

NWN seeks (RVs

Open letter from Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi to

The Rt. Revd. U.M. Tutu, General Secretary of the South African  
i Council of Churches

My dear Bishop Tutu,

This is an open letter to you. The role of the Church in the struggle for the liberation of our country is a matter of public and international concern. There are many matters which go far beyond anything which you may refer to when you write privately to me and say that I have 'gifts of leadership which God has given me' but that you retain the right to disagree with me.

You, as the first public officer of the South African Council of Churches, and I as the first public officer of Inkatha, owe it to both our constituencies to adopt public stances towards each other. The events at Robert Sobukwe's funeral and your subsequent position as reported in the press is something which cannot be rubbed out of the public's minds.

The public have remained under the impression that you condone the behaviour at a funeral. Whatever you have said in your letters to me leaves unanswered the question of why you did not identify with me in the press discussion of the Graaff Reinet events. You claim to respect me and my 'God-given gifts of leadership'. You have however never identified with me publicly.

You say you retain the right to disagree with me but you have never privately or publicly stated where you specifically disagree.

The SACC has actively and specifically identified with black consciousness groups and it has publicly disassociated itself from Inkatha by its refusal ever to say anything constructive about me or Inkatha. We have detailed and numerous information about the impressions overseas visitors get about Inkatha after visiting Diakonia House. The SACC sees fit to take away the dignity of hundreds of thousands of black South Africans who are members of Inkatha. This is political Opportunism and is a lot more than the right to disagree.

You as the first public person of the SACC must subsume this stance of the SACC in your person. The Graaff Reinet events were an enactment of SACC sentiments about Inkatha which have been allowed to dominate Diakonia House. I am criticised for operating 'within the system'. So does the SACC and the various denominations which it represents. .

it is about time that the SACC specifically compared its policy as expressed in policy statements and resolutions with the policy of Inkatha. The SACC is representative of denominations which are the very fabric of white South African society. The SACC cannot distinguish itself from Inkatha on the grounds that I am involved in a homeland government. The SACC very often does little more than claim a black consciousness identity in order to extract money from European churches. There is a very strong sense of antagonism to the SACC in the stupid militant young blacks you say have 'iron in their souls'. Exiled South Africans do not carry the SACC flag with any sense of pride.

While you assure me that you know that The Nation treatment of the SACC was not authored by me, you have left donor agencies to draw their own conclusion and have not teleaxed your support of me to them - a step which was surely needed in the light of both prejudiced press reporting and direct communications to you by donor agencies.

I write this open letter partly because donor agencies around the world tend to blame me for the articles which appeared in The Nation. I was not the originator of those articles. The Nation is not a political mouth-piece of Inkatha. It is a free and independent newspaper. It voiced what I know to be a widespread black view of the nature of the SACC. Only an open letter would suffice to meet the circumstances in which you are writing to me privately expressing brotherly love and respect, while sending telexes overseas condemning The Nation and seeking support. Do you really hint that I should have reprimanded The Nation when the same SACC has spurned the entire membership of Inkatha and done incalculable harm to the image of Inkatha in its private discussions with visitors? The core of the problem should be exploring jointly the failure of the SACC to be a relevant force in the struggle for liberation.

Another reason for writing this letter as an open letter arises out of the fact that as Chairman of Isiswe-Sechaba (Pty) Ltd., proprietors of The Nation, I have been informed that a letter from lawyers acting on behalf of the SACC has been received. I find myself perplexed by this resort to legal action while at the same time receiving personal letters from you seeking discussions towards reconciliation. The incompatibility of going to Court and defining Christian solutions to problems facing the churches should be obvious to everybody. I cannot be party to behind-the-scenes reconciliation while legally daggers are being drawn. In any event, The Nation intends defending its right to comment on things of public concern. The course of action which you have initiated through your legal representatives must, as far as I am concerned, go ahead, so that the world can judge the correctness or the incorrectness of what was contained in The

Nation articles. That seems to be the only course that is fair both to you and ourselves.

You ask me not to fall into the trap of keeping the Church out of politics. This request must be rejected with contempt. The SACC acquired unearned fame in short-sightedly identifying with a passing foolishness in the ranks of a minority of black South Africans. In this the SACC has assumed a political role. If that political role is foolish it must be clobbered for its foolishness and this is not an objection to mixing religion and politics. Inkatha has stood proudly in its self-sufficiency and is waging an international diplomatic war without the benevolent protection of the SACC. The SACC cannot claim to be the benefactor of Inkatha and Inkatha has therefore no utility in bolstering the SACC's image. Radicals, whether they are in Inkatha, black consciousness movements, the ANC or the PAC, know the extent to which there is hypocrisy in the SACC.

If the SACC is ever to become truly relevant to the struggle for liberation it will have to persuade Inkatha to accept it as a working partner. Inkatha's stand in the struggle is clear. Not to identify with it is to reject the truth contained in that stand. The separation of the Church and State has never been more evidenced than the SACC's distancing itself from the largest black freedom constituency which has ever been developed in black South African society.

I have written this letter to you as a practising Christian deeply committed to the church and its future role in the struggle for liberation in South Africa. I remain loyal to my own church and I act responsibly in writing this letter. As things now stand neither the SACC nor any of the denominations in South Africa participate in the struggle for liberation to any meaningful extent. In your task you should concentrate on getting the various denominations in South Africa to do even half as much as Inkatha does in our struggle.

Blacks in South Africa have for many decades hoped that the Church would become increasingly relevant in the struggle for liberation. The denominational churches have by their failure to be relevant directed attention more and more on the SACC. Here blacks sought hope and supported every move to radicalise the churches. The SACC has traded heavily on that hope and has so far failed the people themselves.

Yours in the service of Christ,

(signed) Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi

President Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe