

- STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

"ADVERSITY IN PERSPECTIVE"

by Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi

Chief Minister of KwaZulu, President of Inkatha and
Chairman, The South African Black Alliance

ULUNDI : 23 AUGUST 1986

We meet today to face what could be an incipient crisis situation or even an imminent crisis situation in UWUSA. But then no one of us who had this vision of UWUSA rising to be a mighty force in the world of trade unions and in South Africa at large ever thought that we were not tackling something which contained in it huge challenges. We all knew what we were letting ourselves in for, and the very first point I want to make is that in times of crisis, one gathers every available bit of strength, one seeks every possible bit of consensus and you set out resolving issues step by step. Crises should galvanize us into action. They should call on those hidden reserves in all of us and they should make us ever more determined to succeed.

In a crisis situation I repeat one seeks consensus. We put our heads together. We find each other and then we move forward together. I believe that the very first thing that we should do today is to ask ourselves the question whether or not the crisis was brought upon ourselves by ourselves. If that is the sole reason for the crisis, then that is the direction of thinking we should take. I have watched the development of UWUSA and I am totally convinced that we have not yet failed in this sense of bringing doom upon our own heads. I ask you simply to think back over the years and ask yourself which trade union development did not face crisis after crisis as events unfolded. I ask you: to remember that even today there are deep divisions in trade unions. There are deep divisions between trade unions and a trade union like COSATU has a paper unity which could yet be torn apart. The development of trade unions have always been accompanied by grave difficulties.

I ask you to think in broader terms about Black organisations. Wherever Blacks have struggled for their liberation in Africa, the process of establishing solid and reliable organisations has been a painful process and there have been many casualties on the road to success. I as the President of Inkatha say simply that it is only because Inkatha's development was directed by those of us who have learnt the lessons of history, that it is the powerful force it is today. Inkatha developed out of political circumstances in the first half of the 1970's. Those same political circumstances spawned BPC and SASO. Both of them were riddled with internal

diÃ©sÃ©nt and in both of them there were insurmountable schisms and

it is only their banning which preempted their fragmentation. Dr., Mondlane was murdered before President Machel pulled Frelimo together again. The Zimbabwe history is a history of splits and schisms and organisational problems. Herbert Chitepo, the leader of ZANU, was murdered in Lusaka. President Kaunda faced vast problems in keeping UNIP intact and so on .and so forth.

Organisational solidarity is only won with the utmost difficulty. It is a path fraught with many frustrations, many hazards, even that of losing our very lives.

UWUSA's organisational solidarity will be won with the same difficulty. Its problems are inherent in the South African situation and I make this a major point without in any way . hinting even that everybody is doing what they should be doing. Quite clearly this is not the case. All I am saying is that all the disputing parties in UWUSA need now to have the courage to look up at the great heights of future achievement, and they need now to recognise that every office bearer of UWUSA :needs every other office bearer. You must become an effective team working for noble

objectives. You must all put aside any kind of pettiness. I am not going to use today's discussion as a venue in which there is witch-hunting, where there is blame and counter-blame. Internal

disputes must pale into insignificance against the challenges which UWUSA is facing.

I have always been the champion of Black workers and Black trade unions. Nobody could have done more to give UWUSA the massive send off that I gave it at its launching rally at King Park's Stadium on the 1st May this year. The launching of UWUSA was a magnificent success. There are severe limits to what I and Inkatha can do for UWUSA. These limits are not unfortunate. They are limitations which should in fact be there. UWUSA is not Inkatha. Inkatha is not UWUSA. UWUSA is a trade union with a trade union job to do. It cannot do Inkatha's job and Inkatha cannot do its job. There must be a separation between trade unions and. political organisations. There is nothing wrong with a political organisation giving a trade union its blessing where there is common interest between a political organisation and a trade union. There can be mutual co-operation, but this mutual co-operation cannot amount to in our case Inkatha actually running UWUSA. I have not come here today to solve UWUSA's problems. UWUSA's strength must arise out of the fact that UWUSA solves its own problems. We have made it possible for UWUSA to solve its own problems. There are some people both inside and outside UWUSA who still think that UWUSA is my baby which I should nurse .until it learns to walk. This is far from being the case. I applauded its birth, that is why I was at the launch on May 1st.

UWUSA is moving in the right direction to solve its problems, but problem-solving is not achieved overnight in a situation in which UWUSA finds itself. Until problems are in fact solved, and -properly solved, I charge every member of UWUSA's Executive, and I charge every office bearer of UWUSA with the responsibility of striving together, of working together and succeeding together.

UWUSA dare not become a house which is divided. Strive always for consensus decisions; strive always to do that which is possible and strive always to equip yourself to do tomorrow more than is possible today.

Do not misunderstand me when I say this. I am not saying that there is not an urgent need to break new ground. The continued growth of UWUSA at a vigorous and even phenomenal rate is important. All I am saying is that if we do not do what we are doing properly, we in the end do less. UWUSA must therefore look at every operation and together UWUSA officials must make each and every operation more efficient, more cost effective and therefore more satisfying to members. UWUSA's Executive has approved training programmes. They have approved new positions. They will be seeking additional staff. They will be attempting to improve existing staff, but while these things consume the time that they inevitably consume, UWUSA officials now needing training, now needing additional colleagues, dare not break under the strain of working in what is now the present interim situation. The strain of it will have its toll. Inkatha may be there for moral support and inspiration, but we cannot be expected to carry UWUSA on our backs.

I want to talk about goodwill in UWUSA itself. Wherever earnest people strive for great goals in difficult circumstances, there are bound to be differences of opinion about what should be done and

how it should be done. There are bound to be frustrations and when you combine difficult circumstances with frustrations, you have a prescription for in-fighting. Goodwill is then at its highest premium. So let us pause for a while and look at this

valuable thing called goodwill.

