

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERED

PRAYER MEETING OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK TAXI ASSOCIATION

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MESSAGE BY MANGOSUTHU G. BUTHELEZI, CHIEF MINISTER OF KWAZULU
AND PRESIDENT OF INKATHA

Read on his behalf by the Hon. E.S.C. Sithebe
Minister of Interior

EMANDLENI. 27TH AUGUST 1989

Mr. Ngcoya and members of your Executive Committee, members of SABTA, my brothers and sisters. I wish to commend Mr. Ngcoya and the Black Taxi Association for holding this Prayer Meeting. We always hold a Prayer Breakfast each year before our Session of the KwaZulu Assembly commences, to emphasize our dependence on God.

I like what I see SABTA doing in holding a Prayer meeting to implore the Almighty to guide its leadership and to bless its members with safety as they ferry hundreds of thousands of people each and every day. I think this appeal is timely in view of the violence that has erupted on the Witwatersrand and in the Durban area. Even Ulundi has been threatened with eruptions of violence in conflicts that have taken place between members of SABTA and the

civil servants who are perceived by SABTA to be competing with them.

We are at this time holding a series of Prayer meetings in the KwaZulu/Natal region as a result of the hideous violence between black and white. The violence in which members of SABTA are involved is also a form of black-on-black violence which is as regrettable as the political violence that I have referred to. I am encouraged to see the President of SABTA calling for this Prayer meeting to emphasize his belief that there is nothing we can achieve without God's help.

The emergence and development of the South African Black Taxi Association was, I believe, not only historically significant but was also a truly remarkable development. One can only marvel at how the pioneers of the Association brought so many together so effectively in such a short space of time.

SABTA is not only remarkable because it welded black taxi drivers into a coherent force. It was also remarkable because it broke into what was really a very tough business and operational world. It challenged regulations which curbed black participation in the field of transport and it challenged the politics of separation

which attempted to keep commuters and commuting under the control of the State.

The true story of SABTA should be written in dramatised form so that whole new generations of Black South Africans can remember one of the remarkable things their forefathers did. The story of SABTA should also be written from an analytical and business point of view so that future generations of Black South Africans can have documented proof of the value of the free enterprise system.

It is on this latter aspect of the "South African Black Tax Association" that I want to comment today. I firstly reaffirm my belief that the free enterprise system is the best system mankind has ever evolved with which to produce wealth out of the very dirt of the soil for people such as ourselves.

Between the early sixties and the 1980's a very considerable experimentation took place across the length and breadth of Africa in socialising economies and establishing state controlled economic

development. Right on our own doorstep we had Mocambique adopting a Communist approach to economics within a Marxist political framework as soon as they took over power. We also had the same phenomena in Angola. The experimentation with socialism was thus

right on our own doorstep.

We also earlier had perhaps the most determined attempt to establish socialism in Africa during the early decades of President Julius Nyerere's rule. His vision of Ujamaa led him to collectivise farming and regulate the means of production through State departments.

There is now ample proof that socialism is not the answer for impoverished people who have to make the transition from attempting to survive on peasant economies in circumstances in which there are immense pressures on natural resources to developing a State in which the process of job creation ends up giving the people the means of both lifting themselves up by their own bootstraps and of going on to have steady improvements in the quality of the lives they live.

Not only did socialism fail to produce the Utopias which Marxists promised the people but the poverty which prevailed under socialist rule created the circumstances of strife in which revolution and counter-revolution occurred among people who could not be governed in such a way that they supported government.

In Mocambique Renamo and Frelimo have clashed in what really amounts to scorched earth policies and it is the people who have suffered so hideously. In Angola, it was the clashes between UNITA and the MPLA which scorched the earth of the people.

Less dramatic in terms of revolution and counter-revolution it was the socialism of Tanzania which left the people destitute and although there were not dramatic revolutions and counter-revolutions, perhaps more people suffered in Tanzania because of famine and a lack of essential services.

President Julius Nyerere was statesman enough to recognise that his ujamaa system had failed and he was perhaps the first of the socialist States in Africa to charter a new course for his country. His turning to the free enterprise system and to the Western industrial world for developmental assistance was characteristic of his statesmanship.

In Mocambique it was President Samora Machel who started turning Mocambique around when he signed the Nkomati Accord with the then President of South Africa, Mr. P.W. Botha. The Mocambique of today has taken that turn of events a great deal further and is today actively attempting to de-nationalise the means of production in Mocambique and to encourage free enterprise development there.

There is now a long uphill battle by these countries to recover from the wasted decades and free enterprise is now a late starter, whereas it should by now have been running past the winning post.

In South Africa we have to face the fact that there is already vast poverty and that even the existing rates of job <creation are totally inadequate to ensure that the next generation will not be as impoverished as this and the previous generation has been.

There is a huge population bulge of young Black South Africans

bearing down on the market place. Hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of jobs have to be created in an alarming short space of time if the spread of poverty is to be halted. A great deal more

jobs will have to be created if poverty is ever going to be rolled back.

