

MEMORANDUM FOR PRESENTATION TO THE PRESS CLUB

BY MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI, CHIEF MINISTER OF KWAZULU
AND PRESIDENT OF INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY

BONN, 2 SEPTEMBER 1993

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, I thank you for this opportunity to address you. It is always advantageous for the leader of a political party, such as myself, to speak to those who, like yourselves, are participating in the forming and shaping of public opinion and whose job it is to express public opinion. At this critical juncture in South Africa's political transformation from apartheid to democracy, it is especially crucial that I address you on Inkatha Freedom Party's stand on negotiations which are taking place in our country.

Before I do so, I would however first like to salute you, the journalists of the world, for the courage and dedication that you have shown throughout the ages. Undoubtably, yours is a difficult profession which often sees you directly in the firing line. It is a profession with long hours and little pay. It often entails traversing the divide between opposing sides and, in so doing, opening you up to accusations of taking sides. Sadly, it is a job which in today's conflict-ridden world too often turns out to be a death sentence.

However, it is through the commitment and altruism of many journalists that we have seen society awaken to the injustice of poverty, hunger and deprivation in our midst. It is through the dedication of journalists that the plight of the ordinary people of Bosnia has been vividly brought home to us in the comfort of our living rooms. It is through your brave reporting that the horrors of war have been rammed down the throats of even the most apathetic of observers. For this the IFP and other peace-loving people are eternally grateful.

Unfortunately, while your profession has highlighted the horrors and injustices of the world's drawbacks, and they go hand in hand with a heightened awareness of many conflicts which mar our planet, there is the ignorance of others. One can of course be cynical and argue that the coverage of certain conflicts has to do with whether they advance the cause of those covering a story. Or one can be more complementary and argue that journalists cannot be everywhere at the same time.

Whichever way one looks at it, we in the Inkatha Freedom Party have suffered from the non-coverage of the African National Congress/South African Communist Party's onslaught on our people. While we welcome your coverage of the conflict in Bosnia, we implore you to visit Kwazulu/Natal. We too need your cameras in the war-ravaged villages and townships of our region. We too need you to highlight the ethnic cleansing of the Zulu people by the armed wing of the ANC. We want you to report on the systematic slaughter of IFP supporters and on the horror of having 310 of our leaders assassinated.

When I talk about those 310 leaders who have died, I do not talk about people who died in generalised violence or in mass attacks. I talk about IFP Branch chairpersons, treasurers, secretaries and I talk about Branch organisers. We have over 310 leaders in these categories assassinated one at a time in what is actually a serial killing of IFP leaders because they are IFP leaders.

This is political drama at its hideous worst. Yet there have been no investigative journalists who have been prepared to explore our death list and trace the killers to the political quarters from which the assassins came.

We want to show the world how women are burnt alive by the barbaric necklace and how babies of six months are shot to death in the name of the liberation struggle, with AK-47 rifles.

We want you and the world to know that because these atrocities are not been covered by the media, it does not mean that they are not taking place. While we are doing our best to highlight the suffering of the people of our region, we are constrained by the antipathy which the South African media views myself and my party. It is almost on a daily basis that I and my party are denigrated and vilified. It is almost on a daily basis that we are subjected to false and slanderous reporting. I am sad that these vilifications in our media have reared their ugly head even in the German media.

With such a campaign waged against us you might ask: Why is it that the IFP is faced with a hostile press. Why is it that we are targeted for vilification and not others? Is it not our own fault? Or, are we not somehow to blame? While one can never speculate on individual motives, generally speaking in South Africa journalists have a close affinity with the ANC and other leftist-leaning organisations. This of course has nothing to do with the fact that they offer a better vision of the future, but merely because our journalism fraternity is ideologically akin to the Socialism espoused by the ANC and its Communist allies.

Then there is also the fact that the media in South Africa is subjected to very serious intimidation. I wish to refer you to the booklet published by the Institute of Race Relations entitled: "Mau-Mauing the Media", photocopies of which have been distributed.

Given that this is so, this nevertheless begs the following ethical questions: To what extent should journalists be bound by the necessity of providing fair and balanced reporting? Is it acceptable for journalists to impose their views on the public? And, are not journalists meant to act as the mouthpiece of society rather than the reformer of society?

