

VISIT OF DR. F.J. VAN ZYL SLABBERT, MP LEADER OF
THE OPPOSITION, AND MR. R.A.F. SWART, PROGRESSIVE
FEDERAL PARTY

ULUNDI. 17TH JUNE 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR DISCUSSION WITH DR. F.J. VAN ZYL SLABBERT, MP
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, AND MR. R.A.F. SWART, PROGRESSIVE
FEDERAL PARTY, ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR VISIT TO ULUNDI.
BY MANGOSUTHU G. BUTHELEZI, CHIEF MINISTER KWAZULU, PRESIDENT OF
INKATHA AND CHAIRMAN, THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ALLIANCE
17TH JUNE 1985

In the exchanges between us which followed the very unfortunate wording of the PFP's report on the Uitenhage events, in one of the letters Dr. van Zyl Slabbert wrote to me, he summarised the common points of departure between himself and myself as follows. He said that there was agreement between us that it was unlikely that there would be a successful revolution; that revolutionary forces were negative and bent on removing apartheid without giving us a clear idea of an alternative form of society; that the alternative to pursuing revolutionary tactics was the pursuit of evolutionary and constitutional politics; that the hackneyed phrase "working within the system" was politically meaningless, and that one either did or did not engage the system, and if you did not engage the system you tended, as he put it to be "high on rhetoric and low on action;" that engaging the system constitutionally in tactics and strategies to bring about evolutionary change, presented different problems to Black and White leaders; that "consummate skill" had characterised Inkatha and KwaZulu's exploitation of the co-optive structures for unintended consequences; and that we were approaching a new era of evolutionary constitutional politics which presented both a minefield of opportunities as well as disasters. These points were made in the course of correspondence, and it would serve a useful purpose to fill out the areas of consensus between the PFP and Inkatha.

In broad terms, the PFP and Inkatha stand united in opposition to apartheid society. I believe it will serve a useful purpose for us in discussion to confirm that neither the PFP nor Inkatha are wedded to any one particular constitutional form of power-sharing between Black and White, and that both the PFP and Inkatha are committed to the politics of negotiation in which we can achieve consensus.

I believe that Inkatha and the PFP are also politically at one with each other in insisting on the normalisation of South African politics. This means for both of us that the direction of evolutionary change must take this country into constitutionalised democratic politics which conforms to Western democratic ideals in industrialised societies.

We stand, I believe, together in believing that the Government's claim that there is no majority in the country is apartheid

poppycock and that outside of a single united South Africa there is only endless strife. I say this without committing ourselves to any particular form of society, provided that the principle of universal adult franchise is honoured in practice. I reject the sophistry which holds that there is already universal adult franchise in the country because Blacks can vote in so-called homeland areas.

I am also at one in believing that political change, no matter how urgently it is required, should not be pursued at the expense of damaging the country's economic growth potential. And I also believe together that the free enterprise system is the only system capable of creating the wealth which this country so desperately needs to wipe out huge backlogs and to provide its citizens with even the minimal standards of decent living.

I reject together the notion that the new constitution provides a framework within which Black political developments can take place while leaving the Tricameral Parliament intact as it is conceived in the present constitution. We together reject the racist foundations on which the present Parliament of South Africa rests.

I make these points, I hope, not as debating points but as points of agreement which require affirmation more than debate.

If we agree on this range of fundamental things, then I believe it would serve a useful purpose for discussion to turn around questions of tactics and strategies. It is because Dr. van Zyl Slabbert is correct when he says: "Although I work in a different political environment, my problems are no less real for being less dangerous and more institutionalised." Inkatha's tactics and strategies have the dual purpose of serving the whole of South Africa and securing the ideals which the PFP also could support, but it evolves tactics and strategies which support the Black contribution towards political progress. It is in this latter respect that the tactics and strategies of Inkatha move apart from the tactics and strategies of the PFP which as a parliamentary opposition party has those on the voters' roll as its prime target.

I make this point despite the fact that I am aware that Dr. van Zyl Slabbert as the leader of the Party and the PFP as a Party has been bold and courageous in pursuing politics which are unpopular amongst the vast majority of White voters. The PFP has paid political prices for its ideals and this I appreciate. Nonetheless, there is a spirit of White liberalism which clashes with the idiom of Black politics.

