

ADDRESS TO THE UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

FEBRUARY 1985

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INKATHA AND CHAIRMAN, THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ALLIANCE
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Life is full of contradictions and ironies and moral values are always under siege by immovable realities and by human failures. The moral is so frequently the best that is possible in given circumstances as every leader in business and politics knows. The choice between greater and lesser evils is a choice we all have to face and where we have to make decisions which affect the well-being of others, we so frequently cannot afford the luxury of standing on what would become high-falutin principles.

These realities give some the licence to use and abuse people and to seek their own gain in everything they do. The truly moral man has at times to make compromises and to observe principles which are ranked so that where there is a conflict of principle, decisions are rational and compromises themselves become principled. Every political leader worth his salt deals with the realities around him and for me politics is truly the art of the possible.

I too have ideals about society, and I too could provide blue-prints of how South Africa's apartheid system should be abolished and replaced with a system of government and a social and economic order which are fair and just. I too could do so regardless of whether I am being Utopian, and I too could become vociferous in demanding Utopias overnight. I am, however, a leader elected and supported by millions of ordinary Black South Africans who suffer terribly in their daily lives, and who struggle to keep alive and to improve their circumstances and the circumstances which their children will one day inherit. I am a democrat and the mass constituency which supports me demands that I deal in realities and my own moral sense demands that I do not lead suffering people up the garden path into failing endeavours and expect them to pay terrible prices in tactics and strategies which have no hope of winning.

I have to look at realities and determine the optimum moral and ethic courses of action which can achieve the goals that the people set for themselves. As a democratic leader, I cannot prescribe to ordinary Black South Africans what they should think and feel. I am elected to be their servant and to pursue the objectives which have emerged in Black society over the 73 years since Blacks formulated responses to their exclusion from the State by the Act of Union. There are time-honoured traditions; there are time-honoured values and the Black body politic can only be kept intact and capable of achieving change if we respect these traditions and

if we accept the need to work within the framework of values which live today in people's minds and hearts.

Black South Africa seeks first and foremost inclusion in the State as equals. They seek that inclusion through democratic, non-violent means and they seek first and foremost to bring about radical change in such a manner that they do not destroy the foundations on which we will have to build a future in the process of bringing about change.

Our suffering has been long and hard, but it carries with it the fortunate dividend that we have been witness to numerous struggles for liberation in Southern, Eastern and Central Africa, and Africa north of the Limpopo. I as a Black leader have been made intensely aware by African history that the struggle for liberation really only commences once foreign rule or White racist domination is eliminated. The pursuit of revolutionary aims and objectives which are careless of the future of our children and which are destructive of the foundations on which our children will have to shape and re-shape society is irresponsible.

It is this moral realism, this commitment to the well-being of ordinary people, this medium and long-term view of what we should be doing in the struggle which so often creates the conflicts between me and some others.

The history of the struggle for liberation in South Africa has been littered with those who promise the people Utopias overnight and who lead them into tactics and strategies which incur terrible suffering which are followed by no real gains. People are disillusioned with pie-in-the-sky politicians who talk glibly but who only lead people to greater suffering. I know the meaning of exploitation, and I am aware of the dangers of exploitation in any capitalist system where the great divide is between a minority of haves and a majority of have-nots. I am also, however, aware of the dangers which have so characterised Utopian socialist politics which cannot run industries, and which cannot translate the very dirt of the soil into wealth for the development of the State. For me the most potent agent of development available to us in South Africa is an free enterprise system which is truly free. I say this as a pragmatist. South Africa is blessed with a vast abundance of mineral wealth. It has an existing economic infrastructure which when purified of racist principles and practices could provide the bed-rock of phenomenal economic development over a sustained period of time. We need that phenomenal development and we need it to persist over a sustained period of time.

I face the fact that over 50 per cent of all Black South Africans are under the age of 15 years. I face the fact that agrarian revolutions will do no more than alleviate poverty in some rural

areas. I face the fact that the majority of South Africa's 22 million Blacks are cash dependent, and therefore job dependent. I face the fact that existing vast unemployment and under-employment must be reversed, and more, I face the fact that millions of new jobs will have to be created within the next generation if minimal standards of decent living are to be achieved during perhaps something like a 30 year deep national commitment to work and the reconstruction of society.

I am not an ideological capitalist when I say that it is only the free enterprise system and it is only a working and growing partnership between South Africa and the Western industrialised world which will provide the circumstances in which millions of ordinary people will escape the dire poverty which now attends their lives as a constant background circumstance.

