

# NATAL/KWAZULU – THE ROAD AHEAD

(This article is a condensation of a series which appeared in the *Natal Witness*. David Robbins's book on Natal 'Inside the Last Outpost' will be published by Shuter & Shooter early in 1985)

South Africans of all colours and political persuasions find themselves, in the mid-1980s, caught up in times of unprecedented change and uncertainty. The introduction of the new constitution, with its far-reaching political and social implications, means that life will never be the same again. We stand at the beginning of a new epoch.

Think of conditions ten or even five years ago. International hotels were novelties; mixed audiences in the theatre were the subjects of endless permits; job reservation was natural; trade unionism was a disreputable concept; and the idea of power-sharing at any level was scorned. The government thought it knew exactly where it was going, and the liberal left knew with equal certainty where the government was going wrong.

Now, much of this certainty has vanished. The National Party has split; those who remain in power have, on the surface at any rate, changed direction; the old touchstones of traditional South African society are crumbling even as we turn to them to verify our various positions.

As the world around us changes, our anxieties and uncertainties find expression in a single question: where will it end? The answer is not apparent. What IS clear is that apartheid is coming to an end.

An experienced Natal politician put it to me this way: "There is simply no way that Blacks will not be given real power at central government level in the future. I don't know when. Events will dictate the pace of change. This country is now set on a route to complete integration. You can have all the separate chambers, all the fancy safeguards you like, but you'll never stop the end result."

## SPECIAL CASE

Natal is not immune to the forces currently at work in the rest of South Africa. Yet there are differences, and complicating factors, in this province which could create for it a future somewhat different from the rest of the country.

Many observers assert that Natal is, and has always considered itself to be, a special case. The 'solution' for Natal, it is argued, may not necessarily be the solution for the rest of the country.

It is worth glancing at the reasons why Natal is considered a special case. Take White attitudes. Natal is the only province with opposition party control at provincial government level. Although many White Natalians – especially in the north – might disagree, Natal is fundamentally a colonial enclave with, from a White point of view, a preponderance of English-speaking people. Then there is the sheer number of Blacks here. Whites are outnumbered 9 to 1 in Natal/KwaZulu as opposed to less than 5 to 1 in South Africa generally. This has given rise to what historian Colin Bundy describes as 'exaggerated and morbid forms of racially defined conflicts and fears.'

Such conflicts and fears are certainly fuelled by the geographic nightmare which the policy of separate development has created here in the form of the KwaZulu/Natal patchwork. In other provinces, by and large, the so-called Black homelands are arrayed around a central White core. Here in Natal, it's a mess. The Whites of the Transvaal could never be affected by Venda or Bophuthatswana as the Whites, Indians and Coloureds of Natal are by KwaZulu. Ulundi is one of the most important places in the province; the majority of people living in metropolitan Durban, for example, are administered from Ulundi.

As Professor Deneys Schreiner, vice-principal of the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, points out: "Most political thinking in South Africa is taking place in terms of the situation on the Reef where the vast majority of urban Blacks live outside the homelands. Solutions for the Transvaal are inapplicable in Natal where nearly all urban Blacks live in KwaZulu. KwaZulu is an integral part of all Natal's major urban conurbations; KwaZulu therefore cannot be seen as a rural government, separate from the 'problem' of the urban Black."

Stemming from the geographical patchwork is an almost total interdependence of the two regions. Economically, 'White' Natal prospers because of the abundance of Black labour and because of Black spending power. On the other hand, Blacks eke out a living thanks to the job opportunities available in 'White' Natal; there are precious few jobs in KwaZulu.



*Chief Gatsha Buthelezi*

For these reasons the notion of an independent KwaZulu will remain a dream, and a fading one at that. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, chief minister of KwaZulu, is adamant on the subject. 'Independence for us has always been, and still is, completely out of the question.'

