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SIXTH SESSION OF THE FOURTH KWAZULU LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

V. O T E O, F T H A N K. S

BY: THE HON. MANGOSUTHU G. BUTHELEZI, M.L.A.  
CHIEF MINISTER KWAZULU

TO: THE HON. DR. G. VAN N. VILJOEN, MP  
MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT AID  
AND OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

AFTER PERFORMING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE  
KWAZULU LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

ULUNDI : 15 MARCH 1988

Mr. Speaker, Sir, your Majesty and Honourable Members, it is now my duty to give a vote of thanks to the Hon. Dr. G. van N. Viljoen, Minister of Education and Development Aid, on behalf of the Speaker, his Majesty and members of this House.

Mr. Minister, I thank you on behalf of the Speaker of the House, His Majesty and every member of the House for coming to Ulundi to open this sixth session of the fourth KwaZulu Legislative Assembly. Mr. Minister, this House goes into session at this very critical time of South African history and we appreciate that it is you, Mr. Minister, to whom the State President delegated the responsibility of performing today's official opening.

You have always struck us as a sincere man with a deep sense of commitment to your country. You employ your many talents and your political skills in pursuing the dictates of your conscience. You are a public figure widely respected for your integrity.

I am not ashamed to welcome a man of your integrity to Ulundi. I do so despite the fact that we here remain alienated from the Government, as long as the wagon of fundamental change has stopped in its tracks, because of the stridency of voices of the lunatic fringe on the right of your Government. We welcome the Director-General of your department, Mr. van der Wall and all the senior officials of the Republican Government who have accompanied you to Ulundi. We also welcome in our midst, as always, the Commissioner-General and Mrs. Hansmeyer. We welcome honourable representatives

of Consular-Corps and all other distinguished visitors who have graced this official opening of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly with their presence.

It is SO tragic. . thag " in â\200\230our polarised society racism compartmentalises Blacks from Whites who ought to be Jjoined in common cause for the sake of the land of our birth. None of us can wish away the reality that apartheid divides asunder those who should be joined together. None of wus can wish away the consequences of the oppression by the minority of the majority in this country.

It seems to me that the longer we delay in coming to grips with the prickly nettle of the Black majority's voicelessness in the land of their birth, the more bleaker our common future will get. The more we delay, the more unlikely it becomes that we will be able to resolve our problems in the best possible way, through peaceful negotiations. Whatever reasons the Government has for taking the action it took against 17 Black organisations, and however justified this might appear in the eyes of the Government, I consider it to have been extremely unfortunate. As we see it, this action seems to have slammed all doors that llead to us being engaged in negotiations for quite a while. At least until the situation is normalised again by the Government.

Mr. Minister, you have opened this Session of the KwazZulu Legislative Assembly at a time which has become more deeply threatening to the peaceful co-existence of South Africa's race groups than it has been before. Your Government, Mr. Minister, has taken extremely harsh action against many Black organisations. They have been banned without being banned and across the llength and breadth of South Africa, Blacks see this latest Government action as action against Black democracy. To us this has sounded a gong for a standstill in reform politics, and for peaceful negotiations, to which we here remain committed.

The prevailing national state of emergency and the continued deployment of many thousands of South African troops on the borders, across the borders and inside the country, bears testimony to the fact that the South African Government does not rule by consensus. The state of emergency and the harsh action taken under it, bears testimony to the fact that the State President and the South African Government cannot rule this country through the normal processes which characterise good government.

Mr. Minister, there are those in South Africa and abroad who say that apartheid cannot be reformed, with which every Black South African agrees, but who actually mean that the White man, his institutions and his government need to be annihilated in a violent conflict, which will destroy not only apartheid, but which will destroy the economy and the very fabric of society, in South Africa, where the best that there is can be found.

We in this House say no, a thousand times no, to those who scream out that reform is not possible in South Africa. We say no, a thousand times no, to those who say that the politics of negotiation has fully failed and can never succeed. We in this House stand ever ready to prove these people wrong. We believe in South Africa. We have faith that South Africans will in the end join together to establish a fair and just society. We know that the reconciliation, which the politics of violence -â\200\230denies as possible, is achievable in this country. We know that there is sufficient goodwill for democratic opposition to apartheid, not only to triumph in eradicating it in all its entirety, but also to eradicate it in such a way that Black, White, Indian and Coloured are joined in common purpose to replace apartheid with an open, workable democracy.

Because we believe in South Africa, we believe in the future. Because we believe that there is sufficient goodwill in this country to triumph over every challenge that is thrown at South Africa from within and from without, we can go on believing in democracy. This, however, does not mean that we do not at times stop in our tracks and say enough is enough.