Around every major city in South Africa there are hundreds of thousands, millions even, of Blacks living in informal settlement which range from hideous slums to altogether unacceptable ghettos. The people in them will not be helped by ideology. They will not be helped by grandiose designs to nationalise the economy. They will only be helped if they can get more food, more shelter, more clothes more health services and more education for their children. In all reality, this means they will only be helped if they are provided with the means of working for the money they need to purchase the things they need.

It is tempting to think of the millions of Black South Africans living in these circumstances seeking hope in State assistance. We have seen, however, across the length and breadth of Africa States do not develop the wealth the people need. The best they can do is to spend wealth wisely but they cannot create it.

We can not therefore anticipate a situation in South Africa in which collective ownership and State control will salvage the people in our informal settlements from the poverty they now experience.

Significantly for me the most attractive thing about the free enterprise system is that it locates the destiny of a man in his own hands. I have no doubt whatsoever that for as far as we can see ahead, the informal sector and self-help technologies are going to be vital for Black survival. In these informal sectors and in the use of self-help technologies, it is the individual who must pull himself up by his own bootstraps.

What makes SABTA a historic phenomena in South Africa is that it was not orchestrated from above, it was not produced by outside parties, it was not assisted into existence. Black taxis arose as monuments to black determination to do something about their own circumstances and to do so with vehement determination.

Black taxis have added new dimensions to modern day South Africa and I cannot over-stress the importance of the emergence of the black taxi industry precisely at a time when de-regulation was taking place and Influx Control and Pass Laws were being banished. Political and economic circumstances demanded the greater mobility of Blacks and the South African Black Taxi Association was part of Black South Africa's response to this demand.

It is against this deep appreciation for the pioneering free enterprise spirit of black taxi owners and the ability of taxi owners and drivers to produce a coherent black taxi industry, that I so lament the emergence of violence in black taxi disputes.

It is tragic that what was such a shining example of black ingenuity and black determination and ability is now being marred by an inability of black taxis to run their own affairs with constant commitments to decency and the observance of the idiom of contract in business life.

I am aware that some or even a great deal of the violent confrontations which have characterised taxi disputes come from criminal elements who attempt to break into the taxi business by using violence and intimidation. I am aware that there is a criminal element at work stealing cars and running pirate taxis in unfair competition to those black taxi owners who have worked their fingers to the bone to put the money together to make a start in "the taxi business. ;

I am also aware that there are many taxis which are really owned by Whites, Indians or Coloureds and that the so-called owner has not risen to the status of owning a taxi through his own endeavour.

I am further aware that where criminal elements exist using violence and employing intimidation make very unfair assaults on the upright, law-abiding, hard-working taxi owner and taxi driver. Like Blacks in townships across the length and breadth of South Africa, attack necessitates defence and sometimes, unfortunate as it is, defence sometimes must take the form of pre-emptive action.

This need to defend and the temptation to take pre-emptive action actually breeds violence. This is what has been happening in black society around us wherever we are. It is my plea that we

recognise this hideous propensity of violence to spread and spread and spread, and that we as the Black nation of South Africa now scream out enough is enough and put violence behind us.

SABTA should pioneer in the emergence of a new South Africa in which the politics of negotiation will maximise the operation of the more purified free enterprise system that is found in our informal settlements where there are less regulations to hamper human development.

Our informal settlements must be safeguarded as a spawning ground for the new spirit of enterprise which alone can save South Africa from economic ruin. Let the South African Black Taxi Association join in the historic movement that is now emerging in South and Southern Africa.

The very African air we breathe is now scented with hope that violence will be put aside and that greater and greater reliance will be placed on negotiation and dialogue. There is also now ever-increasing hope that people will actually do what they say they are going to do. Let me say that I am deeply encouraged by the fact that the Brazzaville Protocol which was signed by South Africa, Cuba, Angola in the company of the United States and the USSR, is historically remarkable because countries and political organisations are now actually delivering the goods - they are doing what they said they would do. The spirit of contract is being firmed on our African soil.

In Mocambique there is a call for the spirit of the Nkomati Accord to be concretised in action and once more we have the signs that contracts taken and contracts given are now beginning to have greater credibility. It is my plea to all African statesmen - and now particularly perhaps to President Kaunda - that this spirit of political contract flowing out of the politics of negotiation, should be preserved at all costs.

It is also my plea that the South African Government now for the first time in the National Party's history makes itself truly credible by actually doing what it says it is going to do. We have had a lot of talk and very little action in real reform. The politics of negotiation which is now emerging as the dominant reality in politics must be associated with contracts offered and fulfilled.

The South African Black Taxi Association is still a growth industry and will remain a growth industry for some time. There is a very real danger of it expanding without consolidating its base. I make my plea to SABTA that it pays very considerable attention to organisational dynamics and to the need to strengthen itself as an organisation in the face of violent criminal onslaught and in the face of take-over bids by parties which cannot be disciplined by their Association.

I wish SABTA every strength and I sincerely hope that the difficulties it has experienced in more recent times are going to be hiccups in the overall development and in the overall growth of the strength of the organisation.

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