

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN TRADE COUNCIL

WASHINGTON. 5TH FEBRUARY 1985

A FEW REMARKS ON THE OCCASION OF A MEETING WITH THE NATIONAL FOREIGN TRADE COUNCIL BY MANGOSUTHU G. BUTHELEZI, CHIEF MINISTER KWAZULU, PRESIDENT OF INKATHA AND CHAIRMAN, THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ALLIANCE. 5TH FEBRUARY 1985. MAYFLOWER HOTEL, WASHINGTON

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Big business in the United States is faced with a political debate about what it should do and should not do. The rising tide of American interest in South Africa and public indignation against apartheid is being raised to the point where we can anticipate a spate of congressional activity. Those opposed to President Reagan will use his policy of constructive engagement towards South Africa as a stick with which to beat him, and it is inevitable that in these circumstances, those jockeying for positions of power and influence will take every opportunity available to use the South African question as an in-put to their activities and their lobbies.

I discern this American phenomena by Americans for Americans about American interests. I also discern a genuine American repugnance about apartheid; a disgust with the inhumanity of it, and there is a rising tide of genuine American indignation about civil rights issues in South Africa. But I nevertheless fear that both because of internal American machinations in power struggles and because Western upsurges of indignation against apartheid rise and decline, in the end there will be more benefits arising out of the current debate for American society than there ultimately will be for the Black struggle for liberation in South Africa.

America has the kind of massive wealth which affords the luxury of being involved in South Africa or not being involved. Big business in America is aware of this power and one of the options is to withdraw now in the certain knowledge, and perhaps even capitalist arrogant knowledge, that they are not foregoing involvement in the development of South and Southern Africa forever. American businessmen know that the industrialisation of Africa must necessarily involve them and they can see that the further industrialisation of South Africa, and the industrialisation of all its neighbours, is a demand made by reality which sooner or later will draw them into what is taking place.

For me the crucial question arises as to whether or not big companies can play a positive role in the process of helping to bring about change in South Africa. If they can they should remain there to do so because big business interests which do so and weather the storms of today to prove their worth tomorrow, will have a very distinct competitive advantage over others.

I am watching with some interest how American companies will in

fact respond to the current situation. If big business has a job of work to do in South Africa beyond the turning over of dollars; if America as the world's leading industrial nation, and the world's leading democratic country, uses big business as a party political tool, and if activists and lobbyists in the United States beat big business in the field of public relations and mount the kind of pressures on big business which forces their hand in South Africa, then we will be witnessing something we have not yet witnessed before.

Lest big business be confused about the actualities of the South African situation, let me yet again reiterate the position as it really is. Black South Africans are faced with options between the politics of confrontation, violence and the armed struggle, and the politics of bringing about change through negotiation and the employment of non-violent means. Blacks are divided in this choice and the harshness of apartheid and the fact that it has endured for generations, and the fact that to date democratic opposition to apartheid and non-violent pressures from abroad have failed to eradicate apartheid, have led some to abandon non-violent means and to seek to bring about the downfall of the South African Government through violence. If violence could be short and bitter, and if there were any real prospects of bringing about fundamental change through violence in the very short term, I am sure the total abhorrence of apartheid and the terrible suffering by Blacks under it would incline a great many Black South Africans to opt for a violent solution.

This, however, is not the case. The African National Congress' Mission went into exile a whole generation ago and for 25 years they promised a violent revolution which has never been forthcoming. For 25 years apartheid has survived and in fact grown, and invaded ever wider fields for racist domination. Black South Africans just do not believe that their country will be liberated by marching armies from across our borders. If it could have been done it would have been done by now, and Black South Africans are also aware of the fact that once you pour energies into the politics of violence, there is no energy left for democratic opposition and the seeking of the gains which are there to be had in the short term.

President Samora Machel of Mocambique quite clearly saw the futility of what the ANC's Mission in Exile were trying to do and saw that he would have to sacrifice Mocambique for empty promises and he like Black South Africans saw that the strength of the South African State could not be threatened by sporadic acts of sabotage and that there was no prospect of the Mission in Exile doing more than this. He asked those involved in attempting to bring about an armed struggle to leave his country and in doing so he was judged by Frontline Presidents as doing the right thing.