So Natal/KwaZulu is not going to end up looking like the rest of South Africa: it is a special case. In 1980, Professor J.A. Lombard had his office bombed, presumably for suggesting alternative methods for turning KwaZulu into a viable state. A few years later the Buthelezi Commission amassed a formidable array of facts and figures which demonstrated the complete interdependence of Natal and KwaZulu, and recommended a common governmental structure to control the region in a federal South Africa.

If Natal/KwaZulu is a special region requiring a specially designed future, little progress in this direction has been achieved. Removals (in pursuance of the pipe-dream of consolidation) continue. And now a new constitution, designed for the country as a whole, has been superimposed on this uniquely complex region. Profound social, economic and political change is inevitable, but will such change be painful and destructive, or positive and progressive?

'It is crazy and short-sighted not to start sharing resources,' Professor Laurie Schlemmer, director of the Centre for Applied Social Sciences at the University of Natal in Durban, says. 'I believe that events and economic circumstances will ultimately force this sharing.'

## TWO VOICES

Listen to two more authoritative White Natal voices:

'The current state of affairs is not satisfactory, but what is the solution? We will have to find a way of coming to terms with the situation, and put to the government something that is realistic, practical and acceptable to it. There will have to be much closer co-operation between all races, whatever structures are imposed. The facts of life will force it. Natal and KwaZulu cannot operate successfully as independent units.'

'Certainly, as far as KwaZulu is concerned, it is totally unjust that Blacks are not citizens of their own country. In the broader context, their country is South Africa; in the narrower context it must be Natal/KwaZulu. It's

impossible to divide Natal/KwaZulu. Therefore, if we are going to confine the citizenship issue, it is absolutely inescapable that they must be citizens of Natal/KwaZulu.'

The first voice is that of Frank Martin, Natal's senior MEC; the second belongs to Natal's foremost industrialist, Chris Saunders. Both these men, it will be remembered, voted 'yes' in the constitutional referendum last year; both are moderate and reformist, who see the new constitution as 'a step in the right direction'.

Mr. Martin does not believe that political unity is necessary or desirable, although it might evolve 'in the dim and distant future'.

'You'll never sell the idea of one political institution to the White electorate, and I'm only interested in selling things that can work. As I have said, Natal and KwaZulu are in my opinion economically and strategically indivisible. But not politically. Here we have two separate entities: the Natal Provincial Administration and Ulundi, both drawing their powers from acts of parliament, both acting as governments for their people.

'I am certain that an accommodation can be found for the region in terms of the new constitution. What I would like to see established is a common planning and administrative, rather than political, authority with statutory teeth.'

Mr. Saunders, on the other hand, told me that economic and political unity were inseparable. This would apply to South Africa as a whole as well as to Natal/KwaZulu. Indeed, to more fully understand the regional situation one needed to examine it in its national context.

'For a start, one-man-one-vote is out,' he said. 'We have to accept that South Africa is a modern, collectivist western state with liberal institutions. By collectivist, I mean we are a whole group of different sorts of people brought together by force of circumstances into a unitary state. Within that unitary state we have a high level of technology, a very large military establishment and even a nuclear capacity.'

'We must accept, too, that if these resources were suddenly turned over to a Black nationalist government, we would have here in South Africa the most powerful Black state in the world. We also must accept that it would be a state that would be sympathetic to the many external influences that have made their presence felt in other Black states — Marxism, a dictatorial one-party state, almost continuous revolutions, and so on.'



*Frank Martin*

'This scenario, therefore, must be avoided. And it's going to be avoided first of all by the force of western influence and interest in this country, and secondly it will be totally resisted by Whites who are in power here.'

'How can we have political unity, which you say is essential, without one-man-one-vote?' I asked.

'This I think is one of our greatest problems. We say as Whites: we are South Africa. Now we are going to have a tricameral system whereby the Coloureds and Indians can join us as South Africans. But what about the Blacks?

