

Glimpse of an ugly development

THOSE who precipitated the violent and disturbing events at Graaff-Reinet on Saturday did no service to the memory of Mr Robert Sobukwe, whose death they had supposedly come to mourn.

In confronting Chief Gatsha Buthelezi and chasing him away from the funeral service they behaved contrary to the gentleness and the peaceful outlook which were such outstanding ingredients of Mr Sobukwe's character. In imposing their will on the funeral and refusing to allow two invited whites to speak — Mrs Helen Suzman MP and Mr Benjamin Pogrund — they were both discourteous to Mr Sobukwe's family and they betrayed the nonracialism which was the basis of his political beliefs.

But was it merely a case of "political thuggery", as Chief Buthelezi says it was? And can those responsible be dismissed as a "few delinquents" from the townships who were used on the spur of the moment, as he also says?

We fear that this is only partly correct; that in fact the youths who turned to these distasteful actions reflect the wider and growing attitude of intolerance and anti-whiteism among blacks.

Can this really be cause for surprise? White racism has inevitably spawned black racism. White rejection of blacks is leading to black rejection of whites. Even such a courageous fighter for black rights as Chief Buthelezi is despised by some because of his role in the

white man's separate development apparatus.

It is the Nationalist creed that white and black must be separated. That is what Nationalist rule is all about. Apartheid has deliberately fostered racial exclusivism — with rank discrimination to sharpen the black sense of grievance — and now we are having to cope with the monster.

How to do so? Certainly the Government's answer in locking up and banning and resorting to ever-tougher restrictive laws is not the way. As pointed out by Mr Sonny Leon, who was also ordered away from the funeral: "Once you remove the recognised leaders then the mob becomes a leaderless rabble and anybody can influence them."

Indeed the stern repression so favoured by the Nationalists inevitably becomes counter-productive, setting off greater anger, passion and activity which are then met by even harsher official retribution.

The spiral of hatred and violence, frightening in what it portends, must be halted. That can only be done by the Nationalists seeking a new path of racial reconciliation: not in the debased politics of separate development but through true racial consultation and sharing.

In life, Robert Sobukwe was shunned by most of his white countrymen. There can be hope for all of us if the events surrounding his burial alert whites to the need to act swiftly and positively.