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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 21, 1985

Dear Colleague:

Emotions are running high on the South African issue, as they have been for the better part of the last six months. **If you read nothing else this weekend, read this powerful, yet dispassionate, analysis of the potential effect of disinvestment on South African blacks written by Chief Minister Buthelezi, leader of six million South African Zulus, in yesterday's Wall Street Journal.**

I call your attention in particular to the following:

"The South African issue...does challenge Americans' moral fiber and the U.S....should make an all-party attempt to side with the oppressed in South Africa...

...If we are to avoid a destructive conflagration of forces in South Africa, the process of change in the country must be speeded up. I fail to see how those who agree with this statement can possibly talk of our effective economic isolation. Isolation will bring stagnation to the economy and perhaps even destroy its growth base. Yet it is in the circumstances of a rapidly growing economy, where the interdependence of black and white is vastly increased, that the propensity of the country to change is enhanced...

...Jobs make the difference between hunger and starvation and between life and death. For Americans to hurt the growth rate of the South African economy through boycotts, sanctions and disinvestment would demonstrate a callous disregard for ordinary people, suffering terribly under circumstances that they did not create, and would be a gross violation of any respect Americans may have for the principle that people should be free to exercise their rights to oppose oppression in the way they choose."

Cordially,



Robert S. Walker

# Disinvestment Is Anti-Black

By MANGOSUTHU G. BUTHELEZI

In the struggle for liberation any black leader worthy of the title recognizes that the responsibility for bringing about radical change in South Africa rests on black shoulders. It is a South African struggle, and blacks have to lead in that struggle until we pass the point where the drive for improvements becomes nonracial. We have to shape events in our own chosen direction, and we have to fashion our society after the models that we ourselves emulate.

It must not, however, be forgotten that in life and death situations decency is so often under siege. Bloody revolutions fought against terrible oppression do not automatically bring about great improvements. Decency in South Africa is under siege at the moment in the sense that decency and democratic nonviolent opposition to apartheid are under threat by white recalcitrance, which is polarizing society and driving blacks to despair and anger. Decency is also under siege in the sense that time-honored civilized values and Western democratic principles are being viewed as impotent by an ever-increasing number of blacks. The struggle for liberation in South Africa still could take ugly turns; the prospects of widespread devastation of property and a sharp escalation of violence leading to a race war remain an ever-present possibility.

## Need All-Party Attempt

It is against these background thoughts that I ask Americans to consider attitudes toward investment in South Africa, and attitudes toward President Reagan's constructive engagement policy. As a black leader I cannot be jubilant yet about the Reagan administration's South African policy. We don't know yet what deeds will be added to words, but we are aware that sufficient political time has not passed for anybody to make judgments on Mr. Reagan's approach to South Africa. As a black leader I must welcome his attempt to formulate a South African policy for the first time in the U.S.'s history, even if it has not yet been demonstrated that the U.S. government and the American people have the will and the ability to take South African issues out of U.S. party politics. Black South Africans still don't know whether petty politicking between Democrats and Republicans will turn apartheid into an American political football for party gain.

I make the point that for the U.S. the South African situation is distant and unimportant. The remoteness of South African issues from the daily vested interests of U.S. citizens does not demand that any U.S. government make more than vague moral pronouncements on what should and should not be happening in my country. The South African issue, however, does challenge Americans' moral fiber and the U.S.—as the world's leading democracy—should make an all-party attempt to side with the oppressed in South Africa.

This thought, however, does not belie the fact that medium- and long-term economic developments in South and Southern

Africa have implications for U.S. interests. South Africa after liberation will be a great gateway to the African hinterland where the process of industrialization must inevitably be talked of in terms of many millions of dollars. At this juncture, however, the immediate challenge to the U.S. is a moral challenge.

If we are to avoid a destructive conflagration of forces in South Africa, the process of change in the country must be speeded up. I fail to see how those who agree with this statement can possibly talk of our effective economic isolation. Isolation will bring stagnation to the economy and perhaps even destroy its growth base. Yet it is in the circumstances of a rapidly expanding economy, where the interdependence of black and white is vastly increased, that the propensity of the country

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to change is enhanced. Black vertical mobility is a concomitant of economic growth. Anybody who knows anything about a society such as ours will know that the ceilings that apartheid imposes on this vertical mobility, produce the rubbing points that mobilize opposition to apartheid where it is most vulnerable.

Apartheid has lined white pockets and succored white privilege. When white privilege and standards of living are threatened through the prosperity of blacks and there is a rising claim to recognition, then the prospects of negotiated advances are the greatest. While protected by a wide range of apartheid measures, big business in South Africa has for decades sided with the oppressor and exploited black South Africans unmercifully.

That era has passed. No big business today can secure future plans without challenging apartheid. It was the large corporations that broke the apartheid barriers that led to real advancements for black workers. Ford Motor Co.'s bold indenturing of black apprentices against the law hastened the day when job reservation had to be abandoned. Progressive managements talking, dealing and negotiating with workers hastened the day of black trade-union recognition.

It is big business that keeps institutions such as the Institute of Race Relations alive, and it is very often big business that provides the financial muscle to challenge the government in the courts on civil-rights issues, on labor issues and on contradictions and ambiguities in law; and it is international capital that can back educational and development programs. For large American companies to opt out of the

South African situation is to opt out of the prospects of being catalysts in the process of change.

Increased economic investment in South Africa by U.S. companies associated with a U.S. constructive engagement policy with real meaning is a moral option that the U.S. now has. In the circumstances that now appertain, withdrawal of investments in South Africa by Americans is a strategy against black interests and not a punitive stick with which to beat apartheid.

## Life and Death Difference

There is a great deal of genuine interest in South Africa among many Americans, but I really am fearful that the upsurge of the current debate on the disinvestment issue and on Mr. Reagan's constructive engagement policy is in part fired by Americans for Americans on American issues. Apartheid should be more than some kind of looking glass in which Americans see themselves. Apartheid is real; it is out there and millions of black South Africans suffer indescribably under it. Americans should profess a humanitarian approach to the question of what the U.S. should do about apartheid. To stand on American indignant principles by withdrawing diplomatically and economically from South Africa is a luxury that the vastness of American wealth could afford. But indulgence in that luxury for the sake of purity of conscience, whatever genuine motives produce that conscience, would do no more than demonstrate the moral ineptitude of a great nation in the face of challenges from a remote area of the globe.

Black South Africans have to confine their options to realities, and we have to seek to bring about radical change in such a way that we do not destroy the foundations of the future. More than 50% of all black South Africans are 15 years old or younger. A huge population bulge is approaching the marketplace. To greatly exacerbate unemployment and underemployment, and to greatly increase the already horrendous backlog in housing, education, health and welfare services, would be unforgivable. Millions of black South Africans already live in dire squalor in squatter areas and in shantytowns. Jobs make the difference between hunger and starvation and between life and death. For Americans to hurt the growth rate of the South African economy through boycotts, sanctions and disinvestment would demonstrate a callous disregard for ordinary people, suffering terribly under circumstances that they did not create, and would be a gross violation of any respect Americans may have for the principle that people should be free to exercise their rights to oppose oppression in the way they choose. Black South Africans do not ask Americans to disinvest. The strident voices calling for confrontation and violence are the voices most dominant in calls for disinvestment.

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*Mr. Buthelezi is hereditary leader of the Zulu people of South Africa.*