When motives are selfish and people cannot do that which they want

to do for their own selfish ends, in-fighting is at its worst. I am not saying that right now in UWUSA there is that kind of in-fighting. I am saying that it is when one concentrates on the

major objectives and makes your own endeavours subservient to the major objectives, that goodwill is at its height.

Just look at the major objectives of UWUSA. UWUSA has arisen in circumstances in which Black trade unions are bedevilled by political take-overs. COSATU has taken on itself the

responsibility of being what amounts to a political organisation with political objectives at the top of its list of priorities. No Black trade union in South Africa can pretend that its members are not involved in the struggle for liberation, but when political objectives are set by trade unions which must necessarily fail, then trade unions must necessarily fail workers. COSATU's support for disinvestment is politically inspired. It is - not inspired by what is good for: Workers as workers. You cannot work for the benefit of workers and at the same time work with the forces of destruction which are asking workers to sabotage machinery in their factories and to annihilate South Africa's economic base.

In the upward spiralling of violence in South Africa, the commitment to the destruction of the economy and to the use of violence in politics, can only lead to internecine Black strife. That is not in the interests of workers. UWUSA has arisen to introduce sanity into Black trade unionism on a massive scale. 5 is facing a crisis in our country. It is part of the struggle for liberation but it cannot be part of the struggle for liberation unless it does what a trade union should do. This objective of working for workers as a trade union calls every office bearer . of UWUSA to have the kind of goodwill towards every other office bearer of UWUSA which ensures success. UWUSA is playing for high stakes. The importance of its responsibility should be unifying its office bearers.

I stuck my neck out for the whole of the Black South African workforce when I supported the emergence of UWUSA. Every dispute in UWUSA which becomes unmanageable tarnishes my image. Every failure of UWUSA to settle an internal dispute stabs me in the back. Every failure of UWUSA is a betrayal of Black South Africa. I have got national problems to grapple with. I have got international problems to grapple with. I exercise my political leadership in the most difficult times we have ever experienced as a Black community. I do not want an UWUSA load to sit like a rock on my back and hamper me in the struggle for liberation. Inkatha simply cannot afford a failing UWUSA.

One of the false allegations that are levelled at us is that UWUSA is introducing ethnicity into the trade union movement. This is a lie which COSATU and the External Mission of ANC are spreading all over the world. UWUSA should be careful in what its officials say or do not say to give authenticity to this accusation. The clashes at Hlobane were exploited by some of our adversaries to disseminate this . lie. Thus we should be very, very careful. Our non-Zulu speaking members should be given a leading part in the trade union as much as possible and as much as is feasible.

I have a massive Black constituency but this is by no means the only constituency I have. I have constituencies amongst our Indian and Coloured South Africans. I have constituencies amongst our White South Africans. Am I going to be shamed by the way UWUSA conducts its negotiations with employers? Are employers going to hold me up to ridicule because I participated in the launching of UWUSA? Every time UWUSA officials mishandle a negotiating situation they shame me. Real negotiations are always tough. There is no shame in not succeeding every time one negotiates, but to bungle negotiations because of crass stupidity, is another matter altogether. Be sensitive in your negotiations; learn now to negotiate. Your Executive will be providing you with training in negotiation and that is the very kernel of trade union success. Trade unionists who cannot negotiate are no trade unionists at all.

And that brings me to the next point I want to make. The Black trade union movement has mushroomed since Black trade unions were

legalised. Everywhere there is a desperate shortage of competent trade union officials. When UWUSA was launched we knew this to be the case. We knew that we would have to develop trade union skills amongst those who did not have them, and we knew full well that we would have to further develop the skills of those who did have them. There will be no learning amongst UWUSA officials if there is not a felt need amongst them that they need training. When somebody knows he needs training, then he can learn. And if you know you need training, then you are rather humble about what you in fact can do. You do not bluster around in your failures. Humility, both because you are learning to serve the people and humility because you strive for noble objectives which are very important, when added to goodwill ensures reconciliation and ensures the solution of problems. Trade union negotiation is a complex thing, which is why we see a predominance of Whites, Indians and Coloureds in the leadership of most trade unions. This is because these race groups have been in trade unions for many years, whereas we Blacks were not allowed to participate.

st

Humility and goodwill are essential ingredients in the process of solving problems, but we must always add to them the third very essential ingredient. Goodwill and humility is confounded when they are not channelled in the right way. It is in proper behaviour that goodwill is best expressed. There is a trade union way of doing things and I cannot over-emphasise the need for every office bearer of UWUSA always to act within the constitution of UWUSA. Internal differences of opinion are anticipated by every organisation. Procedures are laid down on how to cope with these differences to avoid differences becoming disputes. Every organisation also knows that this is not always possible and procedures are then further laid down for the handling of disputes. Any accusation in a dispute should be expressed constitutionally. Those who act outside the framework of UWUSA's constitution damage the organisation. We will not allow ourselves to be used by anyone against anyone. We respect everyone as long as everyone works in the spirit of team-work.

UWUSA leaders are there to serve members. They are the servants of members. Every office bearer is a servant of ordinary workers. The benefits of workers are, your prime interests and every endeavour of UWUSA will serve those prime interests if every endeavour is made constitutionally. No Black organisation can tolerate the defiance of the correct ways of behaving as laid down by the constitution. You will hardly ever come across any real dispute which proved insoluble if people do not defy the constitution. There is a proper way of doing things. There is a proper UWUSA way of doing things. Let us always do what is proper.

These are the things that I want to say to you this morning. I repeat I did not come here to lay blame. I did not come here to participate in witch-hunting. = I believe we should now all talk to

the - thoughts I have offered and let us sit down together and look at our difficulties in the spirit in which I have talked.