'It's no solution to say that eventually, by gradualism, they will form a part of the mainstream of South African politics. That is not the answer for now. Apartheid is totally undesirable; in fact it's unworkable. If majority rule is out, for reasons I have already noted, all that is left is some form of power-sharing and consensus-style government.'

The trade union movement, Mr. Saunders said, provided a reasonable blue-print for what could happen politically.

'In any enlightened factory now, 'Mr. Saunders continued, 'there is equal opportunity, a rate for the job, a situation where people will be advanced by merit and merit alone. But what happens when the whistle blows and you leave the factory? It's then that the inequalities begin. Why can't we have the same system of negotiation outside the factory as we have within? We've actually already granted Blacks the economic vote through the trade union movement, why not a political say on the same basis?'

#### SOME STATUTORY BODY

What will all this mean in practical terms for Natal/KwaZulu? Most people I spoke to agreed on one thing; force of circumstances and hard economic facts will ensure the emergence of some sort of statutory body which transcends the current administrative – and perhaps even political – divisions between KwaZulu and Natal.

Mr. Duchesne Grice, past president of the South African Institute of Race Relations, believes that Ulundi and the Natal provincial council should immediately set up joint committees dealing with such matters as health, transportation and communications, water and conservation, and so on. Indians and Coloureds should also be represented on these committees.

'If these committees can be seen to be working BEFORE the Government imposes its own second-tier government solutions, there is a good chance that such a system of



*Duchesne Grice*

joint control over resources and development in the region will continue.'

Mr. Grice acknowledged, however, that the development decisions made by these committees would inevitably involve the expenditure of money 'At the moment Natal is not allowed to spend money in KwaZulu, and vice versa. What the committees could do as a first step is to orchestrate joint recommendations to central government for the allocation of funds for specific projects to the two separate authorities. But we must clearly understand that when you have a system, in this case joint Natal and KwaZulu committees, which spends or influences the expenditure of money, you have a system which will ultimately become political.'

Ironically, it may well be as a result of the new constitution that a direct appeal for a united Natal/KwaZulu will come.

Pat Poovalingam, national chairman of Solidarity, told me: 'What we will be pushing for is the establishment of a compact committee comprising members from the House of Delegates, the House of Representatives, KwaZulu and the Natal Provincial Council to thrash out a system of joint control. If that committee can come up with an acceptable formula, Natal can speak to the government with one authoritative voice.'

Amichand Rajbansi, South Africa's first Indian cabinet minister, emphasised that all population groups should have an equal say in decision making, and that for Natal/KwaZulu 'a power-sharing structure should be worked out by all parties concerned'.

One need not be a political genius to understand that the single most important factor which will decide the quality of Natal/KwaZulu's future is the manner in which the political aspirations of the 5,5 million Zulu people living in the region are satisfied.

There are, broadly speaking, three ways in which these aspirations can be met. The first is a revolutionary situation leading to one-man-one-vote. The second is some form of negotiated power-sharing with the other major population groups, either at national or regional level. The third – and this still appears to be the government's official separatist policy – is through the full independence of KwaZulu.

I asked Chief Buthelezi why he was adamant that independence was 'completely out of the question'.

'For several reasons,' the Chief replied. 'Our belief is that South Africa is a unitary country and that we are South African citizens. On a purely regional level, how can independence be workable for a so-called country which is comprised of so many separate geographical pieces? It makes no sense. My people and the people of Natal are increasingly interdependent. For this reason, independence and all the necessary consolidation it entails are meaningless to us.'

#### NO CHOICE

Familiar ground; familiar arguments. But was there an anomaly here? I was, after all, speaking to a chief minister of a so-called self-governing state (but not an 'independent' one such as Transkei or Bophuthatswana). Why had Chief Buthelezi been at the head of this sort of state for the past decade if he did not agree with the principle of separate development for which it stood?

