

MEETING WITH SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY

DURBAN. 10TH JANUARY 1985

**A FEW REMARKS BY MANGOSUTHU G. BUTHELEZI, CHIEF MINISTER KWAZULU,  
PRESIDENT OF INKATHA AND CHAIRMAN, THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ALLIANCE  
ON THE OCCASION OF A MEETING WITH SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY  
THE ROYAL HOTEL : DURBAN. 10TH JANUARY 1985**

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Honourable Senator Kennedy I wish to thank Bishop Tutu and others who have invited you to come to South Africa to see our complex problems for yourself on the ground. You will recall that on more than one occasion when I had the privilege to see you in your office in Washington we did discuss the possibility of your visit with our mutual friend Mr Wayne Fredricks. I do not begrudge those who managed to persuade you to come. I thank them on behalf of all of us. To me your visit to South Africa was long overdue. I disagree with those who look at it as interference or who perjoratively describe it as a circus and other names. This Country prides itself as the upholder of western values in Africa. This Country like any other Country needs help in many forms from the West. You are entitled just as your late beloved brother Robert Kennedy was, to come here Sir, and try to understand our problems with a view of assisting us to solve them. I realise that the problems of South Africa will be resolved within South Africa by South Africans of all races.

But the West can help particularly as there are two options facing us - the one being the option of resolving these problems through violence, and the other being the option of resolving these problems through peaceful means. I read and re-read your speech to the Africa-American Institute on the 27th of November last year. You made your position and views very clear in that address. Before I go on to say a few things to you, I want to confess one thing to you Senator. When I read page 5 of your speech I would like to quote, I was left flummoxed. This is where you stated Senator that:

"I PLAN TO TRAVEL TO SOUTH AFRICA IN JANUARY. I HOPE TO MEET WITH THE LEADERS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN PEOPLE - IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT, IN AND OUT OF JAIL. I WANT TO TALK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, TO CHALLENGE THEM AS MY BROTHER DID WITH THEIR OWN HOPES AND DREAMS. I WANT TO TALK WITH LABOR LEADERS AND LEADERS OF INDUSTRY TO LEARN WHAT AMERICANS CAN DO TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF RACIAL JUSTICE AND POLICIAL EQUALITY. I WANT TO TALK WITH THE LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL FORUM, SO THAT I CAN BEST UNDERSTAND THEIR ASPIRATIONS. I WANT TO MEET THE LEADERS OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT, THIS EXTRAORDINARY MULTI-RACIAL ORGANISATION COMMITTED TO NON-VIOLENT CHANGE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA. I WANT TO MEET WITH THE CHURCH LEADERS OF SOUTH AFRICA TO LEARN HOW THE TEACHINGS OF THEIR FAITH ARE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON LIFE IN THAT TROUBLED COUNTRY. I ALSO WANT TO TALK WITH THE WRITERS, POETS AND PLAYWRIGHTS OF SOUTH AFRICA TO LEARN OF THE HUMAN TRAGEDY THAT UNFOLDS DAILY IN THAT LAND. I AM GOING TO SOUTH AFRICA NOT TO LECTURE BUT TO

LEARN."

I realise that you Senator have been invited to South Africa by people who disagree with me, but I still do not think that that by itself warranted your having left out INKATHA of which I am President, and also leaving me out Sir, when you listed those you were looking forward to seeing and talking to in South Africa. When your late brother sought me out with a few prominent South Africans when he visited South Africa in 1966, I felt honoured and privileged to meet one of the greatest politicians I have ever had the privilege to meet, talk to and dine with. Since then I have been in touch with some members of the Kennedy family, prominent among them being yourself Sir. Your brother's son John actually came up to Ulundi to see me with Mr Ullmann. I feel rather unhappy that although I got your message that you wanted us to meet, that we can only talk with you for a very limited time.

I will make the best use of the few moments we have at our disposal to share with you my perspectives of the South African situation. In spite of the things which I have mentioned in passing these are perspectives I share with millions of black people who support the leadership, which I am exercising not merely by right of birth but through the democratic formula of being elected to all the positions I hold.

