



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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SCHER: May we have an idea of what you have been involved with?

BUTHELEZI: My name is Mangosuthu Buthelezi and I lead my party in Parliament. I've been in this Parliament since 1994 when the democratic era began, and I was always involved with politics before 1994. In 1994, until the first election, my party was able to win a clear majority in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. We also got the most votes in 1999, although less than before, but we lost control of the province in 2004. I continued to lead my party in the legislature—in the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa.

SCHER: Obviously, your career has spanned many years and you've done many different things, and you've been involved in many different areas of the South African political sphere.

BUTHELEZI: Yes.

SCHER: Today, I was wondering if we could talk mainly about the negotiation period in the early 1990s and I have a few questions for you from that time.

BUTHELEZI: Yes.

SCHER: The first question I would like to ask is we have this major event in which then President F.W. De Klerk un-bans the ANC (African National Congress), the SACP (South African Communist Party) and some other political parties. At that time, as the leader of Inkatha (Inkatha Freedom Party), what did you see as the priorities and challenges facing you and facing your movement?

BUTHELEZI: Well I don't think that our priorities have changed, because we've always believed in further reform of the state in South Africa. The fact that we have even this poor imitation of a federal state was actually a contribution of my party, because the ANC didn't want it. This is proven because even now the ANC is debating whether the provinces should be dismantled. That is of great concern to me, because I believe in furthering a system of subsidiarity. I believe in regions that have authority to determine their own matters. I don't believe in centralism. So that is of great concern to me.

SCHER: As I mentioned before we started recording, you've been a proponent of the federal idea and of federalism for decades now.

BUTHELEZI: Quite, absolutely.

SCHER: And I was wondering in what ways do you believe federalism is particularly suitable for South Africa and why have you fought so fiercely to see it realized?

BUTHELEZI: Because I admired all the federal states in the world, I think whether it's the United States, or it's India, or it's Canada, whether it's Germany, I've always thought that the federal form of government is the best for us, for this country, for our people—especially in a country that is multi-ethnic like ours. It is very diverse. I think that the interests of the people of the Western Cape, for instance, may not comport with the interests of the people of Gauteng, or KwaZulu-Natal. And I therefore believe that it is in the interest of people everywhere to have autonomy and to be able to have self-determination at that level. I think it is of great importance, especially in delivery. I believe that people deliver better if not looking up to Pretoria far away instead of doing most of the things themselves.

Only major things, like foreign affairs, should be controlled by the federal government.

SCHER: At the other end of the spectrum in the early 1990's, the ANC favored a very strong unitary state. What were your concerns about such a model for post-apartheid South Africa?

BUTHELEZI: *Unitary state?*

SCHER: A unitary state, a strong centralized state.

BUTHELEZI: Yes.

SCHER: What were your concerns about a state that would look like that?

BUTHELEZI: *Well, I was concerned because I knew that my colleagues in the ANC were actually very much influenced by the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and I didn't imagine that kind of form of government would be suitable for us in South Africa. My formula gives people more leeway to determine things for themselves and not be dictated to by a central power, somewhere far away from where they are.*

SCHER: Did you have concerns about minority rights and minority representation?

BUTHELEZI: *Yes. That's why I said in the beginning that we're a diverse country. We are multi-ethnic and for that reason I thought it was in the best interest of the people of this country if we had a federal form of government.*

SCHER: One thing that I was quite interested in speaking to you about is that when one looks back during the negotiation period and reads a lot of the debates and a lot of what was written, at times people seemed to use you, Prince Buthelezi, the IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party), Inkatha, the KwaZulu Government, the Zulu monarchy and the Zulu people, almost interchangeably. I was wondering if you could talk about the difficulty of advocating a particular policy when perhaps people do not quite understand what groups you were representing, or what points you were actually trying to advocate?

