

What role should the Church play?

In various addresses to church leaders and at prayer meetings throughout South Africa in the past year, Chief Buthelezi has consistently highlighted the need for Christian reconciliation in the country. The church needed to find ways and means of establishing "fellowship" between Black political opponents, he has told his audiences. There were inadequacies in South Africa's Christian life and the Church was tragically divided.

Millions of Christians in KwaZulu were suffering because Western donor agencies had been persuaded by his political opponents not to render humanitarian aid to the region, Chief Buthelezi told a group of German churchmen visiting Ulundi recently.

And at a prayer breakfast in Durban he told distinguished church leaders from throughout the country that too few people appreciated just how difficult it was to retain a sense of Christian balance in Black politics in South Africa.

At another meeting of ministers from throughout Natal and KwaZulu he called upon churches to mount mechanisms of mediation and to act as the kind of reconcilers Christ would expect them to be in the circumstances which prevailed.

The Church had to date not been able to curb the violence in the country or been successful in mounting mechanisms of mediation between Black and Black and Black and White.

Over and over again Chief Buthelezi has sympathised with the complex spiritual and political dual roles in which churches find themselves participants in South Africa.

There was in South Africa force and counter force, he said in one speech. There was violence and counter-violence.

The Church in South Africa suffered from impediments cast before it by the nature of the society in the country.

This gave rise to a situation in which one Christian campaigned against another and made the Church tragically and truly divided.

However, he believed that were it not for Christianity in South Africa, the country would have long since torn the very fabric of its society apart.

There was, nevertheless, a kind of dualism in the Church. The South African Council of Churches (the SACC)

was a kind of showpiece of Christian fervour behind which Church leaders hid when the accusing finger of international Christendom was pointed at them.

SACC spokesmen accused him of being "something most vile" — they accused him of Christian and political treachery in a sustained and orchestrated campaign because he had chosen to work with his people in Kwa-



The Catholic Archbishop of Durban, the Most Rev. Denis Hurley, and Chief Buthelezi at a prayer breakfast held in Durban.

Zulu. It was forgotten that he opposed the South African Government at every turn, that he had blocked so-called "independence" being foisted on the region.

The Joint Screening Committee of the SACC was the primary tool used by the SACC to block Christian aid for the programmes of self-help development which KwaZulu and Inkatha were attempting to foster.

This issue of Clarion Call will now highlight one particular address by Chief Buthelezi on the issue of the church in South Africa's apartheid society.

In it Chief Buthelezi describes the opposition he, as a Christian, is confronted with by other Christians and the suffering this causes his people.

Speaking in Ulundi to the vice-president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany, Mr H E J Kalinna, and the chairman of the Toronto Confederation of Church and Business People, the Rev Charles R. Plaskett, the Chief said he often pondered upon the meaning of Christ for South Africa.

He saw again and again how people used and abused the Gospel as "some kind of personal passport" to their own perceptions and desires.

Turning to the issue of Church aid for Christians situated in Government-created homeland areas, Chief Buthelezi said he believed the Lord loved them where they were.

History had placed them where they were to suffer where they were in circumstances which neither they or he (Chief Buthelezi) had created.

They desperately needed the helping hand of Western Christendom and Western donor agencies.

Because of this he found it "incomprehensible" at times that the Church "took sides" with those who sought

continued overleaf

from previous page

his ostracisation because he elected to serve his people being the Chief Minister of KwaZulu as well as the President of Inkatha.

"Surely Western Churches can see how wrong it is to attempt to hold me to ransom by blocking humanitarian aid to the people of KwaZulu?" he told the churchmen.

"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

"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? I appeal to Western churches ... to respect the wishes of ordinary people ... and to avoid being drawn into Black/Black South African conflicts"

successfully persuade many 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."

Chief Buthelezi said he had never asked for exclusive support for Inkatha. He had never claimed that Inkatha was the only liberation movement in the country. He had never asked Western churches to assist him to annihilate his political enemies in South Africa.

"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."

Governments may change — but policies remain

The policies of Western Governments towards South Africa are largely determined by national interests.

It was for this reason that he had to be a "practical politician" and deal with whomever was in power in Western countries, Chief Buthelezi told the former US Secretary of State, Mr Cyrus Vance, and former Defence Secretary, Mr Robert McNamara, during a meeting in July in Durban.

At a dinner with members of the Ford Foundation, Chief Buthelezi said he had, over decades, been made "painfully aware" that Western Governments national policies towards South Africa remain remarkably constant whoever is in power.

"The same thing applies to the United States. And the real American indignation with apartheid will express itself whoever occupies the White House and express itself roughly in the same manner.

"Foreign policies in the West are determined by national interests and powerful lobbies which do not change with change in government.

"As a practical politician I must deal with whomever is in power in Western countries.

"I must accept the best they are doing and reject the worst they are doing.

"I know that the best and the worst that they can do will continue to leave the South African Government as a law unto itself until internal developments dictate otherwise..."

Chief Buthelezi said that beyond those in South Africa who postured about wanting to bring about a Marxist and Socialist state, there was now a deep yearning across all race groups for the normalisation of the country.

If there was any hope at all for South Africa, it was that this normalisation would actually take place.

If there was any role that the West could play in the country, it was a role which supported the normalisation of South Africa as a civilised industrial democracy.

Ultimately that support would have to be for the options which Blacks elected to serve within the country and for the tactics and strategies which would produce the kind of society which Western democracies upheld.

"All too frequently foreign govern-

ments, government agencies and church and private organisations seek to take sides in Black/Black political disputes in South Africa," he added.



Former US Secretary of State, Mr Cyrus Vance

"But there is something very wrong when foreign forces aid and abet those who want to turn democratic disputes into internicine strife and blood feuds."

Chief Buthelezi said he believed that Americans should back up what they believed in...

And he believed that it was in the interests of South Africa and the whole of Southern Africa that all Americans avoided heightening Black/Black confrontation in which Blacks were now killing Blacks for political purposes.

Whenever he took issue with some Americans, he did so with an "underlying faith" that in the end the great principles on which America was founded would emerge triumphant over pettiness and over party political considerations.

For him the future would hold close ties between South Africa and the United States because the only thing which would ultimately work in South Africa was an open, democratic system of government — within the framework of a free enterprise economic order.