

Although a shift to violence, retrenchment and repression is certainly possible, so too is change.

No one can predict whether the South African Government will follow through on its promise of reform. The violence of election eve does not prompt optimism, nor do the brutal police actions of recent days.

This being said, there are clearly more hopeful signs. The unprecedented peaceful march in Cape Town two weeks ago was welcome. So too were contacts between President de Klerk, Bishop Tutu and Alan Boesak and the talks with President Kaunda of Zambia. Marches and meetings do not constitute reform. But they can be a precursor to it. They may be a symbol that Mr. de Klerk intends to make history.

There are also signs that a new generation of South Africans is seeking change. The University campuses, once quiescent, are now the focus of heated debate and protest. Young, white middle class students are joining with the black majority in calling for fundamental changes.

And the Dutch Reformed Church, one of the bulwarks of Afrikaaner society, has now registered its moral opposition to an apartheid system it once supported. That is bound to have influence on a people proud of their moral standards.

Acceptable change requires active dialogue. Active dialogue requires an acceptance of the legitimacy of each party by the other. Mutual recognition of legitimacy depends on the acceptance of non-violence as the sole mechanism of change. These are the prerequisites of reform.

In this connection, we have been pleased by the moderation in the attitude of the African National Congress. That moderation has been encouraged by Canada, beginning with Prime Minister Mulroney's meeting with Oliver Tambo, the ANC's President in 1987. The ANC now talks about the desirability of peaceful, negotiated change rather than of violent revolution. It accepts, for the first time, the desirability of suspending violence prior to negotiations. It also recognizes that there are other legitimate voices of opposition in South Africa, and that discussion and co-operation with them are possibilities worthy of pursuit.