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LUTHERAN CHURCH GERMANY AND THE REVD. CHARLES R.
PLASKETT, CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFEDERATION OF CHURCH
AND BUSINESS PEOPLE, TORONTO AND MRS. PLASKETT

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A FEW REMARKS BY MANGOSUTHU G. BUTHELEZI, CHIEF MINISTER KWAZULU, PRESIDENT OF INKATHA AND CHAIRMAN, THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ALLIANCE TO MR. H.E.J. KALINNA, VICE-PRESIDENT EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH GERMANY AND THE REVD. CHARLES R. PLASKETT, CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFEDERATION OF CHURCH AND BUSINESS PEOPLE, TORONTO AND MRS. PLASKETT, ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR VISIT TO ULUNDI.
22ND APRIL 1985

I am bewildered by the meaning of the Cross. And in the quiet times when I close the doors of the world to be with my thoughts and to pray, I attempt again and again to ponder upon the meaning of Christ for South Africa and for me as a person. I grapple with the conviction that the Gospel does not provide a blue-print of action for me, and I struggle with the evidence that there is multiplicity of interpretations given to each and every pronouncement of our Lord. I see again and again how people use and abuse the Gospel as some kind of personal passport to their own perceptions and desires. I feel such a desperate need for guidance and fellowship and find so often that the greatly valued fellowship which I do experience is a fellowship which skirts around the deeper issues which clamour for attention in strident voices as I meet the avalanche of each day's demands on my role as a leader.

I realise that the multiplicity of interpretations of the meaning of the Gospel can be seen as a rich mosaic of finite human minds grappling with things beyond comprehension. I realise that the divine cannot be reduced to a glib set of rational perceptions about the nature of man and God. I realise that Christian wisdom is accumulative in fellowship and that the Church over the ages has moved across vast terrains of discovery. I also realise that each of us in our own circumstances simply has to accept that the Christian life is a life in which one has personally to discover what others have discovered and the things which the Church has discovered. I realise that our Lord does not expect us to have book learning about the experience of others, but expects us to love and to search in love for the meaning of His Gospel. Each day and age must rediscover the meaning of the Cross. These realisations weigh heavily upon me when I am alone and in the rare moments of personal serenity in prayer, there is a quiet perception of the burden which I have to carry.

I exercise a leadership role which history itself has ordained. Whatever system of government there was in this country and whatever turn national events took, I would have to fulfill the demands of a hereditary leadership role. My father and my forefathers before him served as prime ministers, generals and advisers to Zulu Kings, back to the founding father of our nation, King Shaka. Every one of my forebears had to grapple with the Zulu nation's new circumstances and had to guide the people through turbulent history marching through colonial possession, brutal subjugation, wars aimed at annihilating us as a people, and had

ever to be in the forefront of national adaptation.

When Black South Africa lay down arms in 1912 when the African National Congress was formed, they accepted that an old order had passed and that a new South Africa had been born. The demands on leadership were dramatically increased by this acceptance. The process of colonialisation and subjugation initiated by Great Britain, led to a neo-colonial period and then to the horrors of apartheid. To lay down my leadership role in favour of a personally satisfying and lucrative profession was a temptation I had to face as a young man.

I wrestled with this temptation and came finally to know that I could not abandon my people for personal gain. I realised that whether I was noble or base, or whether I had the qualities to meet the demands which leadership placed on me or not, history simply dictated to me and I had no option but to accept the responsibility of leadership.

The one thing that dominated over all others when I put aside personal desire to take up my leadership role was my intimate acquaintance with the ordinary people. I was reared as a barefoot peasant amongst barefoot peasants. I grew up in an intensely human environment and the value of being human amongst humans was instilled in me. As I grew out of the arrogance of youth, I realised that no matter how educated one may be, and no matter how well read one may be, leadership for me was a leadership which had to be a leadership within the framework of my people's perceptions and their aspirations. I spurn dictators and our own history as Blacks has shown again and again how transient Black leaders are who come to the people with a prescriptive type of leadership in which people are told what they ought to feel and what they ought to be doing.

At a relatively early age I became fully determined not to be seduced by clever analytical politics, or to become an ideologue, or to become a bandwagon politician seeking personal eminence. I determined to live with my people and to be honest in exercising the leadership which strove to take them where they wanted to go.