I have also as a responsible Black leader to be cognizant of the wider circumstances within which we as Blacks struggle for liberation in South Africa. We have as neighbours impoverished land-locked Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana. We also have as our neighbours land-locked impoverished Zimbabwe whose productive future is intimately tied to the productivity of the South African economy. To the east of us we have Mocambique which is in dire economic straits and as the Nkomati Accord has witnessed, there is a Mocambican recognition that Mocambique's economic future cannot be served by severing that country economically from South Africa. When I look at the millions of Blacks in South Africa, and the millions more around South Africa in neighbouring States, I am reminded by the vastness of human deprivation wherever I look that my first priority is to be responsible and pragmatic in my political leadership

This sense of pragmatic responsibility leads me to accept that the influx of capital and managerial and technological expertise from the West is a prerequisite for preparing for the future. I have never condemned international pressures on South Africa. Every Black South African is jubilant when the international community pressurises Pretoria to bring about fundamental changes. Every dramatised horror of apartheid by the international community raises smiles of hopes among Blacks. But I believe that we must be moral and pragmatic in the pressures which we bring to bear on South Africa. Pressures which retard the struggle for liberation and pressures which increase poverty and prejudice future production of wealth so essential for social and political reconstruction are ill-conceived. In matters moral, it is all too easy to become seduced into adopting an all or nothing attitude.

When people like President Machel, that valiant son of Africa who led his people so bravely through the rigours of an armed struggle against dictatorial Portuguese authorities and foreign rule, turns to enter into trade pacts with South Africa, how can genuine people

in the Western world continue with the parrot cry for disinvestment and the destruction of the South African economy? When leaders like President Machel, backed as he is by African Frontline Presidents in what he has done turns to move against the armed struggle as the primary means of bringing about change in South Africa, how can decent minded people continue in the parrot cry for disinvestment and the reliance on confrontationist politics aided from without? It is a fact that the two go together. Total disinvestment and the total isolation of South Africa in every sphere of life is a call by those who see the destruction of the existing society through revolutionary means as their first responsibility. I have had to decide between being a revolutionary paying whatever price has to be paid and expecting others to do the same, and being a leader committed to the politics of negotiation and democratic opposition to social, economic and political evils. While I have never ruled out the possible ultimate need for Black South Africans to turn to revolution, I have always seen revolution as a last resort tactic which must be avoided at every cost and not espoused until there is nothing left to do.

It is just not true that there is nothing left to do in South Africa other than to kill for political purposes. It is just not true that there is nothing left to do but to destroy the existing economic order as though we would thereafter be presented with a grand clean slate upon which to write the structure of a new, thriving society. It is just not true that the great force of democracy and civilised standards of political behaviour have become counter-productive in the South African struggle for liberation.

While the South African struggle has been retarded by those who pleaded for some kind of vague evolutionary progress towards a better society, reality determines that we have to accept that the country has now reached the point where the total dependence of Whites on Blacks in every walk of life, and the counter-dependence of Blacks on Whites creates a situation of interdependencies which extend the prospects of achieving a negotiated settlement between the race groups in the country. Interdependencies demand compromises and White avarice can no longer satiate itself without those compromises. The growth of the economy has already reached the point where companies have to involve themselves in crash training courses aimed at Black job advancement, and where Blacks simply have to be employed not only in skilled work, but in supervisory and managerial positions as well. The existing racial imbalance in the upper echelons of factory personnel is an indictment of White racism and the practices of the captains of industry and finance for generations. But that there is now the need and the recognised need to do something urgent and effective about that imbalance must not be denied. The whole process of change in South Africa now can be stimulated in a way which it could not be stimulated before, and the whole direction of change can now be guided in a way it could not be guided before. The prospects for negotiation and compromises are growing. The fact that we are beset by time restraints and the fact that up to now

too little has been done too late, does not deny that there are the prospects of now doing more sooner.

I emphasise that the last thing in the world I am saying is that we do not face a terrible apparently God-foresaken situation in South Africa. The last thing in the world that I am saying is that time itself will heal the South African wounds. All I am saying is that there is now the opportunity for resolution and courage to achieve things in democratic opposition using non-violent means which did not exist in the past. And I say bluntly that if we now do not do everything that can be done to bring about change without violence and without destroying the foundations of economic growth, we will not one day have earned the right to turn to revolution if that is the only thing then left to do.

Revolution in certain circumstances can be supported scripturally as the Will of God, and the use of violence in the achievement and in the defence of things of great value is attended by questions which the deepest thinking theologians, and the most eminent moral philosophers have never been able to solve. I have never condemned those whose sense of desperation and experience of deep dismay and despair have led them to espouse revolutionary causes in South Africa. I have repeatedly asked the West to understand why the African National Congress' Mission in Exile has sought to espouse violence as the primary means of bringing about change. But I would be false to my own principles, and I would be unrealistic if I, with the opportunities I do have in South Africa, agreed with these despairing souls that violence was the only thing left to us. More than this, I would be traitor to the vast majority of South Africans who are so deeply committed to bringing about change through non-violent means in order to gain full acceptance into the South African State as equal citizens. No matter how understandable commitments to violence and revolution are among people in our circumstances, the fact remains that the majority of Black South Africans expect me to lead them as I am now leading them.