As a Kennedy I feel certain that you can tell me a lot about the depths to which human beings can sink in denigrating those that they disagree with in politics. President Kennedy, the late Senator Robert Kennedy and you Sir, have had your share of this human weakness and the lengths to which political opponents can go. I want to assure you Senator that my views have not changed one bit, since I last discussed the South African situation with your late illustrious brother Senator Robert Kennedy in an hotel just down this road. I recall vividly how Dr. Alan Paton that doyen of South African writers said to your brother at the dinner "Mr Senator you have here amongst your guests three passportless Citizens". The three people he referred to was himself, Mr. Knowledge Guzana of the Transkei and I. I was passportless for 9 years. I did not even have a travel document I could use to travel outside South Africa. In short I am and always have been an opponent of the National Party Government which rules us without our consent in South Africa. It might interest you to know Senator that I have been harassed by members of the Security Police and members of the South African National Intelligence over the years. My mail was intercepted, a fact which was revealed by some of them publicly. My telephone has always been tapped. It might also interest you to know that I met the Head of State of this Country, President P.W. Botha, on the 30th of November 1984 in a private house, after a lapse of four full years since we last met, because of our disagreement on the status quo. If this does not establish my credentials in speaking to you as an opponent of the government or the apartheid Regime then I do not know what in fact can establish these.

If there is one message which the United States Government and other Western Governments need to hear it is that Black South Africans are ordinary people and behave as human beings behave the world over. Political forces at work in South Africa are known forces, and the realities which prescribe and proscribe are realities which are known the world over.

I make this point at the outset because South Africa is in a situation of flux and change in which opinion is deeply divided about what to do and what not to do, and about the goals which Blacks should be striving for. As Blacks strive to eradicate apartheid from this country in the face of grave difficulties and in opposition to the full might of the State, we are aware of just how long apartheid has endured and how impotent all the forces of change appear to have been for so many generations. The history of the Black struggle for liberation can be written as one Black failure after another to bring about radical change and to mount forces which become imperatives. Failure after failure has produced new attempt after new attempt and Black politics has always been characterised by raging disputes about what next should be done and how it should be done.

It is not surprising therefore that Black groups in South Africa today are at loggerheads with each other about both aims and objectives and about tactics and strategies to achieve them. What has become known as Black Consciousness groupings tend to look towards a socialist future. This rejection of the free enterprise system and capitalism as a philosophy is not surprising. What little free enterprise has emerged in South Africa has not benefited Blacks, and misused capitalism and what is taken for the free enterprise system has benefited Whites and been detrimental to Blacks. Black experience is an experience of political subjugation supported by economic oppression and the experience of seeing successive governments siding with big business to maintain the status quo.

The step beyond the call for socialism is a step into the armed struggle. Those who reject the country's existing institutions and its political and economic order must necessarily tend towards revolutionary approaches, using revolutionary tactics and strategies. Signals go out from Black South Africans proclaiming a readiness to suffer and to die for revolutionary causes and for ideals which are bred in suffering as antidotes to oppression. Voices crying revolution are always strident and a great deal of international publicity is given to them.

I, like every other Black leader, have had to consider carefully revolutionary options and the tactics and strategies which go with revolution. My leadership was determined by history and it has been moulded by common Black political experience. I trace my

descent through my father's line to successive Prime Ministers and advisers to Zulu Kings dating back to the founding of the Zulu nation. Through my mother, I trace my descent to the very Kings whom my male forebears advised and to whom they were Prime Ministers and generals. The mantle of leadership is thus thrust on me by history and doubly so because my family has always been involved in the struggle for liberation. Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme, the moving force in the founding of the African National Congress in 1912, was my uncle whom I knew well and with whom I spent many an hour. It was my generation which produced people like Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Oliver Tambo and others. I was thus drawn into the old African National Congress' politics and from my mother's knee onwards, I was politicised into an intimate awareness of the issues at stake in our struggle for liberation.

I am a South African first and foremost, but I am also a Zulu with warrior blood beating in my veins, and with a heritage of the past living in the present. It was my great grandfather who led the Zulu army to defeat the British at the Battle of Isandlwana, and I come from Zulu stock knowing that the Zulus were the only people in this country against whom the British had to wage a full scale war before we were subjugated. This background necessitated me looking at the revolutionary option and I too did so while the fires of deep anger burnt in my breast.

