

Inkatha Yesizwe

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ONE of the government's intentions in creating independent black nations states was to defuse internal black pressure for change within the urban 'flashpoints' of South Africa. They clearly hoped to divide blacks amongst themselves and redirect black political aspirations into more limited and negotiable areas.

In the process, however, rather than removing the black presence, the political dynamics created by the homeland system have established black politicians firmly within the white body politic. Despite their lack of effective political power Bantustan leaders have been given unprecedented opportunities for political manoeuvre in their confrontation with the white establishment.

Inkatha, the Zulu cultural liberation movement, is an organization which will test the very limits of this framework for political manoeuvre. Hitherto the Chief Minister of Kwazulu had opposed the government via the 'politics of rhetoric'. Now, with the formation of Inkatha, for the first time Buthelezi's criticism of separate development has entered the realm of action.

Simplistically, Inkatha is an attempt to provide an organizational mechanism for black liberation, operating initially from a homeland base to give it some immunity and a certain and definable constituency.

South Africa, a country with a highly developed industrial economy, dominated by an entrenched and permanent white minority, will demand a struggle for black emancipation of a totally different kind from those that triumphed elsewhere on the African continent. Similarly the internal circumstances of SA in the late 70s is quite different from those that confronted the ANC or PAC in the 50s and early 60s. Inkatha's nature therefore is a response to the peculiar circumstances of the present South African situation.

This involves the realization that the black struggle in the post-Verwoerdian era has to be fought not only in the cities and factories of SA but in the arena of homeland politics as well. It was the failure of any national black organization to attempt even to put a halt to the acceptance of independence by the Transkei that was to be a major motivating factor in Inkatha's formation.

The acceptance of independence by Matanzima and the Transkei National Independence Party highlighted two weaknesses in Buthelezi's position. Firstly he could no longer rely on the other homeland leaders to support his strategy

of undermining the homeland system from within. And secondly, his position within Kwazulu was potentially threatened.

This was as a result of the central government interference in Kwazulu's internal politics coupled with the possibility that elements within his homeland would also respond favourably to the limited but real material benefits available via a positive response to the government's offer of independence. Specifically, therefore, Inkatha is designed to prevent the manipulation of Kwazulu politicians and politics to suit Pretoria's ends. However, it is more than that.

The collapse of the Portuguese empire and the assumption of power by the liberation movements; the push towards majority rule in Rhodesia; the war in Angola and, most importantly, the effects of these actions on SA blacks, were all to influence Buthelezi's strategy for change.

Prior to these events, Buthelezi, although functioning within the black political arena, believed that the dynamics of the SA power game demanded that his efforts be concentrated in white SA — the rulers for the foreseeable future, the authorities with the guns and the bullets. It was this belief that had resulted in his original involvement in separate development; his emphasis in the early 70s on a concern for minority rights, compromise formulas and dialogue at all possible times with whites of all political creeds.

He clearly saw the homeland alternative for blacks opposed to apartheid as a viable lever for change, and exploited his role within the structure to maximum effect. Not only did he use the Bantustan platform to publicly criticise the philosophy and actions of the Nationalist government but, within the separate development matrix, Buthelezi insisted on pushing the government to extend the blueprint to its logical and honest conclusions.

However, the events in Mozambique, Angola and Rhodesia were to be a 'watershed' in SA politics. The pace and possibilities for change were speeded up and this in turn affected all black political groups in and concerned with SA. It is said that the men in the middle of the road stand the greatest chance of being run over and for Buthelezi, whose gradualist, non-violence stance is derided by more militant blacks internally and externally, his future will be decided by the race against time and his response to that race.

He is aware of the great flexibility in SA politics in the present situation — a fluidity multiplied enormously by the events sparked by

'Soweto 76' and this makes his use in March 76 of a Robert Kennedy saying, particularly instructive.

'A revolution is coming — a revolution which will be peaceful if we are wise enough; compassionate if we care enough; successful if we are fortunate enough; but revolution which is coming whether we will it or not. We can affect its character, we cannot alter its inevitability.'

