

EIR Eyewitness Report

Buthelezi: Why a new union was formed in South Africa

The following interview with Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi was conducted by EIR's correspondent Uwe Friesecke on May 1 in Durban, Natal, Republic of South Africa. Chief Buthelezi has been Chief Minister of KwaZulu since 1972. He is chairman, South African Black Alliance (1978-); and president of Inkatha, the moderate black mass liberation movement.

EIR: Your Excellency, you inaugurated today a new trade union organization, United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA). What is the significance of this inauguration?

Buthelezi: First of all, for a long time I kept out of the trade union field because I felt that the labor movement was not something that political organizations should get mixed up with—as you know is the case with the U.S., there is not any direct political intervention. But I have discovered that I was inept, as I said in my speech, because I have found that a lot of political organizations, since the government has allowed trade unions to operate amongst blacks, have decided to poach membership from the trade unions.

The reason why we sought to have today's occasion is because on Dec. 1 of last year, there emerged a confederation of trade unions called Cosatu, Congress of South African Trade Unions. Clearly, at the time, one of the first things they did was to launch an attack on me and the free enterprise system. They mentioned that they were going to fill up a vacuum which was created when the ANC [African National Congress] was banned, and some of the things that they were saying were nothing more nor less than just the policy of the ANC. I had information that they came about because the

ANC in fact prompted them to come about through SATU, the congress of trade unions which was already affiliated to the ANC.

So you could say that today, a real trade union movement is starting which will concern itself primarily, first and foremost, with workers' issues, unlike these other trade unions which clearly have just become fronts for political organizations operating outside of this country like ANC and SATU.

EIR: Will this new trade union also play a role in the struggle for reform and changes of the law of this country, which is your liberation struggle?

Buthelezi: Yes, of course. I think it would be wrong, Mr. Friesecke, if we as black people said that one must ignore the political struggle which is going on. But you see, at the same time I personally think that you know we are newcomers, by we I mean blacks in the field of labor relations, and I think that the first task, is first and foremost to establish ourselves as trade unionists and to know how the negotiations within which a trade union operates are done, this is first and foremost. But of course we cannot ignore certain things: For example, Cosatu is promoting a whole political program, and they reacted very sharply when I said they were a front for the ANC. Already I said in my speech from last month they were consulting with the ANC and SATU in Lusaka [Zambia—ed.].

EIR: How do you judge right now the political process in this country; at what point is it from your standpoint?

Buthelezi: Well, something happened a few days ago when



Chief Minister Buthelezi: "Though there are so many things that need to be put right, they haven't proven to us that a socialist future is the answer for our country."

the State President [P. W. Botha] abolished the pass laws. I think this was a very important thing in easing the lives of the blacks because, as I said in my speech today, it is we black people whose mobility has been very much circumscribed by pass laws and influx control regulations. So, therefore, I think that it is that action of the State President that has been significant and I don't believe myself that one should not give him credit for those things. To say they are cosmetic is being intellectually dishonest, because they will make a very big difference in the lives of the black people. But at the same time, of course, the major issue in this country is power-sharing and we think that is the issue the State President should have addressed if those people who are committed to violence are not going to gain the upper hand and mislead a lot of people into thinking violence is the answer here, because it certainly isn't, it isn't the answer. We certainly haven't tried everything to the extent we can say everything else has failed and the only thing that is left is violence.

EIR: Now, there has been a lot of discussion in the last days about the ANC and the process of bringing the ANC into the discussion of the political scene in South Africa. There have been arguments that the majority of the ANC are nationalists and only a small part are infiltrated by communists, and therefore, President Botha should allow the ANC, should legalize it, and that would be an important step forward in the resolution of the conflict in this country. What is your attitude toward that?

Buthelezi: Well, I am all for negotiations, and they should be involved in negotiations; Dr. Mandela, Mr. Sisulu, and Mr. Kathrada, and others, and Mr. Govan Mbeki who are in jail should be released so that participation in negotiations can be meaningful, and so that people cannot use that by saying that there are leaders who could have participated but who were not there because they were in jail. But on the

question of nationalists and communists: I find there is a very long list of South African Communist Party members in the national executive of the ANC; but, of course, my colleague here, Dr. Mlalose and I, as students at the university, we were members of the ANC when it operated under the old philosophy of the founding fathers of 1912 on the strategy of non-violence, and we did have a few communists at the time, but just a few. I remember Mr. Marx, people like Kodani and people like Kruma, they were just a few. But then there was that alliance with the white Congress of Democrats who were in fact members of the South African Communist Party. Now that alliance existed as long ago as then, but it has become even more because the external mission of the ANC gets a lot of funding and also a lot of military hardware from Russia and other Eastern bloc countries. So I really don't know to what extent those who are nationalists, as you say, can extricate themselves from the alliance within which they find themselves entrapped with members of the Communist Party. The members of the Communist Party in the executive now are quite many, much more than we had, for instance, when the ANC was operating within this country. So, the question of who are nationalists and who are not I do not know, because already I see they have reacted by saying there is nothing like that and that they don't take seriously, should I say, what Mr. Botha has attested.