BUTHELEZI: *From the beginning of negotiations, the King was not represented in the negotiations and I felt that was not fair because when we were conquered in 1879 by the British, we were a sovereign state with a monarchy. So we were concerned about the place of the monarchy as an institution in the new political dispensation. And this was an issue that almost cost us our very existence because we almost didn't go to elections—because the ANC didn't want to commit then.*

It was not until, of course, Professor (Washington) Okumu was able to talk to Mr. De Klerk, to Mr. Mandela, and myself. On the 19th of April 1994 there was an agreement that this issue of the place of the monarchy would be dealt with as soon as possible after the elections through international mediation. Because we had actually asked international mediators to come from Germany, from Britain—Dr. (Henry) Kissinger, the former Chief Justice of India—people like that. They'd come here, but the ANC—through Mr. (Cyril) Ramaphosa and Mr. Roelf Meyer—they rigged it.

It was only after that that we decided we're not going to participate in the election. And until this academic from Kenya, Professor Washington Okumu, intervened, we were not participating in the election. We only participated in the election then and insisted that Parliament should be called for one day to enshrine the institution of the monarchy in the constitution, which in fact was done in the interim constitution. It was enshrined. But then when they finalized the constitution it was no longer there. And they said that it would be sorted out through the constitution for the province of KwaZulu-Natal, which constitution has never taken place up until now.

So I always preach that they were able to pull the wool over the King's eyes because that matter has not been sorted out. Instead the province passed legislation—Act Five of 2005—which has got a line, Section 17, saying that the King is the monarch of the province, which, of course, in constitutional terms is meaningless. That should have been done through a constitution.

SCHER: Do you feel that the guarantees that were made to you and enabled you to reenter the process and to contest in the elections have not been met?

BUTHELEZI: *They were dishonored.*

SCHER: Were dishonored?

BUTHELEZI: *The agreement was dishonored by Mr. Mandela. I know that Mr. De Klerk tried very hard to persuade Mr. Mandela to carry out the agreement, but he resisted. So for me it's one of the bad records that Mr. Mandela has with myself for dishonoring an agreement.*

SCHER: Looking back, do you—and knowing how things have turned out—do you regret participating in the elections and rejoining the process?

BUTHELEZI: *Well I cannot regret the opportunity to inform my people, as I do within a democratic dispensation. So it's difficult to say that I regret. Of course I feel very bitter about the fact we were actually led down a primrose path by the ANC and, in particular, Mr. Mandela, and that he would not honor his own signature.*

SCHER: I wanted to ask you a slightly different question. Your leadership of KwaZulu was very different from that of other homelands. I mean, you resisted attempts to foist independence on KwaZulu?

BUTHELEZI: *Quite.*

SCHER: And some have suggested that your participation in the homeland system was tactical in order to work for change from within the system, and that your leadership was very different from that of the other homeland areas. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that?

BUTHELEZI: *I think one must understand, in the first place, that I'm a hereditary leader of my people. I am a traditional leader by birth and, therefore, taking over my position as my father's heir over the Buthelezi Clan in the District of Mahlabathini within the Zulu Kingdom was something that I was born to do. So within that I always say the whole homelands system was imposed on the Zulu people anyway. It was not by choice that I participated. In fact, Inkosi Albert Luthuli and Mr. Oliver Tambo had to speak to my sister—my late sister, Princess Morgina in Benoni—requesting her to plead with me that if the people elected me in the framework of*

this system—which the apartheid regime was imposing on us—I should not refuse, because they knew I rejected it.

So it was under those circumstances that this was imposed. Then the leaders of the ANC said that I must take it over, rather than anyone else. Therefore, I moved then this thing not to where the apartheid regime wanted—independence. I worked instead to protect the citizenship of not only the Zulu people, but of South Africans, because if we—being the largest ethnic group in South Africa—had agreed, the homeland system would have succeeded.

In fact, Mr. De Klerk at the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) admitted as much. He said that what made them abandon apartheid was the fact that we rejected independence.

SCHER: A question I had for you is that you have a very strong and have always had a very strong regional support base in KwaZulu-Natal and yet you were always advocating ideas at a national level.