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi knows that change is coming and there is no doubt that he wants a part in controlling that change. Thus Inkatha must be seen as a reflection of Buthelezi's new attitude to the liberation struggle in SA.

It is a means of formalizing and consolidating around the country, giving substance to his claims to speak, and ultimately to act for more than just the rural Zulus.

It is an attempt to counter those who attack him as merely a tribal leader created by the apartheid system and thus ultimately circumscribed by 'his masters'.

It is clearly hoped that Inkatha will help legitimize Buthelezi's claims to be a national leader in the eyes of the urban black community and the outside world. And so when he describes himself as the president of the national cultural liberation movement, Inkatha, rather than as the Chief Minister of Kwazulu, he is not indulging in semantic games but trying to distance himself from the apartheid network and the damaging inference of 'homeland stooge'.

What then is this organization Inkatha?

It is an updated and expanded version of the 1920s Zulu movement called Inkatha ka Zulu. This was an organization concerned with the Zulu community, its unity and upliftment which had been started by King Solomon in 1924 but which collapsed in the early 30s. Attempts were made to revive Inkatha in the 40s by the ANC, and by Gatsha Buthelezi and others in the early 60s.

The present-day Inkatha, whilst retaining some of the aims and aspirations of the 1928 constitution, reflects the changed circumstances that constitute the recent Zulu experience and its perception of that reality. This is perhaps best illustrated by the change of name — Inkatha ka Zulu to Inkatha Yesizwe. Yesizwe meaning 'of the nation', for in Buthelezi's words, 'we are not oppressed as Zulus but as black people'.

In common with Solomon's organization, the 1970's Inkatha Yesizwe is concerned with the unity and development of the Zulu people. However, this is only part of the broader aim that is the solidarity and assertiveness of the black nation as a whole. The years in between have enabled Inkatha to discard its submissive and conciliatory attitude to the white government whilst still retaining the Zulu tradition of peaceful co-operation with whites.

Inkatha Yesizwe has two major and inter-linked aims: the first is to prevent the possibil-

ity of Kwazulu ever being forced into or 'voluntarily' accepting independence. Secondly it seeks liberation for all SA blacks. This twin-fisted approach leads to the dualistic nature of Inkatha's aims and organization.

On the one hand the movement encourages a following and utilizes symbols which are exclusively Zulu orientated, for example the King is the patron-in-chief of Inkatha. Simultaneously there is provision for a far more broadly based organization relying for its mobilization tools on general African concepts and ideas, for instance the idea of African communalism.

Within Kwazulu Inkatha is designed to provide Buthelezi with a tightly controlled mass organization based at the local level on the traditional leadership and financial resources provided by the chiefs. It is envisaged as a far more directly representative organ of the Zulu population than the Legislative Assembly.

Thus when Buthelezi takes the major issues to the National Conference or Council of Inkatha for a more wide-ranging endorsement of his often controversial views, this is a means of proving that he is a truly representative leader.

By formalizing his support in this way he has a more solid springboard from which to venture outside the homeland arena. For example in July 1975 an Inkatha meeting at Nongoma, with more than 400 community leaders representing Zulus from all over the country, publicly endorsed Buthelezi's views, from the rejection of independence to support for black trade unions.

Inkatha is not envisaged as a political party in any normal Western sense. Inside Kwazulu Inkatha officials are keen to include all Zulus in the organization including those with different political views from Chief Buthelezi. This incorporation of all Zulus into Inkatha is an attempt to ensure that all opposition which does manifest itself is localized within the movement.

This provision also makes it easier to control outside interference. In July 1976 Chief Charles Boy Hlengwa, leader of the opposition Shaka's Spear Party, gave his consent to the formation of a branch of Inkatha in the district under his jurisdiction and he himself is reputed to be a member as well.

Inkatha is not a secret organization and its membership, although at present limited to Kwazulu citizens, does have provision for affiliation by other organizations. While no person shall be endorsed as a candidate for election to public office in Kwazulu by Inkatha, unless a member of this body, this does not mean that individual or corporate groups outside of the Inkatha structure cannot make themselves available for office.

