

WALL STREET JOURNAL

NEW YORK. 12TH FEBRUARY 1985

A FEW REMARKS ON THE OCCASION OF A LUNCHEON WITH THE WALL STREET JOURNAL BY MANGOSUTHU G. BUTHELEZI, CHIEF MINISTER KWAZULU, PRESIDENT OF INKATHA AND CHAIRMAN, THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ALLIANCE NEW YORK. 12TH FEBRUARY 1985

Given its reputation, one can perhaps describe the Wall Street Journal as a hand-book of informed opinion about crucial matters for the upper echelons of American opinion makers. Whether this is a generous assessment, or whether it is a pertinent description, the Wall Street Journal is regarded as a vitally important publication, and the editorial policy which selects or rejects views is highly influential across the length and breadth of America every day. Its mass distribution reaches Americans across the length and breadth of the country.

It is my special plea at this juncture of the South African struggle for liberation that the Wall Street Journal do everything in its power to keep American public opinion informed, rather than participate in the current ding-dong debate about disinvestment and President Reagan's constructive engagement policy towards South Africa.

We face life and death issues in the struggle for liberation in South Africa. The course that our struggle takes will inevitably be influenced by the extent to which decency is reinforced by allies from abroad. The process of bringing about change will write the script for a new way of life in a new society, and the West must not under-estimate its responsibility towards South and Southern Africa.

No Black leader in the struggle for liberation worthy of the name does not recognise that the responsibility for bringing about radical change in South Africa rests on Black shoulders. It is a South African struggle and Blacks have to lead in that struggle until such time as a threshold is past beyond which the drive for new and better things becomes non-racial. We have to shape events in our own chosen direction and we have to fashion our society after the models that we ourselves espouse.

It must, however, not be forgotten that in life and death situations decency is so often under siege. Bloody revolutions fought against terrible oppression do not automatically bring about great improvements. Decency in South Africa is under siege at the moment in the sense that decency and democratic non-violent opposition to apartheid is under threat by White recalcitrance which is polarising society and driving Blacks to despair and anger. Decency is also under siege in the sense that time-honoured civilised values and Western democratic principles are being seen as impotent by an ever-increasing number of Blacks. The struggle

for liberation in South Africa could yet take ugly turns and the prospects of widespread devastation of things valuable and a massive escalation of violence leading to a race war remain an ever present possibility.

It is against these background thoughts that I ask Americans to consider attitudes towards investment in South Africa, and attitudes towards President Reagan's constructive engagement policy. As a Black leader I can as yet not be jubilant about the Reagan Administration's South African policy. We do not as yet know what deeds will be added to words, but we are aware that sufficient political time has not passed for anybody to make judgments on President Reagan's approach to South Africa. As a Black leader I must welcome President Reagan's attempt to formulate a South African policy for the first time in America's history, even if it has not yet been demonstrated that the American Government and the American people have the will and the ability to take South African issues out of party politics here. Black South Africans do not yet know whether petty politicking between Democrats and Republicans will turn apartheid into an American political football for party gain.

I make the point that for America the South African situation is distant and unimportant. The remoteness of South African issues from the daily vested interests of American citizens does not demand that any American Government make more than vague moral pronouncements on what should and should not be happening in my country. The South African issue, however, does challenge Americans' moral fibre and America - as the world's leading democracy - should make an all-party attempt to side with the oppressed in South Africa.

This thought, however, does not belie the fact that in medium and long term economic developments in South and Southern Africa have implications for American interests. South Africa after liberation will be a great gate-way to the African hinterland where the process of industrialisation must inevitably be talked of in terms of astronomical millions of dollars. At this juncture, however, the immediate challenge to Americans is a moral challenge.

If we are to avoid a destructive conflagration of forces in South Africa, the process of change in the country must be speeded up. I fail to see how those who agree with this statement can possibly talk of the effective economic isolation of South Africa. Isolation will bring stagnation to the economy and perhaps even destroy its growth base, and yet it is in the circumstances of a rapidly expanding economy, where the interdependence of Black and White is vastly increased, that the propensity of the country to change is enhanced. Black vertical mobility is a concomitant of economic growth, and anybody who knows anything about a society such as ours will know that the ceilings that apartheid imposes on this vertical mobility, produce the rubbing points which mobilise

opposition to apartheid where it is most vulnerable.

Apartheid has lined White pockets. It has succoured White privilege and when White privilege and White standards of living are threatened through the prosperity of Blacks and there is a rising claim to recognition, then the prospects of negotiated advances are the greatest. Big business in South Africa has for decades sided with the oppressor and exploited Black South Africans unmercifully as they were protected by a wide range of apartheid measures.

That era has passed. No big business can today secure future plans without challenging apartheid. It was the large corporations which broke apartheid barriers which led to real advancements for Black workers. Ford's bold indenturing of Black apprentices against the law hastened the day when job reservation had to be abandoned. Progressive managements talking, dealing and negotiating with workers hastened the day of Black trade union recognition. It is big business that keeps institutions such as the Institute of Race Relations alive, and it is very often big business which provides the financial muscle to challenge the Government in the courts on civil rights issues, on labour issues and on contradictions and ambiguities in law; and it is international capital which can back educational and development programmes. For large American companies to opt out of the South African situation is to opt out of the prospects of being catalysts in the process of change.

Increased economic investment in South Africa by American companies associated with an American constructive engagement policy with real meaning is a moral option which the United States now has. In the circumstances which now appertain, withdrawal of investments in South Africa by Americans is a strategy against Black interests and not a punitive stick with which to beat apartheid.

There is a great deal of genuine interest in South Africa amongst many Americans, but I really am fearful that the upsurge of the current debate on the disinvestment issue and on President Reagan's constructive engagement policy is in part fired by Americans for Americans on American issues. Apartheid should be more than some kind of looking-glass in which Americans see themselves. Apartheid is real; it is out there and millions of Black South Africans suffer indescribably under it. Americans should be concerned to have a humanitarian approach to the question of what America should do about apartheid. To stand on American indignant principles and to withdraw diplomatically and economically from South Africa is a luxury which the vastness of American wealth could afford. But indulgence in that luxury for the sake of purity of conscience, whatever genuine motives produce that conscience, would do no more than demonstrate the moral ineptitude of a great nation in the face of challenges from a remote area of the globe.

Black South Africans have to confine their options to realities and we have to seek to bring about radical change in such a way that we do not destroy the foundations of the future. Over 50 per cent of all Black South Africans are 15 years old and younger. A huge population bulge is approaching the market place. To greatly exacerbate unemployment and under-employment, and to greatly increase the already horrendous backlog in housing, education, health and welfare services, would be unforgiveable. Millions of Black South Africans already live in dire squalor in squatter areas and in shanty towns. Jobs make the difference between hunger and starvation and between life and death. For Americans to hurt the growth rate of the South African economy through boycotts, sanctions and disinvestment would demonstrate a callous disregard for ordinary people, suffering terribly under circumstances which they did not create, and would be a gross violation of any respect Americans may have for the principle that people should be free to exercise their rights to oppose oppression in the way they choose. Black South Africans do not ask Americans to disinvest. The strident voices calling for confrontation and violence are the voices most dominant in calls for disinvestment.