BUTHELEZI: *Absolutely. I grew up as a member of the ANC Youth League. The founders of the ANC were actually were very close to me, because the founder, Dr. Pixley Seme, was married to my mother's eldest sister, daughter of the King, too. So those are people I knew as I grew up, they were not legends.*

The very first president of the ANC was Dr. (John Langalibalele) Dube. He came from our region, too. He was a Zulu from a place near Durban, and many others after that. So I'd grown up in that environment where one looked beyond just the region of KwaZulu-Natal—we looked at South Africa.

SCHER: So you have always been very conscious of the need to push for things at a national level and to participate at a national level?

BUTHELEZI: *Yes, sure. Absolutely.*

SCHER: Then how did you respond to comments from the ANC and others that you were a regional actor—that your interests were at a regional level? How did you try and address the issue?

BUTHELEZI: *Well it suited them in an attempt to vilify and denigrate me, because I could not have worked if I was like that. I could not have worked with people like Mr. Tambo until 1979 if that had been the case. I worked with Mr. Tambo for all those years, until 1979, when I refused to take up the armed struggle and I refused to support sanctions and disinvestment against South Africa. And so that accusation is merely a part of their vilification of me because, in fact, even before I used to come here to Cape Town, I used to address thousands of people here in Cape Town. I held rallies in Soweto. I used to go to Bloemfontein. I was holding rallies all over South Africa. So to define me like that is just done by the ANC when they turned against me, when I refused to take up the armed struggle.*

If you read the recently the published book by Anthea Jeffery "People's War," then you'll understand the whole thing—what happened, why the media, the churches and all of them joined hands together to vilify me and even the violence that took place. They made it seem as if I was driving the violence, but, in fact, I didn't even have an army. They had an army themselves that they used and threatened with. Right through negotiations, Mr. Mandela used this army as a

sword of Damocles because right through he kept on saying he was not going to demobilize it. I didn't do that.

So that was just something that they did themselves. For instance, yesterday they heard from the President here in Parliament—maybe you can get a text of what he said. He mentioned me in his State of the Nation address as one of the people who were responsible for the release of Mandela, other political prisoners and so on. Even yesterday the chief spokesman of the ANC repeated it. I think that deals with that.

SCHER: I don't want to talk too much more on this particular topic because I understand it's bringing up things that happened a while ago—but it would be helpful for me—one of the things I have been sort of battling to understand is why the ANC changed their attitude towards you so swiftly and so determinedly from the early days when they were very supportive of you?

BUTHELEZI: *I've already said that we were in a meeting with Mr. Tambo in London. We met abroad in various places. We had met in Stockholm. We met in London. We met in Nairobi, in Malawi, in Nigeria. In 1979 he asked me to come to London with a delegation and he was going to come with a delegation from the ANC. For two and a half days we discussed this issue of investments and sanctions, and secondly, the armed struggle. He was trying to persuade us to embrace that. Mind you, even before that Mr. Tambo was attacked for being very close to me, because even the first twelve of the dissidents who hived off the ANC stated that one of their reasons for breaking away from the ANC was the fact that Mr. Tambo was too close to me.*

SCHER: Really?

BUTHELEZI: *Yes, that was the reason they stated in black and white.*

SCHER: I see.

BUTHELEZI: *So when I refused then to embrace their strategies, then the sluice gates were opened and they attacked me through all their international friends and channels, and also vilified me and called me all sorts of names.*

SCHER: And in not supporting sanctions, you were joined by some very high profile people here in South Africa such as Helen Suzman?

BUTHELEZI: *Alan Paton.*

SCHER: Alan Paton. These were people who shared your views?

BUTHELEZI: *Quite so, but what about themselves, now—in fact, I said it just last week when we met with Mr. Zuma. He invited leaders of opposition parties. I said to them that I find it interesting that they say sanctions should not be imposed on Zimbabwe for the same reasons I stated about not imposing them here and he laughed, "Yes."*

SCHER: He laughed?

BUTHELEZI: *Yes.*

SCHER: I see, so definitely there was other support for your ideas and people who were thinking that—?