This clause, and the strict disciplinary code required of Inkatha members, is designed to counter external interference in Kwazulu politics and the infiltration of the movement by BOSS. According to Buthelezi, all the defunct splinter groups which have tried to emerge in

Kwazulu have been inspired by the Department of Information or BOSS and, in the Empangeni area BOSS agents have openly asked Inkatha officials for the right to join the movement. Buthelezi has stated that the formation of any political party which was a genuine expression of Zulu feeling was 'of no concern to us'.

The above notwithstanding, there does seem to be a certain degree of confusion concerning the exact nature of Inkatha and the desirability of the multi-party system of democracy. The constitution of the movement affirms the 'fact' that African political institutions are not undemocratic and rejects the cultural imperialism responsible for the belief that only the 'Western, partisan, political system is perfect'.

Undeniably the colonial experience in the rest of Africa and that of the blacks in SA cannot be claimed as the best possible advertisement for democracy in general and the Westminster political system in particular. Thus Inkatha's attitude must be seen as a reflection of this reality.

However, the search for other kinds of democracy is also a positive statement that African culture does have something to offer 'civilization' and the modernizing world and in addition it places Inkatha right within the mainstream of political thinking in the rest of Africa.

'Culture has proved to be the very foundation of the liberation movement. Only societies which preserve their culture are able to mobilize and organise themselves against foreign domination.' (Amilcar Cabral)

The Inkatha constitution states that the movement is a cultural one. According to the Secretary-General, Dr Bengu, Inkatha does not try to re-enact the past but recognizes that since culture embodies the totality of values, institutions and forms of behaviour transmitted within a society, national solidarity and models for development should be based on the values 'extrapolated from the people's culture and adapted' to the needs of the present time and situation.

Although Inkatha accepts that it has many aspects to copy from the Western economic, political and educational patterns of development, this does not exclude the incorporation of African ideas and cultural traditions. In fact it is suggested that there is much in African culture that the whites could well adopt, such as 'humanism' and patience.

Inkatha also advocates a form of African communalism which 'while not discouraging free enterprise also ensures that the people as a whole have a stake in the wealth of their own land'. According to Buthelezi this state of affairs would be achieved through state-owned organizations which would have controlling interests in all main economic enterprises, with the profits earned therefrom thus available for the use of the nation and ploughed back into its development rather than accruing to individuals. In this way individuals would still have the freedom for initiative and reward for risks whilst helping to

develop the entire country. It is the means which will help promote the 'radical redistribution of wealth' that Buthelezi desires.

Another aim of Inkatha is the achievement of 'African humanism', which is known in the Nguni language as UBUNTU and in the Sotho language as BOTHERO. This philosophy, like that of Kaunda's, is an idealistic affirmation of the worth of individual human beings which is translated into community action and 'people-oriented' development.

At the present time Inkatha claims a membership of well over 100 000, the majority of whom are Zulus. Although non-Zulus can join the organization, Buthelezi has also called on other homeland leaders to form their own Inkatha-type organizations.

For many opponents of the homeland system not only is all collaboration with the government denounced but, in addition, the homeland leaders are seen as a party to the official encouragement of 'tribalism'.

Inkatha particularly is seen as a Zulu tribal movement which could be a danger to future black internal relations inside SA. It is asserted that, through Inkatha, Buthelezi might be aiding the government in its attempts to divide blacks amongst themselves by encouraging fears of Zulu domination.

Buthelezi responds to these criticisms by stating that no 'settlement' is possible in SA without the support of the Zulus, who are the largest single ethnic group in the country. He asserts that the Zulu record of participation in the ANC and PAC rebuts any accusation of a primarily tribal affinity prevailing in the Zulu community.

In addition he also believes that one cannot merely 'erase' one's ethnic background, and he sees no contradiction in a cultural concept of 'nationality' and an overriding African nationalism embracing the ideal of a single multi-ethnic SA state.