'The Zulu people had no choice in the matter,' he said. 'Self-governing status was forced upon them by an act passed in the White parliament. As part of the legitimate power hierarchy in Zulu society, I was asked to take the job of chief minister. Had I not done so, the government would have found a stooge, like Sebe, to do the job for them. Had that happened, we would long ago have been saddled with a completely unworkable independence.'

There are signs, too, that, privately at any rate, central government is no longer looking to KwaZulu's independence with the conviction it once had. Professor Laurie Schlemmer, director of the Centre for Applied Social Sciences in Durban, explains.

'I see one of the most interesting issues of the future as being the tussle between decentralisation and central control,' he said. 'What is happening, through the new constitution, is not a straight process of decentralisation. The responsibility for power is being delegated, but not the power itself.'

'The crucial issues in this country weigh so heavily on central government that one should not expect them to grant autonomy to any areas. They want control; control is security.'

When looking at Natal/KwaZulu in this context, certain facts needed to be grasped, Professor Schlemmer went on. First, the region was growing faster economically than the rest of the country, which meant that more and more national resources were ending up here. Second, the region had the most 'problematic' foreign border situation in the country, surrounded as it was by Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho and Transkei; if there was to be a continuance of insurgency, Natal/KwaZulu would be the point of entry.

'Given these two factors, it seems likely that the government will move away from the idea of complete independence for KwaZulu. The government will want to retain over-riding control.'

On the other hand, KwaZulu would not want to sacrifice any of the autonomy it currently has. This point was endorsed by Chief Buthelezi when I spoke to him.

'Now,' Professor Schlemmer continued, 'out of this situation we may well see a compromise emerging. And the name of this compromise will be, in my view, federation. In practice, this means that KwaZulu as it now exists could be offered some form of direct representation at central government level.'

'It's not difficult to see, though, that if this happened an anomaly would be created. Whites, Indians and Coloureds, not only in Natal but all over the country, will see that Blacks have greater regional autonomy than they have with their metropolitan bodies and so on. And it is at that stage that we'll very likely begin to see some real regional autonomy within a federal structure emerging.'

When I put this theory to Chief Buthelezi, he was non-committal and evasive, so I asked: 'If you reject KwaZulu independence as a way of satisfying the political aspirations of your people, what way would be acceptable to you?'

'I believed — and still do — in one-man-one-vote in a unitary state, Westminster-style. But, because I am for peaceful change, I have been prepared to compromise. I believe that the only possible future for us — given the realities of the present — is a negotiated one.'

'What sort of negotiated future would be acceptable to your people?'

'In spite of the fact that the Buthelezi Commission Report has been ignored so far, I believe that the principles it contains will be a fort in which we will all seek safety one day,' Chief Buthelezi said.

'If some forum for negotiation regarding a common future could be worked out, could we then look towards our future with some optimism?'

'If the forum for negotiation was workable, most definitely,' Chief Buthelezi said.

It is ironical that although the necessity of this sort of negotiation seems to loom so large in the emerging picture of our future, the new constitution makes no provision for it. The question of power-sharing with Blacks simply does not arise, in theory at least.

Added to this are all sorts of complicating factors, not the least of which is the growing rift between the region's urban and rural Blacks, or, expressed in purely political terms, the rural-based Inkatha (or exponents of Zulu nationalism) and the trade-union/community-action-group orientations of the cities.

'We are standing on the threshold of a civil war, man,' an urban Zulu said to me recently.

Sombre words. I heard them first after the killings at Zululand University last year. I have heard similar words since, as the animosity and violence between urban and rural Zulus has continued to seethe not far below the surface. It is not enough to say that the conflict is between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front. It is more accurately between the simple notion of Zulu nationalism on the rural side and the more complex preoccupations of urban dwellers on the other, preoccupations which inevitably appear to the Zulu nationalists as disloyalty.

