

Sanctions could result in brutal SA backlash

Western industrialised countries which were moving towards banning future investment in South Africa — or withdrawing existing investment — seemed to regard Black opinion among rank and file workers and peasants as irrelevant.

Chief Buthelezi told Prime Minister Thatcher and Sir Geoffrey Howe that the above had become obvious because, in spite of the fact that the issue of disinvestment had never received mass Black support, certain groups abroad totally ignored the mass of Black opinion.

It was a fact that every leader of an organisation working to make South Africa ungovernable and who was prepared to use violence, whether mob violence or armed violence to bring about political change, argued for disinvestment.

At the same time, Blacks in South Africa who had jobs with foreign companies had made it clear that they would never be persuaded to relinquish their jobs to further the aims and objectives of the disinvestment lobby.

The memory of sanctions-busting involving Rhodesia (as it then was)

was, also, still fresh in the minds of many Blacks.

The "cheating" carried out by the West and Russia on chrome, as one example, was "still vivid" in the minds of Blacks. The South African economy, with the measure of self-sufficiency it had reached, could survive for much longer than the Rhodesian economy did.

"I support constructive investment in South Africa because I believe that we should never conduct our liberation struggle in such a way that we destroy the foundations for the future in the process of doing so," Chief Buthelezi added.

"Every Western Government knows that economies are not malleable things and cannot be turned on or off at will... they can only be directed towards political ends with very limited success.

"The naivety of some who think they can damage only part of the economy, is to me alarming.

"The West should also realise as soon as sanctions do begin to bite, it is Black South Africa which will bear the

brunt of the burden.

"The West should realise too that the South African government is quite capable of taking retaliatory measures of the most despicable kind.

"If sanctions begin to bite, and Blacks begin to suffer the burden of those sanctions, Pretoria would have no scruples about repatriating more than a million workers in South Africa who come from impoverished neighbouring States...

"I plead with the West not to push the whole of Southern Africa into an abyss because they underestimate the brutality of the situation with which Pretoria could respond in a situation in which very real threats became unbearable realities."

He asked Mrs Thatcher what the international community would actually do for the citizens of Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana and Mozambique if the threat of a Cabinet Minister, Mr Louis Nel, was actually carried out and these people were deported from South Africa.

Chief Buthelezi went on to say that he was not saying that pressures should not be brought to bear on the "South African polecat..." All he was saying was that all who were working for the destruction of "the apartheid polecat" should not be blinded by anger to the extent that they failed to examine carefully the consequences of every act taken.

He had become very sceptical, he said, of whether the West would come to the rescue of the more than a million citizens he had mentioned ... if South Africa decided to expel them.

The options: war or compromise

Slamming down the equivalent of an iron curtain between the West and South Africa would not help the cause of peaceful change and negotiation in the country said Chief Buthelezi.

He told Mrs Thatcher he believed that, in part, President Reagan's policy of constructive engagement held some promise for South Africa because it was objective-orientated.

"If you, Madam Prime Minister, and other Western leaders, were to direct your opposition to apartheid to seek to bring the State President to the point where he can make a declaration of intent (regarding power-sharing with Blacks) which leaders like myself could co-sign with him, you will achieve something of historic significance," he said.

"I isolate the State President's unwillingness to make such a declaration of intent as by far the most negative aspect of his whole political career and his current leadership of the country.

"I have been pleading with Mr Botha to make a declaration of intent ever since he took office as Prime Minister.

"Until he declares his willingness to negotiate about the future of Blacks on terms they can accept — and which Whites will also accept — there is no hope of breaking the upward spiral of violence."

"There would be no Utopian leap into the future for South Africa and if the country was to avoid a bloody, racist, confrontation, it must be accepted that there would have to be compromises on all sides.

"It is for us a matter of war or compromise," he said. "If it is war, it will be the kind of war which will lead to scorched earth policies on both sides — and there will be no winners..."

"I have said that I am prepared temporarily to shelve my cherished ideal of one-man-one-vote in a unitary state, if Whites are prepared to sit down with Blacks and look at alternatives and examine the merits of federal or other solutions.

"There is a vast amount of Black goodwill which could still be mobilised to support compromise solutions and there is the equivalent goodwill amongst Whites..."