It is necessary to look at the implications of this statement. The implications are not that White liberalism is rejected by Blacks per se. Black perspectives see White liberalism as moral fibre in politics which has at times been counter-productive. This point perhaps needs to be teased out.

It is insufficiently realised that the growth of Inkatha's power and the growth of KwaZulu's and Inkatha's bargaining advantages vis-a-vis other Black organisations has given rise to intense

Black/Black political conflicts. Those bent on bringing the Government down by violent revolution and those bent upon sustaining revolutionary fervour with confrontationist politics using violence and intimidation, are deeply threatened by any prospects of Inkatha and KwaZulu playing a meaningful role in furthering the politics of negotiation in which a series of compromise settlements will be stepping stones to a normalised political life in this country .

The ANC's Mission in Exile has called upon Blacks in this country to direct violence at anybody who plays any role which could bring about a negotiated settlement. The rhetoric which justifies violence is as meaningless as the rhetoric which justifies apartheid. Behind the accusations of being "stooges", "working within the system," being a "sell-out," there lies the injunction to kill for political purposes. The Mission in Exile in pamphlets and in radio broadcasts is now exhorting Black South Africans, and particularly the youth, to kill Black community councillors and to extend their acts of violence into rural South Africa to attack those involved in so-called homeland governments.

It is in this context that White liberal sentiment is sometimes counter-productive. I really do genuinely admire PFP stalwarts like Mrs. Helen Suzman who for many years fought a lone battle against injustice and particularly against detention without trial and police brutality. Inkatha has always been encouraged by that thread of moral liberalism in South Africa which has been offended by oppression.

But because White liberalism tends to champion the underdog and because it rallies to the aid of any who are jailed without trial, it is seen by a great many not only in this country but throughout the world as being more sympathetic to Black organisations who have produced crop after crop of martyrs who go to jail for acts of political stupidity and who are penalised by the system for senseless political acts which have far more bravado in them than political sense. Inkatha does not specialise in symbolic protest or the politics of desperation and I do not encourage our youth to be cannon fodder. Because Inkatha has not in failure after failure presented crop after crop of martyrs hammered by the system, it is regarded as suspect in some liberal quarters.

It is in this context that the letter which Mrs. Helen Suzman wrote to me is so welcomed. It was in response to my letter to prominent South Africans that she included the following statement in her letter:

"Your own role in maintaining a courageous stance on negotiation politics as against mere protest politics, is, I think, a very potent force in this respect."

In response to the same letter from Dr. van Zyl Slabbert, he said:
 "Furthermore, let me assure you, as well as the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly, that I keenly appreciate the strategic and pivotal role you have to play and have played in avoiding violent confrontation and working for a negotiated solution to

our complex and conflicted-laden problems."

These two statements are quoted in recognition that the PFP does not despise Inkatha. However, we in Inkatha can be genuine about that statement and still raise the question of the extent to which PFP sentiment in some of the PFP constituencies tips the scales against success in Inkatha's attempt to pursue the politics of negotiation. One thinks here of the extent to which NUSAS and Black Sash are avowedly anti-Inkatha, while a great many of their members share common membership with the PFP. In a sense, these two organisations are White liberal constituencies, and they are also in a sense PFP constituencies.

The point has been made in correspondence and in debate that Dr. van Zyl Slabbert and the PFP are not apologetic about reaching out to organisations like the Black Sash and NUSAS. Dr. van Zyl Slabbert in a letter said:

"However to spread the sons of my colleagues and the UDF and Black Sash on my political bread is more than common sense can tolerate. I refuse to chastise the children of my colleagues who differ from their fathers. I am not a political Dr. Spock."

This reaction needs to be debated. The point at issue is a real dimension of South African politics. The point needing discussion is that work needs to be done to weigh the scales in favour of the politics of negotiation. The PFP needs to do this work amongst its White constituencies in particular. It needs to do this work amongst the Black Sash and amongst NUSAS in particular, and we in Inkatha believe the PFP should actively pursue increasing the line-up of those who should be working together within the framework of the politics of negotiation. Considerable weight is brought to bear on Inkatha by White liberals. I have always been advised by a great many liberals to abandon what I am doing and to resign my position as Chief Minister of KwaZulu. Dangerous propaganda is mounted on this advice. The propaganda does the cause of liberation damage and we in Inkatha believe that for the sake of South Africa, and not for the sake of Inkatha, the PFP should devise ways and means of strengthening Inkatha's negotiating position and encourage others to join Inkatha in negotiations.

