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MEMORANDUM PRESENTED TO THE MOST REVEREND AND RIGHT
HONOURABLE ROBERT RUNCIE, PC, MC, DD, 102ND ARCHBISHOP OF
CANTERBURY AND PRIMATE OF ALL ENGLAND AND METROPOLITAN

By Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi
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LAMBETH PALACE 30TH JULY 1985

I deeply regret not being able to meet with you, my Lord Archbishop, the last time I was in England and I am most grateful for the opportunity of doing so today. As an Anglican I have longed to share my hopes and fears for my country with you, Your Grace, and I have long hoped for an opportunity to hear what your wisdom is for the kind of circumstances in which I exercise my role as a Black leader in the South African struggle for liberation.

When travelling abroad, I have often found myself in discussions with those who cannot understand why Blacks who have suffered so terribly under the yoke of apartheid are not drawn together in common cause by their shared political, social and economic deprivation. They do not understand that the intensity of suffering, and the anger which flows from it, heightens political debate among Blacks, and deepens differences of opinion and dramatises these differences in opposing political action. Blacks in South Africa who are politically involved have deep convictions about the merits of the various courses of action open to them. There are courses of action about life and death issues, and because there is so much at stake and because there is no consensus about what could and should be done, every dispute about alternative objectives, and every dispute about alternative tactics and strategies is intensified. Also, because every action of a political nature aimed at bringing about radical change is put, under police surveillance, all Black leaders in the struggle for liberation experience one or another form of intimidation. Only those who believe fervently in what they are doing find the strength and resolve to carry on. The leadership which does rise up to meet oppression and to defy intimidation, is only found among those who have a single-minded purposefulness which is not always an asset for debate and the politics of reconciliation.

Not only are there stark issues to be faced in life and death issues in a complex situation in which there is little consensus about what could and should be done, but action on the part of the state continually disrupts the democratic process by which people select their leaders and exercise choices among options. The jailing and detention of leaders and the intimidation and the

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banning of organisations destroys the whole process by which people eventually get together in positions in which there is a multitude of choices.

Action by successive National Party governments over the last 37 years has so disrupted the democratic process for so long in South Africa, that I fear for the future. This fear has driven me to be intensely democratic in my own approach, and has led me to do everything in my power to make Inkatha a democratic organisation.

After the banning of the ANC and PAC in 1961, there was widely felt despair in South Africa about the merits of constituency politics and the utility of membership-based organisations. After the massive crackdown and the jailing of hundreds of Black leaders, those who escaped the net either went underground or fled the country to act as leaders in exile. And it was only in the mid-1970's that the perceived failure of underground leadership and leadership in exile led ordinary Black South Africans to once again demand visible political organisations. It was in the years of the early seventies that both Inkatha and the Black People's Convention emerged to fill the vacuum which had been created by police brutality.

I established Inkatha to pursue the hallowed aims and objectives of the old ANC which was founded in 1912, but the Black People's Convention was established as a protest political movement which was not membership-based and this duality in Black politics has persisted ever since. Inkatha remains today the only membership-based Black political movement in the country.

That Black South Africans feel the need for a democratic membership-based organisation is shown by the fact that in the short space of ten years, Inkatha has grown to have a card-carrying membership of over one million people. It is only - Your, â\200\230Grace, significant that when you look at the growth pattern of Inkatha, you find that its growth surges forward a space of time after protest politics has produced confrontations and violence which have been crushed by the police, and which leaves people counting the cost in terms of lives and property, and to assess these costs against gains made. During the 1976-77 period of violent unrest in South Africa, when Inkatha was but a year old, a great many friends warned me that I should abandon what I am doing because Inkatha had no future in an angry South Africa which demanded immediate political action for immediate gain. I was again and again told that if I was to survive as a political leader, I would have to relinquish my position as Chief Minister of KwaZulu and would have to join in with other leaders in the protest movement. It was during 1977-78 that Inkatha doubled its membership and this pattern of upward surges of Inkatha membership which has been evidenced ever since, after violent confrontations which did not achieve

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anything.