These questions can never be answered fully nor without an ideological bias. There will always be those who justify the manipulation of society for the so-called 'greater good'. There will always be those who deem that the shameless use of propaganda is perfectly justifiable in any effort to wean people away from their incorrigible habits and views. I am not here to comment on this, nor to contest this. Suffice to say that one can always justify the actions of those who are good at their job, no matter how objectionable that job is. Yet what I would like to say is that in a volatile situation such as our situation in South Africa, there lies a moral obligation on those who report on our country to be as impartial as possible in order to minimise the potential for conflict.

This is no platitude. Sadly, the history of our country has been one of the deliberate sowing of the seeds of division, not only between races, but within races themselves. This has polarised our communities along race, ethnic and class lines. If these divisions are stoked any further, we will merely exacerbate the violence which threatens to destroy our country. This is no exaggeration. South Africa is sitting on a veritable powder-keg waiting for the final match which will see our country explode into the violence and conflict from which we will not recover. Should we be so unfortunate that this happens, that will mean the destruction of a society which will not be resurrected again.

Yet even in conflict there are opportunities for the media. As the saying goes, there is no news like bad news. The prospect of a race-war in South Africa is pregnant with opportunities for those in the journalistic profession who thrive from war. In addition to its newsworthiness, such a conflict holds the added opportunity of purging the collective guilt of Western society for the shame of slavery and centuries of discrimination against the black man and the general colonisation of Africa by European imperial powers.

We in South Africa ask therefore that we do not become a proverbial football in the wider confrontations of Western society. We South Africans are adamant that we will not allow our country to degenerate into conflict and chaos. As the present violence in our country illustrates, once lit the fires of conflict are not that easily extinguished. If you in the West genuinely believe in securing peace in South Africa, then you will help us in our efforts to secure a negotiated settlement to our problems.

In South Africa's transition to democracy you the press have an especially important role to play. Resting squarely on your shoulders is the responsibility of informing the public as to the nature and progress of negotiations taking place in our country. Later on that role will be extended to advising and instructing the 70% of our population who have never voted in their lives.

Of further importance is that your role can be transformed into one of an educational nature where people are made aware of the need for a free press for democracy, for we in the IFP firmly believe that without a free press there can be no democracy in our country. It is our belief that without a free press South Africans will not be able to make an informed choice as to which party best represents their interests. Without a free press the transgressions of government will not be open to the scrutiny of the voting public. And it is without a free press that those whose intention it is to prevent us from succeeding, will be allowed to undermine our fragile democracy.

However, going hand in hand with the freedom to report is the obligation of providing fair and unbiased reporting. This point can never be over-stressed, for without the impartial coverage of the very sensitive negotiations process, we will always run the risk of exacerbating the already volatile situation which our country faces.

It is in this light that the IFP is perturbed at the blatant misrepresentation to the public of our position at multi-party talks. Of particular concern to us is that there are great discrepancies between our position at the multi-party negotiations taking place at the World Trade Centre and that which is being portrayed by the media. There is great concern in our party when our statements are manipulated in order to create false impressions. There is great

consternation at how the media latch on to statements individuals make and then punt them as official party policy.

For these and other abuses of the freedom of speech, we in the IFP are perturbed. We feel that the discrepancies between our position and that which is reported do not arise because our proposals are ambiguous or vague. Quite the contrary, it is the IFP positions, more so than those of our negotiating partners, which are clear cut, detailed and to the point.

At the heart of the IFP's constitutional proposals is our commitment to Western-style democracy. Ours is a commitment to a federal system of government which will give force to the hunger of the Black majority for political power while at the same time protecting minorities from arbitrary rule. It is a commitment to a form of government which recognises the right of self-determination amongst our plural society, while acknowledging the need for strong central government to ameliorate the evils of apartheid. It is a system of government which has as its fundamental basis the principles of political and economic pluralism, thereby ensuring the demands for democracy and civil society, for free enterprise and privatisation.

The IFP's belief in a federal system of government is driven by the belief that it is only federalism which can bring about peace in our country. It is the only system of government which can adequately address the peculiar developmental needs of our different regions; and it is the only form of government which can fairly and democratically confront the anomalies and tensions within our pluralistic and divided society.

During my meetings in Germany and Denmark I have explained why the IFP is not taking part in multi-party negotiations in detail. I have told my audiences that the IFP has withdrawn from national negotiations in protest at the manner in which decisions were being made in terms of the concept of 'sufficient consensus' and how the decision was taken to draw up an interim constitution which is a sure recipe for disaster.