BUTHELEZI: Yes. And in fact I tested this, because I used to ask people whether they support sanctions and they would roar and say, "No, we need jobs." I had rallies in Durban and in Soweto where I actually asked the people themselves. And I would argue of course that the people—if you go to any factory in South Africa, any place where people are employed, you'd find queues and queues of people. And I said, by doing so they vote with their feet for continued investment and against sanctions.

SCHER: Do you feel that perhaps you had a better view of the situation on the ground operating as a leader within South Africa as opposed to how the ANC was operating at the time, which was largely in exile?

BUTHELEZI: Of course.

SCHER: Do you feel you were quite in touch with what as you said the people on the street, the common people felt?

BUTHELEZI: Quite correct. Absolutely. Those are the facts of the matter whether one likes it or not. I think that's why, for instance, at one time an institute at the University of Freiburg did an empirical survey where I was South Africa's political favorite. I was the person who they would support more than other leaders, even those that were in jail.

SCHER: I see.

BUTHELEZI: Just because of that.

SCHER: I would like to change tracks just a little bit and ask if you could tell me a little bit about your hopes and perhaps ambitions for the case at Indaba that was held, I believe, in 1984. Because a number of people that I've spoken to suggested that that was a really overlooked model—like you were really trying; you were ahead of your time in what you were trying to do there and the types of solutions that you were proposing?

UTHELEZI: In fact, I was going to mention it myself because I think that also deals with the issue that I was an ethnic leader, and so on. Because in fact I mobilized people of all races in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and the last result of that was, of course, the KwaZulu-Natal Joint Executive Authority, which was the first non-racial government of any sort in this country. It was the first time the people of all races in the province governed their province together. And that was long before 1994.

SCHER: In terms of the reception of your proposals, were you disappointed that people did not look at it more closely and see how it could be emulated?

BUTHELEZI: There were many people who admired it but, of course, it was overtaken by other events. I mean they were for instance disappointed that the ruling party in South Africa, the national party, would not be part of it. And now also the ANC—I had invited the ANC to participate also. They refused to participate. I was disappointed, but nevertheless we proceeded with other organizations and various structures—resulting in that Joint Executive Authority.

SCHER: You mentioned earlier that we have a poor imitation of the type of federalism that you wanted for South Africa. I wonder if you could talk about how the reality today does not meet the ambitions that you had, or what you were really proposing?

BUTHELEZI: In terms of this constitution, I find that provinces—while they have the competence, they can't pass their own legislation. And I think this is likely the case because most of the provinces are ANC—governed by the ANC. And I find that, while in the constitution there's concurrency and there's also some things that we can do as various provinces, it has never taken off. It is just not done, because this government here doesn't like it and because of what I have said that most of the provinces are under them anyway.

SCHER: Do you think there is a way of rectifying it, do you think there's a solution to try and make the provinces more autonomous?

BUTHELEZI: I think that these provinces governed by the ANC perhaps can do certain things just as we did before, but we lost power in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. There were things we could do, and which we did, which cannot be done now because its now under the ANC. The ANC now has put on their agenda—and its not theory or what they speak about privately, it has been put on the table—the question of whether provinces should continue to exist or not. That is the point we've reached now.

SCHER: I know one of the best examples of the potential for provinces was when KwaZulu-Natal began administering Nevirapine anti-retroviral drugs ahead of the national government and actually intervened in that landmark case?

BUTHELEZI: Quite correct.

SCHER: Would you say that that represents the potential for provinces?

BUTHELEZI: Yes. This stands out as an example of what could happen—because we saved lives of people because of the autonomy that the provinces had.

SCHER: But despite the provinces not functioning perhaps as well as they could or as well as you envisage, do you still feel that your contributions to the shape of the South African state were significant in the fact that there even are these provinces that have some powers? The shape of the provinces today and the shape of the relationship between the central government and the provinces could largely be said to be the result of the advocacy of you and Inkatha and some other parties who were pushing for federalism. Are there any particular aspects of this that you're quite proud of—that you were able to at least achieve parts of what you were aiming for?

BUTHELEZI: No, I think it was already mentioned with the case of Nevirapine.

SCHER: Stands out as the most successful example?

BUTHELEZI: Yes, quite. It's a good example.