Black people yearn to be organised politically. They yearn for viable political structures within which to act and they yearn for the opportunity of meaningful participation in the decision-making process in their country. All Inkatha's policies, all its tactics and strategies, and all its leaders are decided upon by the Movement's Annual General Conference which is the supreme body of Inkatha. I have been elected as President of Inkatha and each and every year I have to make myself accountable to the Annual General Conferences of Inkatha, and I lay before the people that which I have done, and I inform them of the stances I have taken. The current South African position is debated; tactics and strategies are reviewed and Inkatha's leadership is given a fresh mandate within which to act. I adopt no stance, either at home or abroad, which is not dictated by Inkatha's mass membership. Not only do I work strictly within the confines of the mandate I receive from Inkatha's members, but I test Inkatha's thinking at mass meetings in numerous parts of the country. No policy decision and none of Inkatha's tactics and strategies, and none of the positions it has adopted are untested in mass meetings, even in a place like Soweto in South Africa's industrial heartland.

It is therefore with a solid Black mandate, my Lord Archbishop, that I say that Black South Africa's first option is an option to pursue non-violent, democratic tactics and strategies in opposition to apartheid. Black South Africans are aware of the fact that the ANC's Mission-in-Exile has been pursuing an armed struggle for 25 years without any tangible evidence that they will ever succeed. Black South Africa is aware that the South African Government commands the mightiest police and army force on the continent of Africa and that it would not hesitate to use its full might, both within the country and across the length and breadth of Southern Africa. Black South Africans are aware that there is no area in South Africa which can be turned into liberated zones, and they are aware of the immense logistic problems which those who are committed to the armed struggle are faced with.

The fact that the majority of Black South Africans would only turn to violence if all else failed has always given me the courage to continue in my pursuit of non-violent solutions. As a Christian, I am deeply convinced that while in certain circumstances just wars may be fought, although I myself am incapable of defining those circumstances, my deepest conviction is that while there is as yet one stone left unturned in the pursuit of non-violent tactics and strategies, there is no Christian justification for the pursuit of objectives through violence. The fact that Inkatha, as a membership-based democratic organisation, has accumulated the massive support it has, justifies the statements I have just made. It is just not true that it is not possible to pursue aims and

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objectives through non-violent tactics and strategies.

I am in daily contact with South Africa's suffering Black masses. Every day I am made intimately and deeply aware of Black suffering and the anguish it produces. I am deeply aware of the anger which has been generated by this suffering and as much as anybody else in the country, I understand the forces which are generating violent reactions to apartheid. For me you cannot claim that the Church has failed to be correctly involved in the process of bringing about change and in the same breath justify the violence which is consequent on that failure in theological terms. While there is one thing as yet left undone by the Church; if there is as yet one area in which the Church has under-achieved, and if there is but one thing the Church has left undone, there is for me no theological justification for violence. :

There can be no just war as an easy out for the Churches. I have no problem in accepting that some churchmen feel constrained by their conscience and convictions to involve themselves in violence. I understand that God is with the oppressed and in an unjust war Christ is equally present on both sides of the firing lines. Those who feel personally constrained to support violence in South Africa should add courage to their convictions and cross the lines to administer to people in insurgent camps. They should venture out into the world and persuade international Christendom to support violence. For me there is something hypocritically dishonest about

unstated commitments to violence and about conferring and negotiating with agents of violence beyond the sight and hearing of ordinary congregations. The Church's witness must be an open

witness and if there is a partnership between some of our churchmen and, for example, the ANC's Mission-in-Exile, then that partnership must be an open and proclaimed partnership which is stripped of the hypocrisy which talks in terms of distinguishing between the spiritual needs of insurgents and the intent to kill for political purposes which directs them.

The Anglican Church in a particular sense has an historic role to play in South Africa. While the Church of the Province of South Africa is guided by God Almighty as a separate entity, it is nevertheless true that it has historic links with the British which in the Act of Union established apartheid South Africa after having ruled here as a colonial power. I think of such great historic figures as our Bishop Colenso. I think of other leading Christians such as Archbishop Clayton, Archbishop Joost de Blank, Dean French-Beytiah, Canon Collins, Bishop Trevor Huddleston and Bishop Colin Winter, to illustrate the point I am making.

