

# Was Senator Kennedy listening?

Visiting South Africa earlier this year as a guest of supporters of the United Democratic Front, Senator Edward Kennedy nevertheless asked to meet with Chief M G Buthelezi.

The message given to him by Chief Buthelezi contrasted sharply to those of his hosts.

Senator Kennedy was simply told that there was no socialist magic for Africa and no communist magic which would feed the hungry and house the poor. Bishop Desmond Tutu, one of Kennedy's hosts, has stated that he favours a socialist future for South Africa.

Chief Buthelezi, at a breakfast meeting in Durban, said it had been "a sobering experience" watching, over the years, grand experiments in African socialism.

He had seen just how little socialism had done for so many people in so many parts of the continent.

When he sought wisdom from Africa, and when he drew on African experience, he was cautioned by other people's experiences of revolutions striving for a socialist future.

There was, in South Africa, vast unemployment and it was Blacks who were unemployed or under-employed.

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Senator Edward Kennedy

tial services — in housing, medical care and in education. It was Blacks who suffered because of these backlogs. Rural areas were desperately over-populated.

After looking around Africa and the Third World, Chief Buthelezi said he had become convinced that the free enterprise system held out more hope for "people in our circumstances" than any other system.

"The free enterprise system goes hand in hand with democratic government and it goes hand in hand with

social order based on Western industrialised values," he said.

He therefore found himself unable to commend an idealist socialist future to his people — no matter how attractive the trappings of socialism appeared to be.

Outside the hotel, hundreds of Inkatha supporters welcomed Senator Kennedy (in contrast to some other Black groups which protested against his visit) and waved banners for him to see which clearly asked for increased US investment in South Africa and clearly condemned disinvestment.

Senator Kennedy's reaction to Chief Buthelezi's remarks seemed somewhat dislocated.

After he left Durban and had arrived in Cape Town, he was reported to have said that nothing Chief Buthelezi told him had "...convinced me about the validity of the homelands system..."

This subject was not discussed at all.

After his return to the US, Senator Kennedy was also quoted as saying that the vast majority of Blacks favoured disinvestment. More than one-million members of Inkatha, the largest membership-based movement in South Africa, have rejected disinvestment as a strategy in the liberation struggle.

## Culture should join people — not divide them

South Africa was "walking through one of the darkest valleys in its history" and only fools would dare predict what would happen next, Chief M G Buthelezi told a gathering of Jewish leaders in Johannesburg in September.

Speaking at the SA Zionist Federation dinner he said: "The State President dare not tell us what he thinks will or should happen next because he himself does not know."

Despite the explosive uncertainty prevailing, Black people were convinced victory would be theirs and that, in the end, they would create a "beautiful" society which would be respected in the international community.

He said his recent visit to Israel had strengthened his resolve to hold to his beliefs and to pursue his present tactics and strategies in defiance of "the forces of oppression".

Chief Buthelezi said he had often been asked whether South Africa's 120 000 Jews were not a vulnerable minority who had to be careful about what they said and who had, in political matters, "to avoid rocking the boat".

Chief Buthelezi said his own response to such cautions was a sharp reminder that South African Jews had as much right to be in the country as any other South African citizen.

There was a "deep and moving similarity" between the Zulu experience and the Jewish experience in Israel.

When the Zulus were conquered by the full might of the

British army in 1879, every attempt was made to destroy the Zulu kingdom.

"We felt the onslaught in our very souls and our Zuluness rallied to keep us a people with an identity..."

Zulus, however, did not see any clash between their identity as Zulus and their identity as South Africans.

"We do not want to rob Whites of our country, or Indians, or our Coloured population of their identities.

"We do not have a kind of spiritual imperialistic ambition to convert all South Africans to being Zulu. The richness of our own cultural heritage makes us respect the identity of others.

"We empathise in fact with people who have an intense awareness of their identity. We respect Jews for remaining Jews..."

"We insist that cultural heritages and historic backgrounds play a vital role in our struggle for liberation as they generate the kind of awareness of self which steels our hearts to face the trials and tribulations of struggling for peace, justice and prosperity for all."

When he looked into the future he saw the need for interlocking cultural forces complementing each other to produce a rich South Africanism — which could accomplish that which apartheid had so dismally failed to do.