatha's leadership.

Congressmen and Senators in the United States will receive conflicting signals from Black South Africa, and this is understandable and in fact to be expected. Black South Africans have the right to differ with each other and to pursue differing aims and objectives, but as a democrat I believe that the final arbiter of who is acceptable and who is not acceptable in Black South African politics are the masses of ordinary people. No other organisation is endorsed by ordinary people as effectively as Inkatha is endorsed. I ask therefore that when I make observations about the upsurge of American indignation about apartheid, my observations are taken seriously.

You as members of Congress and the Senate are the custodians of the Great American Dream. You have been elected to office by ordinary people and you of all people should be able to distinguish between the voices of wild rhetoric and the voices of leaders who speak the language of the people and who have massive constituency backing to

articulate the wishes of the people.

As I ask Americans to employ their indignation skillfully and rationally, I ask them to bear the following in mind:

1. The practice of democracy is deeply and adversely affected by circumstances of mass poverty. I ask Americans to remember that Black South Africans do not wish to destroy the foundations of future progress by indulging in the politics of anger which is satisfying in the short term but detrimental in the medium and long term.
2. The majority of Black South Africans seek to bring about fundamental changes in South Africa through the politics of negotiation, and by employing non-violent means.
3. Ordinary Black South Africans see politics as a bread and butter thing and as a vehicle for improvements in their standard of living and in individual and family circumstances.
4. Black South Africans are intimately aware of White power and that it will be used to protect Whites preferentially if South Africa began to feel the effects of economic isolation.
5. Ordinary Blacks do not distinguish between those among them who were forced to live in urban ghettos by apartheid and those whom the same apartheid forces to live in rural areas. For them, the rural/urban dichotomy does not exist as a political dimension, and for them life under apartheid rule is as obnoxious for Blacks in apartheid-created townships, or apartheid-created so-called homelands.
6. Black South Africans do not wish to pay terrible prices for failing strategies and they neither believe that the armed struggle, nor the effective economic isolation of South Africa, could succeed in destroying apartheid for the foreseeable future. Both the armed struggle and increased economic deprivation, which Blacks would experience as the result of effective economic sanctions against the country as a whole, would involve Blacks in paying heavy prices for gains which would be minimal if there be any gains at all.
7. Black strategists with their feet on the ground are aware that people who suffer as we suffer, experience losses of morale in the face of the prospects of greatly increased suffering. It is the taste of something better which galvanizes impoverished people to demand more and which creates a sustained determination to struggle for that more.
8. Righteous indignation which vents itself against South Africa's White apartheid bosses but which also extolls casualties from Blacks, must be rejected, as the use of bombs against strategic and military targets in South Africa which kill and maim ordinary Black citizens in the process, must be

rejected.

9. Americans must always remember that the international might of the United States should not be used to dictate to Black South Africans about what they should do and what they should not do, and what they should suffer and should not suffer, as Americans give vent to anger and indignation against the horrors of apartheid.
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