Reverend Mcebisi Xundu, an executive member of the Durban-based Joint Rent Action Committee (Jorac) and Lamontville community leader, expressed it in this way: 'Our actions, and particularly our resistance in Lamontville now to incorporation into KwaZulu, are being interpreted as disloyalty to the Zulu king. We are not disloyal. But our political rights come before Zulu nationalism. Chief Buthelezi has been beguiled into thinking that the people love him more than they love their political rights.' 'What political rights?'

'All Blacks are oppressed under the present system,' he replied. 'Now Ulundi is saying to us (the residents of Lamontville): 'get out of one part of the system and come and join us in our misery in another part.' This is unjust. For a start, the people lose their Section 10 rights. What we should all be doing is fighting the whole system together.'

'There is another aspect to consider. It does seem as if Pretoria is going full-out to get KwaZulu to accept independence. In all likelihood, if Chief Buthelezi goes, independence will result. Then the people (the Urban Blacks in Natal) will find themselves unwilling citizens of a 'foreign' country instead of what they really are, South African city dwellers.

'Urban Blacks must not be intimidated,' he added, 'must not be taken by the scruffs of their necks and forced to accept what they do not want. Intimidation will not break the people's will in their quest for justice.'

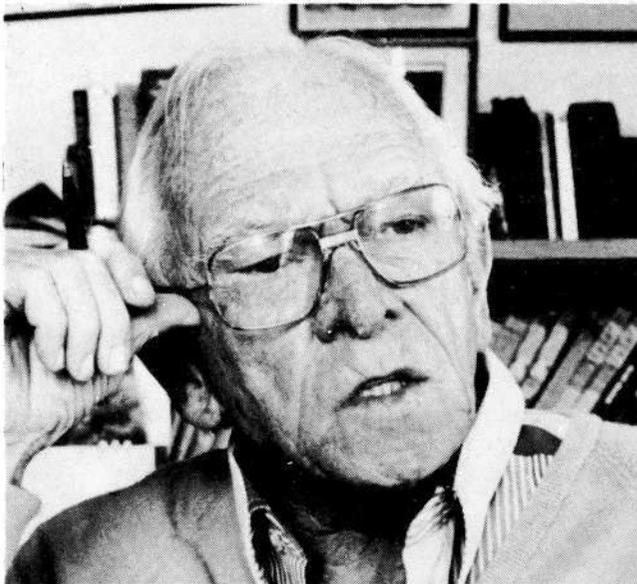
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Intimidation, the people's will, nationalism and justice. Are these the buzz-words of social instability, or are they, in the words of a recent Diakonia News editorial, 'the seeds . . . of a Black civil war — a conflict which could stretch far into South Africa's future — long after apartheid has come to an end?'

### THREATENED

Whatever the answer, one thing is sure. Chief Buthelezi's power-base is being threatened as never before, perhaps simply because his brand of 'radical moderation' has no place in the swiftly polarising political situation in Natal/KwaZulu.

Dr. Alan Paton remarked: 'It seems to me that Chief Buthelezi faces more difficult questions than any other person in South Africa. People who call him a stooge make me very angry. He's not a stooge. He is trying to fulfil an historic and traditional duty. But where is he to go from here?'



*Dr Alan Paton*

Where indeed? By his own admission, independence is out, as is violence and subversion. There seems to be no middle path for him without the co-operation of Whites, and Whites have denied him that. Must he then be doomed to protect himself against those forces, free of the idea of Zulu nationalism, which seems to offer more radical — and attainable — goals?

Listen to Rev. Xundu again: 'Our aim is to get more and more people to be aware of their political rights. This in turn will create severe problems for the state. Unrest will increase; police action will become more harsh; adverse overseas publicity will place pressure on the big multinational companies to disinvest . . . I do not believe that a national convention can be very far away now.'

Dr Farouk Meer, chairman of the Natal Indian Congress expressed a similar view when he told me: 'The forces of apartheid have been systematically compelled to relinquish one bastion of their ideology after another. They are in retreat.'