I do not expect the PFP to "shout and rail at Whites; to command them to like Inkatha more than the UDF and Black Sash; not to say nasty things about Buthelezi, etc." as Dr. van Zyl Slabbert interpreted Inkatha's desires. I do not expect Dr. van Zyl Slabbert to "work as a marketing man for the Inkatha Institute." I do recognise that Dr. van Zyl Slabbert has his problems. We need to discuss the process of strengthening the democratic opposition to apartheid and the politics of negotiation without using this kind of terminology.

Exchanges between Inkatha and the PFP have been fired in recent months by indignation and counter-indignation. I hope that today's discussion will be more than substantiating or repudiating specific statements that have already been made. Inkatha accepts the bona

fides of the PFP. It accepts the bona fides of Dr. van Zyl Slabbert, but this does not mean the PFP is beyond criticism, just as Inkatha knows that it itself is not at all times beyond criticism. The valuable time that we have together is limited and I do not raise the question of the PFP's role in curbing the negative effects of mistaken White liberalism and the not infrequent destructive role of the Black Sash and NUSAS in attempts to rake old coals. Inkatha has a genuine desire to see White liberalism being given a cutting edge it has not had in the past. I would dearly like to see White liberalism emerge as a mobilising force at this crucial time in our history when so much is at stake and when there is such a tragic possibility of vast under-achievement among those who desire to bring about reform in White society.

It is this in respect that I believe it would serve a useful purpose to discuss today the draft Statement of Intent which I have now published. It was published accompanied by clear statements that it was formulated to set balls rolling. It was drafted as the kind of statement which could possibly have a positive effect on facilitating negotiations between Black and White. I reiterate my statement that it is a formulation for discussion and possible amendment. I need to know what if any objections the PFP has to its wording and what possible alterations to its wording would make it easier for the PFP to identify with it.

The Political Interference Act has been scrapped and at first and second tier government levels there are going to be ever-increasing opportunities for inter-party co-operation in first and second tier politics. This most certainly will be the case in KwaZulu/Natal. We clearly are faced with a situation in which the full might of the National Party and the State are going to be employed in assisting the Labour Party and the Reform Party and Solidarity. We are all aware of the extent to which the machinery of State moved in to give the National Party logistic advantages in the Referendum campaign. Those same forces will be mobilised to bolster the new constitution wherever it is seen to be vulnerable. Regional Service Councils and new Provincial structures and the politics which go with them foretell of dire danger, unless they are modified very considerably. Perhaps the PFP and Inkatha are as urgently in need of making a statement of intent as it is urgent for the State President to make a statement of intent. I am not suggesting that it will necessarily be wise tactics for the PFP and Inkatha to make a public statement at this juncture of our political history. It would however be prudent to have discussions about the nature of the statement of intent which both Inkatha and the PFP could support openly when the time came to do so.

The National Party is weaker in Natal than it is in any other Province. Its weakness here spells vulnerability which it does not spell in an area where it has got massive support and where it can afford to shed right-wing extremists. It is quite clear that progress towards establishing a productive working relationship between Natal and KwaZulu and transforming that working relationship into a statutory relationship is threatened by the felt-need of the National Party not to lose a single voter in

Natal. This area is an area of great political promise but that promise will not be realised without astute politics and sound tactics and strategies.

Tactics and strategies can only be discussed meaningfully in the context of real situations. Inkatha is not proposing any kind of political pact, but again it would be prudent to look at PFP and Inkatha latitudes in the devising of tactics and strategies.

It is our hope that today's informal discussions will make tomorrow's formal discussions richer and that both the PFP and Inkatha ears will be more discerning tomorrow because of what is said today. Of all Black political groups Inkatha is the most serious in its commitment. It is the longest surviving Black political movement on the ground in South Africa with any national meaning and it is set to survive as a permanent factor in South African politics. There are prospects of working on medium or long-term objectives with Inkatha which are lacking elsewhere. Our commitment to serious politics and our prospects of surviving in the long term, I hope will enhance today's discussion.