Black South Africans will be the last people in the continent of Africa to triumph over racist-inspired social, economic and political oppression. We have Africa's experience as our teacher and when I looked to the north, I realised two very important things. One was that many nations triumphed over colonial and neo-colonial oppression without the wide-scale employment of violence for political purposes. Black political experience in Africa does not make violent revolution a hallowed thing. One has only to think of President Kaunda's leadership in Zambia; President Nyerere's leadership in Tanzania; Jomo Kenyatta's leadership in Kenya; Sir Seretse Khama's leadership in Botswana; President Banda's leadership in Malawi; King Sobhuza's leadership in Swaziland and King Moshoeshoe's leadership in Lesotho to see just how very vast areas of Africa managed successfully to throw off oppression and to establish popular governments without armed struggles having taken place.

This is one thing which the history of Africa has taught me. The other thing that the same history has taught me is that political victories in struggles for liberation are but first steps into a tortuous future. Having acquired political power, one Black leader after another has been faced with the reality of having to employ that power for the benefit of the people. African history has taught me just how difficult it is to counteract the legacy which White colonial exploitation left behind. African history has taught that a liberated country needs to be located in one or another international axis and that no African country is a political island unto itself. I matured in the years during which

grand experiments in African socialism emerged, and I have been sobered by just how little socialism has done to so many people in so many parts of this continent.

Thus when I seek wisdom from Africa and when I draw on African experience, I am cautioned by other people's experience of revolutions striving for a socialist future. In my own leadership I am also aware that history is there to teach us but not there to prescribe for us. As a Black leader faced with the realities of South Africa here and now, I dare not take models of liberation from elsewhere and apply them simplistically to our own circumstances. The fundamental lesson I have learnt is that the process of bringing about radical change is the very process which lays the foundation for the future. Thus when I, like other Black South Africans, have time and again examined the utility of revolution and the desirability of rejecting capitalism in favour of socialism or communism, I have done so soberly, attempting to keep my feet on the ground.

When I look at South Africa today and realise that over 50 per cent of all Black South Africans are 15 years old and younger, I have necessarily to think about the future of a generation, and to look at the implications of what I and others now do.

There is vast unemployment and under-employment in our country and it is Blacks who are unemployed and under-employed. There are vast backlogs in essential services, in housing, in medical care, and in education. It is Blacks who now suffer and who will continue to suffer because of these backlogs. Black South Africans just dare not become politically extravagant at this point in time and we just dare not escalate revolutionary conflict to the point at which there will be nothing to build on once radical change has taken place. Rural areas are desperately over-populated and the pressures on rural resources are such that agrarian revolutions will only alleviate suffering, but bring about no real change in the quality of life of the people. If people have to eat to live; if they have to clothe themselves and house themselves, and if they have to educate their children, they will need jobs and unless there is a vast expansion of the industrial base in South Africa, those jobs will not be forthcoming. There is no socialist magic, and no communist magic, which will feed the hungry and house the poor. There are no international donor agencies which will buy the time necessary to mount and survive failures and grand socialist designs.

When I look around Africa and the Third World, I become ever increasingly convinced that the free enterprise system holds out more hope for people in our circumstances than any other system. The free enterprise system is the most potent development agency at our disposal. I therefore find myself unable to commend an idealist socialist future to my people, no matter how attractive the trappings of socialism appear to those who have suffered so

desperately and for so long from oppression which has been inspired by the West and supported by the West.

While the struggle for liberation in this country must be essentially waged by those in the forefront of that struggle here, the West cannot wash its hands of its international responsibility. The West helped to produce the South African situation as we now know it, and as an internationalised situation the West has a role to play in bringing about change here. There are some who are saying that your visit, Sir, to this country is irrelevant, but I believe they are wrong. The United States of America is a global power with global responsibilities, and its foreign policy provides South Africa and countries in the Third World with circumstances which cannot be ignored.

When your brother, Sir, Robert Kennedy visited South Africa, he sought discussions with me and I enjoyed talking with him over supper attended by guests he had selected. I have known you for years and whenever I visited you in your office, you have displayed a vital Kennedy interest in South African affairs. It can only benefit the forces working towards change here to have people like you, Sir, coming to gain first hand impressions. None of us dare believe that opinion-makers like yourself and the United States are irrelevant to what happens in this country. I am indeed grateful that you availed yourself of an opportunity to visit South Africa and to meet people here. South Africa is locked into a north/south global axis and the Western industrial world cannot be dismissed as irrelevant.