'Ultimately, there must be an equalisation of forces. Think of it as a type of see-saw on one end of which is positioned the forces of apartheid, on the other the popular will of the people. At the moment, the forces of apartheid are in the

superior position, but, as I have already said, they are in retreat. The popular will is on the offensive. When these two opposing forces equalise, then the government will have to talk to the people.'

Whether we consider these views optimistic or subversive, the grim realities remain. KwaZulu exists as an entity. It is moreover an entity whose leadership is not only becoming more and more politically embattled but which is facing a future of almost certain administrative disintegration.

'When thinking about the future of Natal/KwaZulu,' a prominent Natal economist and agriculturalist told me, 'you need to understand that KwaZulu has been designed to fail. It's part of the master-plan.'

I asked for an explanation.

'Give Blacks some sort of control and then watch them mess it up,' he said. 'It reinforces the belief that Blacks are incompetent.'

'But how has KwaZulu been designed to fail?'

'Look at the way Ulundi must run its various departments, education or health for example. They are obliged to plan, not in terms of the actual needs of communities, but in terms of availability of funds. The effect is to place people, however able, in an impossible straight-jacket. They must fail. On top of this, the Ulundi administration suffers from a 'capacity to spend' problem. Say, for example, the Works Department's budget was suddenly quadrupled. They simply wouldn't be able to spend the money. They haven't got the engineers, the plant, the infrastructure.'

This point is amply demonstrated by the fact that the sprawling greater Durban townships of Umlazi and Kwa-Mashu are served by only one professional engineer, while the Pietermaritzburg City Council employs over 20.

'Given these basic flaws — insufficient money, insufficient manpower and administrative infrastructure — the only possible future for KwaZulu is that the various services the homeland government provides will become more and more shambolic, despite the earnest endeavours of the many capable people involved. Ultimately the whole administration of this so-called state will collapse.'

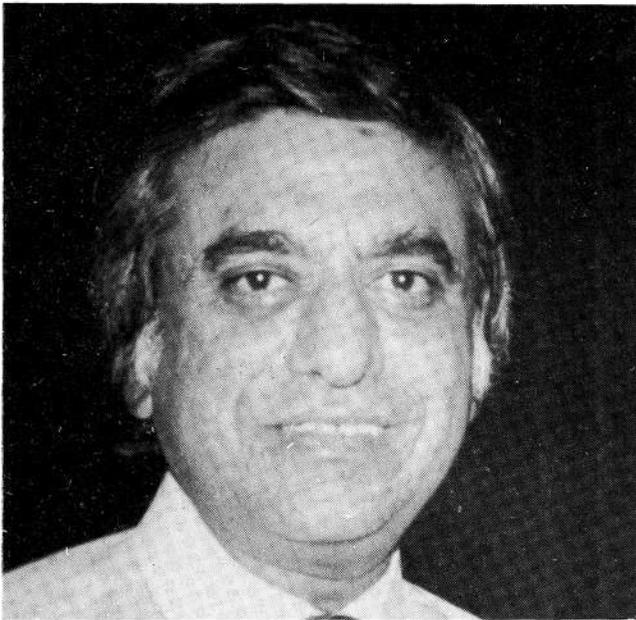
Disturbing words, but there was more to come.

'Other things are going to happen at the same time,' the economist told me. 'Look at it this way. There are several economic classes of citizens in Natal, and the second to lowest (or underprivileged) class is four to six times better off than the lowest. Now put labels on these classes. The second lowest is the urban Black, the lowest the rural Black. It's an obvious consequence that urbanisation is going to take place on a massive scale.'

'As the rural areas degenerate — and I believe that the recent drought has ultimately tipped the balance towards an irremedial situation — the populations of greater Durban, and greater Pietermaritzburg, will grow at a rate of up to 15 percent a year. All the associated problems of housing, education, employment, health and so on will increase at the same rate.'

I asked if there was no chance of a less terrifying future. The economist shrugged his shoulders.