SCHER: We've talked a little bit about you rejoining the elections, which was one thing that I was quite interested to hear more about but we spoke about how Dr. Washington Okumu was able to mediate a bit there.

BUTHELEZI: Quite.

SCHER: I am quite interested to learn about your thinking at the time. Because if you had not participated in the elections, you could have missed out on this very landmark, significant event in South African history. Were you prepared to really go through and not participate at all until your demands were met?

BUTHELEZI: Well, we had decided—.

SCHER: Yes.

BUTHELEZI: It was a *fait accompli*. It was decided that we were not going to participate until the intervention of Professor Okumu. We had decided we were not going to participate and the people were very happy when I announced on my return. I remember there were thousands of people there and they were waiting for me, and I said that we now could participate. They were very happy, because they knew that our stand was actually a stand which could cost the obliteration of our party too.

SCHER: That was a risk you were willing to take on principle?

BUTHELEZI: Quite, absolutely.

SCHER: But on Election Day you weren't 100% happy with how the elections were run in KwaZulu-Natal?

BUTHELEZI: Yes.

SCHER: And actually got the IEC (Independent Election Commission) to extend the elections for a day, if my understanding is correct. Could you talk about what were the problems during that time?

BUTHELEZI: You see there was violence at that time, although it would be suspended. I mean during those days, the days of the election there were not many instances—there were no instances of violence. But at the same time you know, boxes with votes were ferried from various points to a central place, and quite a big number of votes were thrown all over the place and were found in valleys and hills—were thrown away by people who were influenced by the ANC.

SCHER: But you accepted the IEC contention that the results needed to be accepted for the cause of peace?

BUTHELEZI: It was for the sake of peace, yes.

SCHER: Yes.

BUTHELEZI: But we had complained about it.

SCHER: I see.

BUTHELEZI: You see, there's not been a single election in South Africa that has taken place where there is no fraud. But the problem is that the IEC always says in terms of regulations we should have complained inside a certain time, now it's too late. Even in last year's election in the province, the office of the Premier was printing ballots. We actually drew it to the attention of the IEC and I even told President

(Olusegun) Obasanjo of Nigeria—he was an African Union Monitor—but it was never attended to.

SCHER: I see.

BUTHELEZI: And other things too which are too numerous to mention.

SCHER: And just on this issue of the violence: there certainly seemed to have been an effort to cast you as having some role in the violence.

BUTHELEZI: That is why I say really I cannot go into that, but if you buy the copy of the book, which is—.

SCHER: Is that the best?

BUTHELEZI: Just a few months ago it was published, you know, "People's War." Then you'll understand rather than me arguing for myself for Princeton University. I don't know the amount of propaganda and lies that were flung at me and the IFP, which are not true. I mean the whole international community ignored the fact that the ANC had an army. I had no army, but they had this army, which killed a lot of our people and our people defended themselves. I believe in nonviolence but I said it was an inalienable right of the citizens under our common law to defend themselves and their loved ones. That is all I said.

Many times they wanted to assassinate me and those who worked with me in the Cabinet and, since I rejected independence, we had no army in KwaZulu-Natal. Transkei and Ciskei had armies, but I didn't have an army. And I appealed to the central government to protect me and my colleagues and the buildings. Two hundred young people were actually trained by the South African defense force for us. Because I was a sovereign citizen, I was entitled to protection by the South African government. There was nothing hanky panky about it.

SCHER: Yes.

BUTHELEZI: And then, of course, they always use that as if it was a deliberate thing of training death squads.

SCHER: Right.

BUTHELEZI: Which of course is nonsense. The fact that one or two people were involved in that does not mean that—they were not orchestrated by myself to do so. Just as they say some members of the KwaZulu Police were involved in acts of violence. That was not orchestrated by me. There was not a single meeting of the Central Committee of the IFP which ever decided that we should kill anybody or embark on a war, except the self-protection units, which we tried to set up just before the election because the ANC had set up defense units. We had set up protection units, you know, because of the civil right to protect people that had been mowed down. I mean up until now we've never been told of what happened to more than 400 leaders of the IFP that were killed.