In accordance with this belief Buthelezi will encourage Zulu identification not only with the national struggle but also with past Zulu heroes. However, Buthelezi is well aware of the tribal and group conflicts that have been generated in Angola and Rhodesia, and he is a strong advocate of black unity and solidarity. Many appeals have been made by Inkatha for dialogue between the different black political organizations — these have been refused by SASO, BPC and the SSRC.

This Inkatha attitude reflects the belief that Inkatha can provide a 'forum' for the discussion of black tactics, and in that way internalize conflict rather than allow it to fester in public. Buthelezi believes that when blacks attack one another, as in the debate between himself and the more militant, it is only the government that benefits from these feuds.

In the wider black community Buthelezi has been severely attacked by the major proponents

of black consciousness. He has claimed, though, that 'among the so-called homeland leaders there are some like myself who believe in black consciousness and who believe they have done more in promoting the concept of black consciousness than those who arrogantly dismiss them as "irrelevant".'

The validity of this assertion would probably depend on what is seen as the necessary components of black consciousness rather than merely sufficient facets of this philosophy. Buthelezi's attitude with regard to African culture, African communalism, black pride and assertiveness, black solidarity, the inhumanity and inherent violence of the present SA system and the necessity for liberation are all thrusts in the same direction as the black consciousness movement.

However, it is in the crucial area of strategy that the two groups differ. The Chief Minister of Kwazulu's actions are governed by two important beliefs. He sees the brute force of the white power structure as inimical to ill-conceived strategies reliant on violent and emotional action, and he thus envisages the struggle for liberation as a long and difficult one.

Secondly he understands the word liberation to have two meanings — the *freedom from* injustice and the *freedom to* enact justice. In other words, liberation will not merely entail the destruction of the apartheid system in SA but it will also involve the creation of a new society. Thus he has said that no organization involved in the struggle 'should build into their strategy, principles and tendencies which could not be perpetuated in the civil society which will follow liberation.' Those two convictions help explain Buthelezi's attitudes to homeland involvement, violence and the role of whites in the struggle.

In December 1976 Buthelezi made a significant proposal when, at a PRP inspired conference, he called for formal links between Inkatha as an organisation and white opposition groups. He no longer wants dialogue between himself and individual prominent members of the PRP, with that 'good fellow' Gatsha making a speech at conferences every now and then.

He wants interaction at all levels between two organizations whose separate origins and natures have been legally confined. He can no longer afford to merely talk to whites, he has to involve them in black action for liberation.

'This meeting is not an example of black/white co-operation. It is no more than talking about it. The real thing will only come about when we join in action which mobilizes constituencies.'

Buthelezi believes in non-racialism, but he is also a politician. He is aware that his strength will lie in a broad constituency which includes Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites, and he is clearly aiming at a moderate consensus of all races, centred around the numerically most dominant organization, Inkatha.

The PFP might be a body small in numbers and influence in the white community but it is important that this growing group of whites be incorporated into the liberation struggle in some way. There was little opportunity for sympathetic whites to play any constructive part in the black stay-aways during 1976. However, Inkatha-initiated action might help radicalize these whites and provide them with an opportunity for a more positive response.

Buthelezi is the one black leader of substance who has publicly criticized the student action arising from June 76 and offered an alternative strategy for blacks. He has said that 'the tragedy of Soweto and other Reef townships lies not in the presence but in the absence of a political content'.

While he acknowledges that the situation in SA might be so desperate as to require martyrs, he realises that being willing to die is not going to liberate the oppressed, as he believes that commitment to change will require more careful tactics than merely 'to walk into a trap'.

He advises against individual and isolated incidents and urges co-ordinated planning before 'jumping' into action. He has, however, described well-prepared mass action, through strikes and boycotts as 'the most important tool' in the struggle for liberation.

There seems little reason to assume that if Buthelezi were one day to call for mass action those, who are at present his detractors, would not support such a stance.

It remains to be seen whether the president of Inkatha will be able to mobilize his potentially far-ranging constituency.

The question here is twofold: what kind of action will he find it viable to undertake and finally will he be able 'to lessen the death toll' before the other forces, vying for some control of change in Southern Africa, sweep him aside?