However limited each day and age may be; however limited my day and age is and my people's perceptions are; however limited their understanding of the mysteries of the future may be, I will go with them where they want to go and lead them in the achievements of that which they aspire to achieve. The pace of history is determined by the ordinary man and woman. It was these perceptions which led me to recognise the fact that mankind as he progressed through the ages achieved some kind of summit of understanding when democratic government emerged. The demands of democratic government recognised the need for leaders to walk at the pace of their people.

As a Christian, democracy makes sense to me and as a leader, I see it as an essential idiom if my generation is to make a telling contribution towards the achievement of a better society in this country.

After the banning of the ANC and PAC in 1960, Black politics went through an all-time low. National political structures were smashed and as it were, Black South Africa had yet again to pull itself out of a political vacuum by its own boot strings. After a decade of waiting and hoping in vain, Black South Africa became restless and the urgent demand for political mobilisation became irresistible. The early to mid-seventies saw a mushrooming of Black initiatives and one of these was the emergence of Inkatha.

As a Christian leader committed to democracy, I founded Inkatha on the best principles of democracy that the history of mankind has distilled out of experience. Democracy for me is more than rules of how to make decisions. Democracy for me spells out not only that we make rules about decision-making, but that we make rules to decide to do what the people want us to do.

Over a ten year period, the democratic nature of Inkatha and the deeply hallowed aims and objectives which Inkatha espouses, led it to become by far the largest Black political organisation ever to have emerged in this country. Inkatha emerged ten years ago and each and every one of these years I have spent walking with my people, walking at their pace, seeking to serve their objectives and seeking to make their aspirations realities for them. In my political stance, I am as wrong as my people or as right as my people. I genuinely exercise no prescriptive role. Every tactic and strategy of Inkatha has arisen as something which has been processed by the machinery of Inkatha democracy.

Inkatha's Annual General Conference is genuinely the Movement's supreme body. The Annual General Conference elects its leaders. It dictates policy and each and every year, the leaders it has elected, stand accountable before Conference. Conference itself draws its delegates from grass-root branches and regions. It is a genuine voice of ordinary people and it dictates to me what I can and cannot do.

Western observers of South Africa so often fail to distinguish between their own moral perceptions which have roots in indignation and the strategic perceptions of Black South Africans which have its roots in the vastness of a suffering incomprehensible to the West. I and Inkatha are attacked around the world because we do not conform to Western perceptions of what we should and should not be doing. When there is a clash between what my people want and what the West demands of me, I must necessarily turn to say: Sorry

to my Western friends, and say Yes to my people.

Let me illustrate one of the dilemmas this clash of perceptions creates for me. I greatly appreciate the genuine indignation which apartheid has aroused in Western minds. I empathise with Westerners who abhor apartheid and feel constrained by their decency to do something about it. I understand that they are not in the forefront of the battle here and their options are therefore necessarily geographically and strategically limited. I understand how they want to rap Pretoria over the knuckles by working for the telling economic isolation of this country. I understand why Westerners want to cut off the money supply which they perceive apartheid to be dependent upon. I also perceive that the disinvestment lobby has the beneficial effect of heightening international awareness of the horrors of apartheid. But no matter how much I understand these things, and no matter how much I have been tempted to adopt stances abroad which would be acclaimed by my Western friends, I have to heed my own people before all else. The struggle for liberation in this country is a struggle by my people, for my people.

Each and every year at Inkatha's Annual General Conference, I report on the disinvestment lobby. I ask my people what their choice is, and each and every year Inkatha's Annual General Conference, numbering three to four thousand delegates, unanimously reject disinvestment as a viable strategy open to Black South Africa.

I go beyond testing the acceptability of disinvestment within the framework of Inkatha democracy. Every time I have been to Johannesburg to hold a mass rally in Soweto which is normally attended by thirty to forty thousand people, I put the questions which disinvestment lobbyists raise to the ordinary Black public. On each and every occasion that I do so, there is a resounding rejection of disinvestment as a viable Black strategy.

I make a statement with weighed words when I say that in no mass meeting has any leader ever received a mandate to pursue disinvestment as a viable strategy open to Black South Africans. We have here a clash of perceptions. Western friends believe that disinvestment is a tactic which we need. Black South Africa says plainly that disinvestment is not an option which we elect to pursue. Celebrity leaders may go to the United States, Canada or Germany and claim to speak on behalf of the people when they say that Black South Africa wants disinvestment. They do not come back to South Africa to address a mass rally of thirty or forty thousand people and seek endorsement for what they said abroad.

