

Plea for positive Western pressure

South Africa's new constitution was a "prescription for violence," Chief Buthelezi told Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher during a recent visit to London.

In a separate meeting with Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, he emphasised that the politics of negotiation were being threatened by Black political groups, led by the ANC's Mission-in-Exile, who were seeking a bloody and violent showdown in South Africa.

Chief Buthelezi presented Mrs Thatcher with a detailed memorandum covering among other issues, the new constitution, existing Black democratic strategies for change, disinvestment, the use of violence within South Africa and from abroad and the vital future conciliatory role of the West.

In it he reminded Mrs Thatcher that before Mr P W Botha visited Britain and Europe in June last year, he had written a memorandum to all the Heads of State Mr Botha would be seeing.

In that memorandum Chief Buthelezi said he felt it was important for Western Heads of State to know that the South African government was continuing to pursue policies which would lead to disaster. It was in Western national and international interests that these leaders tax Mr Botha on some issues — which he spelled out.

Chief Buthelezi told Mrs Thatcher: "I believe that events in South Africa since mid-1984 have shown that my concerns expressed in that memorandum were fully justified.

"Instead of buying time for progress towards normalising South Africa, the new constitution has done the opposite.

"During the Referendum campaign I did everything I could possibly do to warn White South Africa that a "Yes" vote in favour of the new constitution would deepen Black anger and would widen the chasm between Black and White which successive apartheid



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Sir Geoffrey Howe

Governments in South Africa have created.

"I warned that the new constitution (incorporating a tricameral Parliament of Whites, Coloureds and Indians but excluding Blacks) was a prescription for violence.

"It is obvious that nothing in the new constitution addressed the central question in South Africa which revolves around the disenfranchised of 72 percent of the population and their exclusion from any meaningful participation in the government of their country."

He added that these warnings were

not heeded and today there was ample tragic evidence that his fears were fully justified.

Black anger had risen sharply across the length and breadth of South Africa and had reached unprecedented heights.

The vast range of repressive measures — made available to the Government through Draconian laws which had been passed over decades of National Party rule — had proved insufficient to contain this anger.

The State of Emergency in dozens of magisterial districts throughout the country had resulted in between eight and nine million South Africans living in circumstances which characterised the worst of Police States.

"The upward spiral of violence employed for political purposes in South Africa will only be broken if the South African Government now turns to address the fundamental issues which White South Africa needs to face up to.

"The government needs to address the question of giving Blacks a say in the Government of their country. Unless this is done, and done boldly soon, the forces working for non-violent,

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democratic solutions leading to politics of negotiation will suffer irreparable harm," Chief Buthelezi continued.

The State President had not, however, ever indicated that White South Africa was prepared to share power with Blacks. Mr Botha "confused" the division of power with the sharing of power.

Chief Buthelezi told Mrs Thatcher why he pursued policies of democratic opposition to apartheid and remained committed to non-violent tactics and strategies.

He believed, he said, that unless Black South Africa won the struggle for liberation through these means, the country would be left with an aftermath of bitterness and hatred which would take generations to dissipate.

"Despite the upward spiralling of violence in South Africa, there remains even today the kind of goodwill among Black South Africans which has resulted in my leadership and

Inkatha's aims and objectives being supported by a card carrying membership of over a million people," he emphasised.

Beyond these numbers there was also further vast Black South African support and sympathy in areas throughout the country.

He saw South Africa "locked into a north/south axis" by history and he saw the natural destiny of the people of South Africa as a destiny within the international Western industrial sphere of interest.

Britain had a role to play as an "honest broker" in international diplomacy and he had faith that it could fulfill that role in South Africa and between South Africa and the West.

He had admired the extent to which Mrs Thatcher and her Government had refused to bow to pressure to take indiscriminate action against South Africa — simply because apartheid was morally repugnant.

"In a sense, there may now be a ripeness of time in which diplomacy could be more effective than it was in the past," he added.

Black South Africans had always seen the West as "toothless" when it came to dealing with apartheid ... and it would be tragic ... if Britain and its allies failed to make the combined weight of Western pressure on the South African Government an ever-increasingly positive factor in bringing about meaningful change.

He had no doubt that there were many in Mrs Thatcher's party and in the Labour Party and other British parties who were genuinely indignant about apartheid and in whom indignation gave rise to "irresponsible action in supporting the forces of destruction" in South Africa.

"This has become very apparent in the disinvestment debate in the United States and it is very apparent in much of the activity of pressure groups in Great Britain and Western Europe.

"There is too much at stake, not only for millions in South Africa, but for the whole sub-continent of Southern Africa for Western indignation to give rise to indiscriminate action against apartheid..."

"Black South Africans have always seen the West as toothless when it came to dealing with apartheid. Apartheid under the National Party has grown vigorously and has thrived for over 37 years, despite all the moral and diplomatic pressures which has been exerted on successive National Party Governments."

"It would be tragic for South Africa and the whole of Southern Africa, if Britain and its allies failed to make the combined weight of Western pressure on the South African Government an ever increasingly positive factor in bringing about meaningful change ... now that there is greater fluidity in the South African situation."

"Statesmanship demands that apartheid is condemned and that opposition to apartheid is strengthened in such a way that the politics of negotiation are furthered. There are those who are genuinely indignant about apartheid and in whom that indignation gives rise to irresponsible action in supporting the forces of destruction in South Africa."

Mrs Thatcher was asked by Chief Buthelezi to "exert every pressure available to you" on the South African government to begin formal negotiations with Black leaders.

He said he believed that Mrs Thatcher and other heads of Western Governments should be made aware of the following:

That whatever reforms were being introduced in South Africa, and however meaningful those reforms were, unless the Government was prepared to begin meaningful negotiations with Black leaders, there could only be an escalation of violence.

Whites would have to relinquish the monopoly of power they enjoyed in South Africa.

He was daily being made aware of the fact that unless the South African Government took early and bold step towards normalising South Africa — as a modern, industrialised, democratic state — there would be increased radicalisation in Black politics and the upward spiral of violence now being witnessed would succeed in making South Africa ungovernable.

"Not only for the National Party but for any future Government — whether it be Black or White."

He added: "I am asking you Madam Prime Minister, to exert every possible pressure on Pretoria to strengthen the politics of negotiation by insisting that the State President declare his intention to negotiate with Blacks about the future of South Africa as one country, with one people who share one destiny."

He then added that he believed that President Reagan had embarked on a course of action in his constructive engagement policy which could accumulate the kind of pressures which were "badly needed" in South Africa.

However, whether or not the American party political "scene" would permit this policy to evolve into anything meaningful remained to be seen.

He then went on to tell Mrs Thatcher that he was "concerned" about statements which were increasingly being made by the Labour Party in Britain and some Democrats in the United States.

They were "adopting stances and making statements" which if continued would, he stressed, accumulate advantages for those committing South Africa to civil war and to the solution of South Africa's problems through the armed struggle and through generalised violence.