EIR: What in your opinion should be the next step Mr. Botha should take to find a way for a constructive process of negotiating the power sharing of the future of this country?

Buthelezi: Well, the first thing that I've tried to persuade him to do is declare a Statement of Intent, which he told me he was not prepared to declare. He has now suggested a National Statutory Council, and I have said yes, provided certain ingredients were included and there was a program which could be changed and added on to. I couldn't see that my constituencies, in other words, Inkatha, on the one hand, and members of the Assembly and my colleagues in the Central Committee of Inkatha and my colleagues in the Cabinet, would allow me to participate unless it were clear that the present Tri-Cameral Parliament is sentenced to death, as I put it. It has got to be very, very clear that the present Tri-Cameral Parliament should go. If the National Statutory Council is created as a body to find a solution for the country, I think there are many blacks who would find this acceptable, to know that this is merely an interim measure. But if the National Statutory Council is going to operate in order to legitimize the continued existence of the Tri-Cameral parliamentary system, then many of us won't participate.

EIR: What type of constitutional solution would you propose for the power sharing of this country?

Buthelezi: We are really charmed into thinking that a unitary government, a unitary state democracy à la Westminster

was something that came from God. But you see, it seems to me that in our country Germany is for instance a federal state, America, many other countries are a federal state, Nigeria is experimenting along those lines. I think a country which has so many cleavages, and so many multi-ethnic traditions in this country, it could well be we should have a federal form. And we in Inkatha have already said our idea is one man, one vote in a unitary state, but we are prepared to look at other alternatives. This is why we appointed a commission, called the Buthelezi Commission, which did come out just for this

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region of Natal/KwaZulu, it did make recommendations about one legislature. But that is, of course still academic. At present my colleague, Dr. Mlalose, our national chairman, represents Inkatha with five advisers in what is called *Indaba*, which is a Zulu word for a convention where you discuss things and reach a consensus. We invited various organizations, the cabinet, and the executive council which governs the white part of this region, Natal as it is called, and had discussions. On the 11th of last month, I went to Cape Town to present to the government the agreement that the province and the chamber had reached about the future of this country, of this region.

At present they're going to allow us to have a joint authority, but we pleaded the answer is really a joint legislature, that is what we are working on. Dr. Dhlomo, our secretary general, is representing the government with five advisers as well. Both my colleagues were reporting to us just last Tuesday, that things are so far getting on very well, I would say better than they had expected. Now we believe if this experiment were left alone to get its own momentum and take its course, it could well be a pilot project for this whole country, to the extent that then other people can show that white and black can negotiate together and reach agreement. It's not necessary to fight, to kill each other.

EIR: Now Excellency, you give special emphasis to the economic prosperity and economic development of your country. Right now the Republic of South Africa is also affected by the international debt crisis, by a devaluation of its currency; it is affected in a sense similar to other African countries which are effected in a very dramatic way, and to other developing sector countries like Latin America. Do you

see your struggle as part of the struggle of other nations of Africa, Latin America, and Asia for a New World Economic Order, that is for a reform for a new Just World Economic Order, so that genuine economic growth and development can take place again?

Buthelezi: Yes, of course. South Africa, as you can see, sir, part of it is first world, but the black side is actually third world, so that therefore, from the point of view of development, we are struggling for that new order. We are still looking for a new Jerusalem here.

EIR: What do you think in this respect of proposals and measures, for example, President Alan García of Peru has made, who said I am only going to pay 10% of my export earnings to the banks, the rest I will use for the development of my country and I will not allow the sovereignty of my country to be suppressed by financial institutions like the IMF. Could you see a certain connection to that struggle, to the struggle you are waging?

Buthelezi: Yes, I think it is basically the same struggle. The circumstances may differ, but basically I would say we are facing the same struggle.

EIR: Do you have a special proposal about what the international community, on the one side the advanced sector, on the other side leaders in the developing sector, should concentrate more on to help your struggle?

Buthelezi: I think that myself, take America: There is a lot of pressure, of course, that Apartheid should be abolished in this country. President Reagan has been very statesmanlike and wise regarding South Africa, for which he has paid a very big price. He impressed me, for instance, when he applied partial sanctions, that was followed by the EC countries. I admire him very much, where in fact he wanted to send a loud and clear message to South Africa by applying partial sanctions, but at the same time he did not want to destroy the economy, so he didn't go further. Alternatively, I admire the fact that he balanced the imposition of partial sanctions against South Africa with stepped-up humanitarian aid to the black people. I think the international community can do wonderful things in that field. My colleague here is the minister of health and welfare, and I am sure he can tell you some very sad stories about the health of our people, the state of health, and the vast needs our people face and the extent to which the international community can help with doctors and all sorts of things.