The free enterprise system goes hand in hand with democratic government and it goes hand in hand with a social order based on Western industrialised values. These values, enshrined in a constitution supporting democratic government and eliminating racism as a political corner-stone for this country, are what we should be striving for. The Black struggle for liberation has in fact always sought the inclusion of Blacks in the existing social, economic and political institutions of the country. We now have a bad constitution which enshrines the principles of racism, but the alternative to racist practice in South Africa is not egalitarian socialism. The alternative to racism is a race-free, democratic parliament which makes possible government by consensus. In this regard we have a number of models to choose between and eventually to select one and adapt it to meet our specific requirements. Radical change does not necessarily imply revolution and a movement away from the free enterprise system.

I am not a politician who flits from one power group to another in the search for personal aggrandizement. I exercise my political leadership within the very severe restraints of responsibility to ordinary people. Like other Black South Africans, I experienced the vacuum which was created when the National Party Government banned the ANC and PAC. I, like other Black South Africans, first

in anticipation of a final crack-down.

It became apparent to me and to other Black South Africans in the 1960's, and absolutely certain to me in the early 1970's, that the ANC's Mission in Exile would not lead us to a new future. The leadership of this Mission has now been in exile for virtually a generation, and apartheid in the very real sense of the word is now stronger and more virulent than it has ever been before. I and a great many Black South Africans believe that the Mission erred grievously when it espoused the armed struggle as the primary means of liberating this country, and it erred when it turned to reject the free enterprise system and to declare war not only on the Government of the day, but on the economic order itself. It became quite clear to me and others that the struggle for liberation in South Africa could not be led from abroad and that the people of South Africa here in this country would have to mount a new offensive to bring about radical change.

One of the things which stared me in the face was the fact that the Mission in Exile could err grievously because it was out of touch with the people and did not have the opportunity of testing its thinking and its decisions against popular will in this country. I therefore determined to gather together the forces of liberation and thus established Inkatha. I established Inkatha in consultation with a wide range of Black opinion makers and it is now founded as a Black liberation movement in its own right, deeply democratic, committed to bringing about radical change without the use of violence for political purposes, and it is committed to bringing about change in such a way that the foundations of the future are not destroyed.

Having seen the need to test all decisions against the will of the people from the inception of Inkatha, I have done everything in my power to keep it democratic. The points I am making to you today, Senator Kennedy, are points that I repeatedly make to Inkatha's Central Committee and I continue to make them at the Movement's Annual General Conference. I make these points in small group discussions and I make them in Black mass meetings, attended by tens of thousands. And when I make them I listen carefully to the people's response, and time after time, the masses of Black South Africa applaud what I say because in saying the things I say to you today, I voice the opinion of the majority of the people.

Those who cry revolution and speak about Black socialism; those committed to violence and confrontation, ridicule me in public and their ridicule is spread by the media across the length and breadth of this country and across the whole world. When I established Inkatha, its early demise was again and again prophesied. Inkatha is now nearly ten years old and it has nearly a million card-

carrying members. Not only is it as a Movement now the largest Black political force ever to have emerged in this country, but its Youth Wing is the largest Youth Movement ever to have gripped the imagination of our young people, and its Women's Brigade is the largest Women's Movement ever to have arisen.

Inkatha's support goes far beyond its paid-up membership. For every one paid-up member, there are many more supporters and even more sympathisers. Inkatha not only is the largest Black political constituency in this country, but it is the only large constituency which is ordered, disciplined and democratically directed. Inkatha is a membership based, grass-root organisation and it is in itself a cross-section of Black society. Inkatha has as much support in rural areas as it has in urban areas. It is supported by old and young; it is supported by peasants and workers and by Black South Africa's business and professional communities. Demographic reality determines that the majority of Inkatha's members are workers and peasants, and they exercise the power of their numbers in Inkatha to elect rungs of Black leadership at different levels and then to direct Inkatha's elected leadership to pursue the policies they want us to pursue.

When I express the opinions I have expressed today, and when I talk about Black South African values as I have done today, I do not speak for myself but I articulate the opinions of millions.

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