This clash of opinions about disinvestment between ordinary Black South Africans and our Western friends, and the pursuit by some who claim in the West to be Black leaders of eminence and prestige by

espousing the options which the West elects to serve, is but a tip of a very dangerous iceberg. If the West is to become meaningful in our struggle for liberation, it must respect the democratic options open to people as real options. It must distinguish between leaders who have got genuine, grass root support in realistic tactics and strategies, and leaders who gain eminence by articulating anger which flares and flares again in communities such as ours which suffer so much. The West must come to understand that anger is a vital national asset of Black South Africa which must be conserved and employed in resolution as people seek to achieve realistic goals in a step by step manner. It is so tragic that Black anger is dissipated on our township streets and turned to serve Black/Black confrontations in which Blacks kill Blacks.

Inkatha's members are ordinary Black South Africans. Anger wells in their breasts, but Inkatha employs that anger. It is the unemployed anger which is turned to feed the fires of a kind of protest politics which articulates suffering without offering remedy. It is the exploited anger which is keeping real negotiating tables out of reach of ordinary Black South Africans. Inkatha's anger is genuine, but it is achievement-orientated anger, resolutely moving this country towards negotiating tables through the politics of democracy and non-violence.

There will be no leap into Utopia overnight. There will be no grand victory from a romantic armed struggle. There lies before us only the hard, grinding work of developing constituency politics to the point where pressures for negotiation are overwhelming. The West romanticises our struggle and seeks to make heroes out of those which the history of the struggle will cast aside as transient.

Not only is Inkatha the largest political constituency ever to have been created on South African soil, but it is the most consistent and steadfast in its pursuit of central aims and objectives. During the ten year span of Inkatha's existence which has grown to have nearly a million paid-up members, other Black organisations have come and gone with alarming rapidity. It is all too easy to blame the horrors of racist oppression in this country for the brevity of existence of one Black organisation after another. Surely the first challenge we face as Black South Africans is to preserve our organisational integrity so that advantages may be accumulated over time and positions strengthened over time? There is in Inkatha strategic thinking by a purely African, leadership created by Africans, serving African interests. There is in Inkatha a realisation that the multi-racial future we seek demands a specific African input by the 22 million Africans of the country.

Western Church leaders somehow fail to perceive that millions of Black South Africans living in KwaZulu are members of all the various denominational Churches. They are ordinary Christians

They desperately need the helping hand of Western Christendom, and Western Christian donor agencies should regard them as worthy recipients of Christian care. Our Lord loves them where they are and the Church should serve them where they are. I find it incomprehensible at times that the Church takes sides with those who seek my ostracization because I have elected to serve my people and do their bidding in being the Chief Minister of KwaZulu, as well as the President of Inkatha. Surely Western Churches can see the wrongness in attempting to hold me to ransom by the blocking of humanitarian aid to the people of KwaZulu? Does the Church really judge me as incapable of rendering humanitarian aid in partnership with them? Does the Church really wish to penalise local congregations and communities because some oppose me politically? It is simply a fact that my people suffer because my political opponents successfully persuade Western donor agencies not to render humanitarian aid here among us.

I appeal to Western Churches as a leader and as a Christian to respect the wishes of ordinary people, and I particularly appeal to them to avoid being drawn into Black/Black South African conflicts. I have never asked for exclusive support for Inkatha. I have never claimed that Inkatha is the only liberation movement in the country. I have never asked Western Churches to assist me to annihilate my political enemies in this country. I and Inkatha accept a multi-strategy approach in which there is a multiplicity of tasks which can only be formed by a multiplicity of organisations. All I ask of the West, and Western Churches in particular, is to assist Inkatha to pursue those things in its aims and objectives with which the West agrees. Inkatha pursues non-violent tactics and strategies; it pursues the principles of democracy; it bases its policies on realism and it genuinely attempts to lay firm foundations on which a race-free, open society of the future can be built. It does these things with ordinary people, amongst ordinary people, and there is a rich variety of openings through which Western influences can flow through Inkatha as a doorway to assist in bringing about radical changes in this country.