For example, in America, I know they are collecting money to equip clinics and material to stock our clinics, because we have a shoestring budget and it seems to me, therefore, in those countries, we still need a lot of help. We still need a lot of expertise. One help that I think is still needed is to help us to produce food. Although South Africa is a country that sells food, here again, though Western type

economies work, there are some disgraceful things here where there is dumping of much needed things like milk and so forth to keep the price at a certain level. I believe myself one of the problems of my people is to be able just to feed themselves, because that is basic to health and I think it is one aspect of the liberation struggle which we have not tackled.

EIR: You are a leader of a nation of the African continent with a very long history. What is your historical vision for the continent of Africa as a whole, a continent which has gone through devastating economic crises of starvation and where suffering and injustices are suffered by the people, what is your historical vision for this continent?

Buthelezi: Africa, you know, can really contribute a lot to the international community. But at the moment we are still confronted with basic things like food production because it is a continent of disaster as well. You have a desert coming down and you've got all kinds of very, very devastating things like cyclones, like droughts and so forth, but I feel nevertheless we haven't even touched its potential. One of the things that I was hoping would happen: If the South African economy is not affected, I would think it has a lot to offer black people, the know-how in it. I believe that South Africa is the only country in Africa which has a sophisticated developed economy, an economy that has reached a certain self-sufficiency. I therefore do believe that Africa is going to play a role, and I believe Nigeria and South Africa can play a very important role in the development of Africa in the economic field.

EIR: UWUSA at this point seems to be the only union in South Africa that is fighting for jobs, whereas Cosatu is trying to take away jobs.

Buthelezi: Absolutely right, they are taking away jobs from people, they are taking away bread from people. We say to people, to struggle you need to be fed. While the struggle for self-fulfillment that is going on that our children should be preparing for, for I am certain we are going to take our place in this country. It is no good having a whole generation of illiterates and semi-illiterates such as Cosatu proposes. You remember in my speech I mentioned they have involved themselves even in trying to influence children to rebel and they are doing so as lackeys of the ANC, of course, trying to provoke children not to go to school but instead to destroy the buildings. They are committed as a front for the ANC, the ANC is committed to making the country ungovernable, as is the UDF. They are playing those games at the same time and not concerning themselves with the problems of trade unions.

EIR: One of the banners at the rally was France, United States, Great Britain, West Germany, invest in South Africa, help fight hunger.

Buthelezi: Absolutely, sir, it is the only way you can help us, it is the only way you can really help us. And I find it strange too, our brothers are talking about a socialist future, they are talking about setting up some kind of Marxist state here, and they are talking about nationalizing mines and industries. Of course, if the socialist system is so wonderful, I wonder why is it that the Russian bear is fed by America, a country whose economy they say is based on exploitation. Why do they eat food that comes from exploitation? If Russia is such a wonderful system that our people are aspiring to through the ANC with a socialist future, why is Russia not able to feed itself?

I somehow fear that although there are many faults that one can point at as far as this economy is concerned, I believe that though there are so many things that need to be put right, they haven't proven to us that a socialist future is the answer for our country. Therefore, I think it is another aspect which many people in the West don't realize. Overseas I think that many interest groups, which support directly or indirectly our brothers and want to put pressure to bear or economic pressure on South Africa, are people who don't realize that the ANC has got a blueprint, and that blueprint is that the economy of this country, the free enterprise system, is as evil as Apartheid itself. When they say pressures should be brought to bear from countries of the West, they are not doing so because they genuinely want to put pressure on Mr. Botha and the government. They do so because they want to destroy the economy itself and I think that is a very irresponsible thing because whoever rules this country, be it a decade or two, would need massive wealth. Because black people are increasing in this country at the rate of 3% per annum. That is very, very high, with a population bulge that needs an interest we can't service already.

EIR: Could you say that the contribution of technology, know-how, and economic performance for the development of the South African economy and for the development of the economies of the African continent is the political security guarantee for the whites in South Africa?

Buthelezi: Look, sir, whites need blacks as much as blacks need whites, in fact we are interdependent, and therefore, it seems to me, there is a guarantee. I have always said myself let us not delude ourselves that one morning we'll get up one day or Christmas Day, one Easter morning, and find we love each other, that is, black and white. I think our vested interests will decide the issue because I think the people of this country, black and white, are not foolish, and they know that it is in their interests. Already in the economic field there is interdependence, and black people are increasingly becoming more and more advantaged in the sense in which the economics of the country depends on them. So that economic interdependence can be used in negotiations that can take place to convert it into political interdependence.