Right now I feel more alienated from the State President than I have felt ever since he first took office as the Head of State of South Africa. There seems less hope now of the State President rising above adversity to really get a meaningful reform programme off the ground. The prevailing mood in Black South Africa is one of gloom. There appears to be no light at the end of the tunnel, despite the fact that there is so much going for this country and so much of promise which could be welded together in a triumphant drive towards democracy.

Alienated as I am, Mr. Minister, I am beginning to dread the day when I will have to do the bidding of the masses as they demand that I abandon a willingness to compromise and demand that I gather the people together to lead them in practical non-violent action. I shudder as I think of the possibility that such a day may come, under the current circumstances. In a country of such great tensions as in our country, one cannot help imagining conflict and confrontation, even at the end of non-violent action, if there is no way forward as far as fundamental changes are concerned.

Mr. Minister, I make this statement in measured tones, in as simple as possible a way. If the South African Government is not aware that there is something awesomely inexorable about the progress of radicalisation in Black politics, then you, Mr. Minister, and your Cabinet colleagues can bluster and accuse me of sabre-rattling. I say this, Mr. Minister, because I have experienced being blasted at ministerial level in the past, when I warned . about the inevitability of violence in. . 1983 when the tricameral parliamentary system was imposed on all of us. My warnings were

interpreted as threats. These were no more than expressions of just my gut feeling as a hard-bitten politician of quite a few decades now.

I do not rattle sabres in saying what I have said. I have never rattled sabres. I never make empty threats, and indeed, I never even threaten. I have said this in order to share with you our desperate felt need for the reform process to now actually get off the ground. We dare not mill around on this Åcritical historic cross-road which South Africa has come to. We must go forward. There lis time yet to gather the goodwill which makes that going forward possible. Every delay in getting a meaningful reform programme off the ground which Blacks could applaud, eats away at the time that we have left to us.

As I have already indicated, there does not seem to be a snow-ball's chance in Hell for reform to get off the ground while we are living wunder a state of emergency. Let us hope that the reasons for imposing the state of emergency will soon disappear, before desperation leads people to half-baked desperate action.

Only llast week, the South African Government instructed its representative at the United Nations to tell the Security Council now to go ahead and do its damndest. I ask you, Mr. Minister, to convey to the State President the feeling of this House that were this defiant attitude taken against a background of a meaningful reform programme in South Africa, we would have cheered the decision of Mr. R.F. Botha, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to tell the world to go to hell. We know that we in this country will have to solve this country's problems here on the soil of Mother Africa. We know that only South Africans can save South Africa. We know that this is a resilient country with deep hidden strengths which the international community has not yet perceived.

However, Mr. Minister, we also know that if Mr. Pik Botha tells the world to go to hell within the context of a continuing National Party commitment to the White electorate to <continue with the politics of prescription; while the National Party attempts to dictate the future for all the people of this country, it is South Africa Wthh will end up in hell.

The National Party's headlong drive along the road of prescriptive politics has terrible implications for every race group in our country. There is no White destiny and there is no Afrikaner destiny within the broader White destiny which is a separate destiny from the destiny of other race groups. History has unequivocally dictated that this country is one country; that it has one people and that all the people of the country have but one destiny. Whatever that destiny lis, every race group in the country will share it. This, Mr. Minister, means that every race group in our country will share not only in the errors, but also in the wisdom, of every other race group.

I and my people are locked into the same destiny that Whites are locked into. We will not be dragged to hell, which will happen if the South African Government tells the world to go to hell from a broken South African base. Black South Africans have already claimed their God-given, democratic rights to be full and equal participants in the government of the land of their birth. That claim will not be relinquished. Whites would not relinquish their claim to be full and equal participants in the land of their birth and they must now accept that others have an equal claim to what they themselves claim with absolute justification.

It is so terribly tragic that the South African Government does not accept that in the final analysis there is a total political interdependence between Black, White, Indian and Coloured. The White man will never secure his own future unless Blacks are working with him to do so. We sink or swim together. Neither White nor Black can on their own author a secure future for South Africa. There are some who see the Black struggle for liberation as a struggle which must first turn to dominate White society before democracy can become a reality. This perception, Mr. Minister, is gaining ground in this country but it is as wrong as the perception that Whites can go it alone in solving our country's problems.

You and your Government, Mr. Minister, really are aware that we in this House and we in Inkatha do not have a double agenda. Everything we do, we do boldly in the full light of day so that the whole world can see what we are doing. We are deeply committed to protecting the best that there is in South Africa from destruction in the Black struggle for liberation. Our total commitment to eradicate the worst that there is, is not a blind irresponsible commitment that destroys the best with the worst.