After the banning of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress in 1961, there was a deep dismay in Black South Africa, and until the early seventies we experienced a political vacuum and relied on hopes that the ANC's Mission in Exile, sent there to pursue the aims and objectives which had been espoused for so long, would succeed in mobilising international support to bring about change. That did not happen and now after two decades of waiting for relieving forces from across our borders, Black South Africa settled down to the sober realisation that the struggle for liberation will have to be waged in South Africa, by South Africans using tactics and strategies available to them.

I founded Inkatha in 1975 as a Black South African response to the continuing Black political vacuum we had experienced ever since 1961. The fact that since 1975 Inkatha has grown to become the

largest Black liberation movement ever to have been formed in the history of South Africa, is witness to the fact that Inkatha's aims and objectives and its tactics and strategies are the aims and objectives and are the tactics and strategies which ordinary Black South Africans espouse. Inkatha's paid-up members now amount to nearly a million. Beyond this million, there must be two or three million supporters and beyond this four million, there are millions more who sympathise. Every political leader knows that paid-up membership is but an indice of strength and that for every one paid-up member of a political party, there are many more supporters and sympathisers.

When I articulate the views I articulate today to mass meetings in Soweto in the heart of industrial South Africa, attended by 35,000 and more people, I get standing ovations for what I say. As a democrat, each and every year at Inkatha's Annual General Conference which is attended by delegates elected at the local and regional level throughout the country, I ask Conference to re-examine tactics and strategies, and I ask them to change or re-affirm commitments to our aims and objectives. Inkatha is thus a living, on-going expression of ordinary Black South African views and values. No other Black leader has the opportunity of testing principles against mass opinion that I enjoy. What I say to you today will be distributed to Inkatha members, and whenever I go abroad, I report back to the people, and I have never done so without being acclaimed for what I have said because I speak from within the framework of ordinary perceptions and within ordinary attitudes and values.

We in South Africa are aware of the upsurge of American indignation about apartheid and I must comment on this upsurge. In South Africa I am faced with Black anger. I too am angry; Inkatha's leadership is angry; Inkatha's rank and file are angry; ordinary people are angry. Anger is one of the greatest assets we have. While it is employable anger can also become destructive. It is a double-edged sword which must be wielded with both determination and discretion. I plead with Americans to employ their indignation in the same way. Indignation can lead to precipitous action, and the laudable indignation of good Americans needs to be directed and channelled in American responses to apartheid which are realistic and achievement-orientated. Indignant Americans should not attempt to isolate South Africa in such a way that the virulence of apartheid is left immune from Western inputs aimed at bringing about change. To encapsulate apartheid in acts of indiscriminate isolation will leave we Blacks to pay the price which indignant Americans themselves cannot play and would not play for no real gains. Disinvest and refuse to invest in South Africa and you will be asking Black mothers and fathers, and Black children, to starve. Every job that is not created, no matter how menial, is to deny somebody the right to work. Every company which withdraws from South Africa denies not only people the right to work, but the right to progress through job advancement. Every act of withdrawal is an act which diminishes circumstances of negotiation between Black and White.

Black South Africans struggle for their liberation. It is our responsibility to bring about change and we will in the end succeed in doing so, whatever the costs. However, for Westerners to increase those costs without consulting us would be tantamount to practising moral colonialism which to us would be worse than the economic colonialism which preceded it. Western friends should play supportive roles to initiatives which are evolved in our circumstances by the people in South Africa themselves, as they choose between alternatives as they see them.

My closing words to you today are to employ America as the greatest democracy in the world to support the democratic rights of people in South Africa to achieve decent things decently. The might of the United States leads me to say that if America can be constructively engaged in bringing about change, then we must encourage whatever Administration involves itself in constructive engagement. President Reagan's commitment to constructive engagement is a commitment which has raised Black expectations, and which we as Blacks would encourage. Whether those expectations will be met remains to be seen. Generally speaking Black South Africans are despondent about the impotence of the West. The inability of the West to be effective has been so amply demonstrated for so long that any commitment by a Western leader constructively to engage Western forces in bringing about change in South Africa must be applauded.

For Black South Africa it would be tragic if constructive engagement was prematurely rejected before sufficient time had passed for the United States to add deeds to words. President Reagan has placed the South African situation on the American political agenda in a way that will ensure that it remains there. There is now at least a formulated American policy on South Africa and I speak in the full knowledge of how inconsequential South Africa is in the minds of so many millions of Americans. I speak, however, in the hope that the commitments of ordinary Americans to democratic decency will lead them to pick up the South African issue as an important international issue. Strength is best demonstrated in aiding the weak and I plead with Americans to employ American strength to aid the process of bringing about change in South Africa, no matter how remote that country is from their daily vested interests, measured in material terms and measured in terms of individual and small group priorities.