If the armed struggle cannot succeed then we are left with the

recognition of what I have been saying for many years. The real struggle is in South Africa and Black South Africans themselves, ordinary Black South Africans, in their daily lives and in their own circumstances, will have to struggle to eradicate apartheid and to re-order society.

For generations, apartheid has deprived Blacks in every aspect of living. Whites have been able to dominate Blacks and to treat them as hewers of wood and drawers of water, and to employ them as migrant labourers, and to dictate to them where they should live and how they should live. That situation has changed in recent times. There is such a total dependence of White on Black now - and a dependence on them not only as workers but also as skilled workers, supervisors and managers - that the idiom of dictation which characterised the past must make way for the idiom of negotiation.

The reciprocal Black dependence on Whites thrusts Black and White together in situations of interdependencies which is in South Africa to stay. The interdependency of Black and White, the fact that they are now permanently locked into a situation where negotiation is demanded, favours the politics of reconciliation. The circumstances for bringing about change through non-violent means and through the politics of negotiation, are more propitious now than they have ever been before. Whether or not negotiations will be successful in bringing about change and the eradication of apartheid, remains as yet to be seen. There are circumstances making for success. Whether or not we will be able to salvage the situation even in these improved circumstances, remains to be seen.

It is too little perceived that the South African Government is thrashing around in a quandary and does not know how to set about solving the problems which each of its ventures into modified apartheid create. Whether this thrashing around will create a vortex into which all will be drawn, or whether the thrashing around creates the opportunities we need, is a question of very considerable importance.

I am totally convinced that if the prospects of a negotiated settlement between Black and White in South Africa are increasing, we should do everything in our power to make the fullest possible use of them. We should do so not only because they promise gain, but we should do so urgently because if we fail now, we will be drawn into that vortex.

In the past big business interests in the West have participated in the development of the South African economy, and they have done so within the framework of apartheid, and they have been parties to the fact that economic development has been so dominantly development favouring Whites at the expense of Blacks. There is no doubt that the West generally, and big business in particular, were

in the last generation blind to the horrors of apartheid, but I do not believe that the same can now be said, particularly about American big business interests. American businessmen have seen the writing on the wall and for them apartheid practices are restrictive of the full benefits that they can gain out of their investments in medium and long term.

Big business I believe is now ready to do many of the things they were criticised for not doing before, and I believe that big business must now be given the opportunity of doing those things. Furthermore, I think it will be tragic for the whole free enterprise system if big business now did not do those things which it should have done before.

When I look at South Africa and its demographic realities, when I see the fact that over 50 per cent of South Africa's 22 million Blacks are 15 years and younger, and when I see Black South Africa's dependence on industrial expansion and job creation, then I see from a Black point of view a desperate need for Western industrial interests to look at investment in South Africa as part of the free world's moral responsibility.

There is no prospect of an agrarian revolution catering for even the minimal needs of people in South Africa. We have to become a rapidly industrialised society or starve. There are imperatives at work which dictate that the free enterprise system should be espoused and employed to its maximum advantage. Apartheid Whites do not practice free enterprise, and the presence in South Africa of international business interests are essential. Beyond this, the continued importation of capital, technical expertise and management skills are vital to economic development. Withdraw these now and irreparable damage will result to the growth base of the economy. Economic development is not something you can do in fits and starts; it is not something you can do, pick up and drop. We need sustained development and sustained development is only achieved as success is built on success in a continuing endeavour.

I repeat again that Black South Africans do not have the luxury as it were to choose the politics of violence and the armed struggle. The average Black South African sees this and agrees with the central Black political tradition in the country that Blacks should seek full inclusion in the South African State through non-violent and democratic means. Blacks do not want foreign capital to be withdrawn from South Africa. They do not want it because it will mean the difference between hunger and starvation for them.

One of the things which Blacks strive most desperately for is the education of their children in the hope that they through education and training will get better jobs. Black South Africa sees the need for continued economic development and the continued provision of jobs. They ask Americans not to indulge in the luxury that their

big businessmen to stand firm and to increase their holdings in South Africa. They ask big business to bring with their investment the positive in-puts that the inventiveness of the entrepreneur has. They ask American businessmen to enter the South African situation of flux and change, and to struggle with Black South Africans to make the free enterprise system a rewarding reality in the circumstances in which the flaying around of a Government which does not know how to solve its problems creates.

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