SCHER: Yes.

BUTHELEZI: They've never told us, even now, who killed them. Let alone thousands of others who died.

SCHER: But given all of these tragic events and this unpleasantness, how did you feel about then participating in the government after the elections as Minister of Home Affairs, given that there were these demands that had not been met and numerous unresolved issues that you say you feel quite bitter about and quite understandably so. How did you then go on to just to participate and work towards—?

BUTHELEZI: The constitution said so, the interim constitution prescribed that anybody that had more than 5% was entitled. It was not through magnanimity or favor if you participated in the government.

SCHER: Yes, so.

BUTHELEZI: In the government of national unity. I mean, how could I be the one who wrecks what is called the "government of national unity," because then they would say that you see true to my character, I'm sabotaging something that is meant to promote national unity.

SCHER: Let's talk a bit more about the federalism issue, if that's all right. And one of the things I wanted to ask you was the—you formed a group called COSAG (Concerned South Africans Group) that was—.

BUTHELEZI: What?

SCHER: COSAG, Concerned South Africans Group.

BUTHELEZI: Yes.

SCHER: Who were proponents of federalism and it entailed getting together some fairly disparate groups.

BUTHELEZI: Yes, quite.

SCHER: And people who were envisaging very different things.

BUTHELEZI: Quite so, yes.

SCHER: And yet you formed a common alliance.

BUTHELEZI: Yes.

SCHER: Could you talk about that and how you went about building up this coalition of people who shared your bigger views?

BUTHELEZI: I don't think there's much I can say there.

SCHER: Yes.

BUTHELEZI: Except that we did help create that with people who were not on the same wave length politically, but had a common idea for a federal state in South Africa that we wanted. It is true that it was quite a motley gathering because some wanted their own states, like the Volkstaat idea and so on, which is not what I believed in myself, but that was the reason.

SCHER: I guess all who felt, all people who felt that the federal model would be—

BUTHELEZI: *Quite, it would be best.*

SCHER: More suitable.

BUTHELEZI: *Because of the heterogeneous nature of the country, of the population and the diversity of the people of South Africa, that would be the best model for peace and stability.*

SCHER: Now in terms of the IFP and the IFP's ambitions and future, what do you—looking forward, what are your plans for the IFP and what are your ambitions?

BUTHELEZI: *About what?*

SCHER: About where you would like the party to be perhaps during the next—at the next elections, or what are your goals for the party?

BUTHELEZI: *Our goals have not changed; they are the same even now. That if we're in a position to be in power, we'll still pursue the goals that we have always believed in. Our goals have not changed.*

SCHER: But I mean would you—?

BUTHELEZI: *We don't have money. Politics is money today. The ANC had 200 million budgeted for elections. We had nothing. They also used the resources of the state and they continue to do so, plus other things that I have mentioned. You see at the time when I advocated and when I stood against sanctions, I was the flavor of the month as far as business was concerned. But now, business likes to polish the shoes of those who are in power. They don't give us any donations and money is essential. You cannot do these things without money. It's very challenging; it's very challenging being a smaller party.*

SCHER: So do you think there are some reforms that are needed, that would allow smaller parties more funds and more opportunities to raise campaign resources?

BUTHELEZI: *To talk about it even last week—we're talking to the President about it.*

SCHER: Yes.

BUTHELEZI: *Because what happens is that even the money that comes from the state, they give it proportionally according to the percentage of people they supported during elections, so the largest share goes to the ANC and we get tidbits and whatever remains from that. Even that we thought is not fair, especially because ANC you know is awash with money.*

SCHER: I think that sort of brings an end to the questions that I had, is there anything that I should have asked you that I haven't or are there any reflections?

BUTHELEZI: *I do not know what you want.*

SCHER: No just in terms of the federalism debate, the demands for regional autonomy?

BUTHELEZI: *No I think I've said everything.*

SCHER: I think we have covered quite a lot of ground.

BUTHELEZI: *Nothing else I can add.*

SCHER: I am very conscious that you have other demands on your time, so I'd like to thank you very much Prince Mangosuthu.