According to the principle of 'sufficient consensus' an election date was set before we had even decided on what the form of state South Africa was to take; and it was according to this principle that the decision to go ahead with the drafting of an interim constitution - which would embody a two-stage process - was taken. We objected to both decisions and both times our objections were over-ridden. We were then left with no option but to exercise our democratic right by walking out of the multi-party talks.

At each meeting that I have addressed I have impressed upon my audience the need for a quick and simple solution to South Africa's constitutional predicament, and I have spoken out against the two-phased, and somewhat convoluted, route to a new order which the ANC wants us to take. We have consistently argued for a one-stage process which will see a final constitution being agreed on by constitutional experts before an election, and that constitution being put to the people for their approval or disapproval in a referendum.

Despite arguments that our concerns about the two-phased process are exaggerated, I remain unconvinced that this two-phased route will lead us to democracy. According to this two-phased approach, South Africa's negotiators will write an interim constitution which would

lead us into an election for a Constituent Assembly which would then write South Africa's final constitution.

Far from bringing about democracy for which we in the IFP have fought for so long, we believe that the real reason for this two-phased approach is the ANC's goal of securing absolute power for themselves in a centralised, unitary state. We believe that this process will compromise any possibility of South Africa achieving a federal dispensation.

We believe that this two-phased process will allow the ANC to fight our first non-discriminatory election on the issue of who will write the final constitution for the country. This process is ideally designed to give credence to the myth that the ANC, as conqueror over the evil forces of apartheid, would be entitled to write South Africa's first non-racial constitution. It is clearly designed to go hand in hand with an election campaign which will be run on the idiom of the liberation struggle. We can therefore expect that the election campaign will be marred by intimidation and violence. This is already happening on a large scale.

Already our supporters, and those of the National Party and the Democratic Party, are prevented by ANC youths from opening up branches and holding meetings in certain townships. Just recently IFP members were killed when they attempted to open up a new branch. Both the National Party and the Democratic party have had their meetings disrupted. It was this very need to avoid a potential bloodbath that led us to reject the two-phased approach.

It is our view that we will not return to negotiations unless certain constitutional guarantees are met. We hold the view that state governments and legislatures must be established under the next constitution and via the next elections. Their powers must derive immediately from the next constitution and the states or regions' legislatures shall be able to implement those powers through their own legislation.

It is our firm view that the list of powers vested in the hands of the regions must be such that real political power can be exercised at the regional level. This must include residual powers and all the powers which are highly politically charged. Only those powers which can not be adequately and properly exercised at state level should be devolved to the Federal Government.

Of critical importance is that the exercise of powers must be autonomous. What this means is that they can not be subjected to the over-riding or concurrent powers of the central government. It is our firm view that our regions will not be able to exercise any true political autonomy if the constitution allows the central government to over-ride any decision of the regions. If we are to maintain the autonomy of the regions, it is our firm view that this arrangement must be entrenched, and written assurances must be given that any future constitutional development cannot wipe out the powers of regions.

If our constitution is to succeed in providing a framework in which justice is possible, then constitutional legality and the justiciability of the constitution must be guaranteed by a fully independent, fully jurisdictional and easily accessible Constitutional Court.

We totally and utterly reject the notion of any deadlock-breaking mechanism being incorporated in our constitution, as is contained in the present draft. By virtue of this deadlock-breaking mechanism, South Africa's constitution can ultimately be adopted by a 51 per cent majority. To make matters worse, the final constitution can be written without taking into account constitutional principles which have been agreed to in the interim constitution.

This mechanism renders totally useless the guaranteed built-in requirement of a 60 per cent majority which is needed at a referendum to pass the constitution. With this mechanism available to it, the government of the day is able to generate deadlocks in order to relieve itself of the restraints of agreed- to constitutional principles and the limitations on the power of the central government.

An onus rests on journalists not only to report on injustices being committed around the world, but also to provide fair and balanced reporting. Without balanced reporting there is the chance that the conflict which threatens to make democracy unworkable, will be exacerbated. It is in the interests of South Africa, and indeed the entire world, that South Africans make an informed choice when it comes to choosing a political party in elections next year. Without that informed choice we run the risk of destroying the promise that democracy holds for our country.

-----0-----