I am not saying that Anglicans have privileged access to the reconciling powers of God, but I do say that all denominations have a living history of their commitment to justice and peace and the

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Anglican commitment to justice and peace has for me a particular meaning.

Violence is spiralling upwards and in the current spiralling violence, we are witnessing evil faces of violence which were somewhat hidden before. There have been previous upsurges of violence in South Africa and, God forbid, I think we must be realistic and say that the current upswing of violence will not be the last. Violence will continue escalating until Blacks and Whites are reconciled one to the other, and Blacks and Blacks are reconciled to each other about Black/White relationships in South Africa. This reconciliation will only take place within a political framework which moves this country steadily towards becoming a just society.

We had an outburst of violence in the late fifties and we had another outburst of violence after June 16 1976. We are now living through a third explosion of Black violence. When one looks at the nature of these violent explosions one can discern a deepening ugliness in them. The violence of 1976 was a tone uglier than the violence of the late fifties. The violence we see now however, whether it be violence in Black/Black confrontations or whether it be violence in Black/White confrontations, is a great deal more than a tone uglier than the violence of 1976. As violence escalates the horror of it deepens. It is as though the bells of warning are pealing louder as time passes. Christians in South Africa need to hear these warnings and to recognise that the Church has a role to play in bringing to an end the use of violence for political purposes.

I am as aware as most that the question of violence has given rise to vexed theological and moral debate. I do not believe that one can make simplistic statements about it as a Christian. I myself deeply understand how Blacks so lose hope and so lose faith in the politics of negotiation and are so outraged by apartheid and so compassionate for their fellow Black South Africans, that they abandon the ways of peace and seek retribution through violence. I understand how Black South Africans' breasts are boiling with anger and with injustice. No matter how much I myself am totally committed to non-violence, I have an understanding compassion for those who no longer have the courage to pursue non-violent means of bringing about change and seek the easier option to hand of becoming violent.

I am aware that there is a body of theological opinion in Christendom which is beginning to look at violence as a necessary instrument of God in bringing about the downfall of unjust governments. The recent call by the Western Cape region of the South African Council of Churches for Christians to pray for the downfall of the Government on June 16th bears me out. As a

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Christian, however, I remain totally convinced that if ever violence in this country is to be judged as just retributive violence, that judgement could only be made after every stone of non-violent action has been turned over, and after every Christian act of reconciliation has failed.

We certainly cannot say at this point in time that the Church has failed despite having turned over every stone. There are a great many stones yet to be turned over. There is still profound hope, born out of Christian commitment in my heart, that while we may be failing, we have not yet finally failed. There are things to do which we must do, which we and others before us have failed to do.

It is, Your Grace, in the context of this thinking that I have been so dismayed to find that the forces working for violent confrontation in South Africa, are so often rewarded with Christian acclaim in the Western world, while those of us struggling on the ground to salvage our country from a consuming fire of violence, and who are pursuing aims and objectives by popular Black demand,

are stigmatized as sell-outs because we speak against the employment of violence and other tactics and strategies with which they are associated. Inkatha has received no encouragement from

the British Council of Churches for the role it has played in fighting apartheid in arenas where other Black organisations have not dared venture. I am speaking here of the political differences between those who deny any possibility that constituency politics attempting to penetrate the institutional life of South Africa is anything other than collaboration. Non-participation as a principle leads to confronting apartheid society from without, and is the domain of those who employ violence. I believe that there is an urgent need now for international Christian agencies to look carefully at the implications of non-participation and to make assessments of the extent to which the Church in any society must necessarily be a participant in the institutions of that society if the spirit of Christ is to be spread across the fabric of society to work within it.

There may be times in a nation's history when denominational churches will stand aside for a confessional church to emerge, but I believe it is dangerous thinking to talk of a confessional church in South Africa today. It is only when the Church has done everything the Church could and should do that we can think in terms of abandoning working from within the Church to make the Church relevant to the process of liberation.

Your Grace, I share these few thoughts with you as a Christian perplexed by Western Christendom, but yearning for the fellowship of the Church.