Not only do we not have double agendas but we in this House, Mr. Minister, and we in Inkatha, are here to stay. We know that we will remain on centre stage through whatever crises this country goes, and we know that we will remain on centre stage in the end when South Africa's problems get solved. We are not fly-by-night leaders who can be irresponsible now because we do not know where we will be tomorrow. If we sow whirlwinds now, we know that we will reap those whirlwinds tomorrow. We work for a decent future South Africa in which no White will be ashamed to claim his birth right.

Yet it is we who are open, honest, steadfast and bold in our commitment to things of great and lasting value who so frequently have the rug pulled from beneath our feet by the South African Government. Every act of harshness against Black democracy is an act against us. You cannot attack Black organisations with harsh measures without also attacking us. It is the Black body politic which is attacked when any group in it is attacked. What happens to our brothers and sisters in organisations whose

programmes for change differ radically from our own, leaves not just these organisations politically devastated, but we also end up as political eunuchs who are of no value to the State President and to his negotiation programme. We end up willy-nilly folding our arms and not moving one inch as far as cooperation in the governments reform programme is concerned. The only consolation is that there is in any case no reform programme on the table ever since the Dr. Treunichts and the Terreblanches of this world raised their strident voices on the right of the government.

We in this House are more immediately aware of the hideousness of political violence than anybody else in South Africa. We bury our dead, Mr. Minister. It is residents in our constituencies who are battered and bruised and who suffer hideous death at the hands of revolutionary forces aiming to smash and then rule in a one-Party State. We say, however, that it is only an unshackled Black democracy which can succeed in doing what the State President attempts to do as he takes action to curb violence. We in this House demand law and order. We demand the elimination of the politics of intimidation. We cannot endorse the activities of those who brutalise our children by teaching them 'necklacing'. We cannot approve of anyone's actions, whoever he or she may be, who subjects our people to the brutalities of the Dark Ages, such as those of the kind that we have seen in our townships in the Transvaal, the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape and more recently, in the Greater Pietermaritzburg area.

Because we are committed to decency but are Black, we are caught in a terrible cross-fire in the upward spiralling violence. My people are beginning to say enough is enough; and unless a light appears at the end of our tunnel, and hope is reborn that a reform programme which we could endorse will get off the ground, my people will feel that the slamming of the doors in their faces by the Government leaves them no alternative but to seek their salvation in another direction.

We know what that direction is, and that is not the direction we now choose to walk. We could not have been more clear about where we stand and about where we would really like to go than we have been. In the Buthelezi Commission we sought an alternative to apartheid society because that is an historic necessity. In the negotiations with the then Natal Provincial Council which followed the work of the Buthelezi Commission, we sought joint decision-making structures in which Black, White, Indian and Coloured could be joined together because that too is an historic necessity.

After we had overcome the immense difficulties which were there in these negotiations, we tackled the even more difficult terrain of negotiating a Joint Legislative Authority in the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba. We have walked a long way along the road of our choice. We have shown our commitment to the politics of negotiation. We

have clearly indicated the kind of society we see as making possible the compromises which are necessary to divert South Africa from a final headlong plunge into a situation in which there are no winners such as in a scorched earth policy meeting scorched earth policy.

In all the things we have done, we have constantly held out a hand of friendship and acted on our perception that neither Whites nor Blacks could succeed on their own to overcome the difficulties with which this country is faced. In all the things we have done, we have been prepared to walk our half of the way to a compromise solution. The South African Government must now walk its half of the way. I state a very harsh political fact when I say that having walked our half of the way, we stand alone and very vulnerable while the Government slams democratic doors in our faces. We cannot stand in this half way position for over long. We must move forward or we must retreat.

We are reaching the point when we just do not know what more there is that we can do to bring about reconciliation between Black and White. We have that deep sense of tragedy which is always there when one knows that what one has done has been both good and sufficient; and is now dependent on others to do their share of what is good and sufficient, but who do not do so. We have done what we have done because it is right and it is constructive. Nothing will rob us of that distinction. That, however, does not mean that South Africa's problems are solved. There is the ultimate reality that Blacks and Whites are politically interdependent. Unless Whites also do what is right and what is constructive, and that unless what is right and constructive from the White side is joined to what is right and constructive from the Black side, there is no hope. If there is no hope in the direction in which we have travelled, it will not be of our making. This will not make us sanctimoniously right. It will make us retrace our steps and to re-examine our points of departure and re-consider our options.

In passing this vote of thanks to you, Mr. Minister, for opening this session of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly, I am addressing what I say to one whom we perceive as a man who could gather wise counsel around him to use the match that is in his pocket to light the light which we so need to see at the end of our tunnel. Sanity simply must now prevail. We must stop South Africa's headlong rush towards disaster. We must get the politics of negotiation off the ground and we must now put the good of South Africa before the good of any Party.