'The economic and administrative imperatives for co-operation between Natal and KwaZulu are overwhelming. Politically, Whites don't want the sort of co-operation



*Professor Hoosen Coovadia*

necessary to improve the outlook. The whole history of White politics is for Whites to isolate themselves from problems and in the process compound them. Who is going to have the guts to take the optimistic road?'

#### **NO SOLUTION**

Yet it must be recorded that many people believe co-operation, and even political union, between KwaZulu and Natal would come nowhere near to solving the real problems which the region faces.

Professor Hoosen Coovadia, Natal regional chairman of the United Democratic Front: 'It is for us incomprehensible to work out a Natal solution without first achieving a South African solution. I really cannot see how a unified Natal/KwaZulu in some sort of federation will be able to solve its own problems.

'Think of just one aspect, health. Colossal sums will have to be spent to ensure minimum standards with regard to clean water, adequate food, housing and sanitation. Where is this money to come from, if not from central funds? South Africa is a unitary state. I think that this idea of a 'local solution' for Natal/KwaZulu is a pipe-dream.'

It is interesting to note that the only common ground between the far left and the National party is this insistence that South Africa is a unitary state and that no 'local' solution is tenable. Their reasons are not dissimilar, and have to do with power bases linked to the economic resources of the country as a whole. Yet there are indications that the Government at any rate might soon begin to move away from the rigidities of its current stance.

Speaking of the possibility of a federal structure for South Africa, in which a combined Natal/KwaZulu could form one component, Dr. Paton remarked to me that the Afrikaner Nationalist might not be so opposed to the idea of federation as he had traditionally been.

'The Afrikaner Nationalist has always stuck to the concept of a unitary South Africa because this has given him his power. Now, with the introduction of the new constitution, his power is less dependent on the unitary idea. In fact, P.W. Botha has been hinting that some form of federal idea might emerge in the future.'

Dr. Paton pointed me to a magazine (*Leadership S.A.*, Spring 1983) in which the Prime Minister was quoted as saying: "... another idea I have been propagating, which is broader in concept than what is generally understood by a 'constellation of states' (is) a confederation of states ... a more regular sort of co-operative commonwealth, if one can call it that.

'This would involve South Africa, the national states, and the independent states. I foresee that we will meet more needs if we succeed in bringing about a higher level of local government for the urban Black ... and I am looking for a formula ... to accommodate them in this federal system. Devolution, decentralisation and regional development are all ideas which must be developed to the full whilst retaining a broad basis of conferring with each other on matters of mutual interest.'

'The seeds of a federal system are clearly there,' Dr. Paton said. 'It is my belief that the only alternative to the federal concept is a path to revolution. The problem of racial fear in a unitary South Africa is almost insoluble.'

#### **NEW MINISTER**

I went to see Mr. Stoffel Botha, new Minister of Education and Culture for Whites, and Natal leader of the National Party, and asked for his views on the future.

He said: 'We are going to have to be prepared to accommodate the political aspirations of Black people, but not at the expense of the minority groups. This does not mean that White and brown people should be in a privileged position. We will simply have to do a great deal of soul searching — and practical searching — to see how these aspirations can be met. The position of the Black man must receive urgent consideration now.'

I asked if he meant urban Blacks only, if the Government still believed that the political aspirations of Blacks, especially rural Blacks, could be satisfied within the 'homelands' policy.

'Yes,' he replied, 'as far as those Black people who live in the national states are concerned, or those whose ties with their regions of origin are such that they still identify with their national states and who exercise their voting rights in those states.

'The position of those Blacks whose ties with their respective national states have grown looser, whether they live in urban or rural areas, is at present being investigated by a top-level Cabinet committee.'

Speaking specifically of KwaZulu, Mr. Botha said that if this self-governing state had not been created, development in the rural areas would not have occurred. Isithebe, for example, would never have developed. 'We must continue with this economic development of KwaZulu.'

'Does this mean that the Government will continue to press for the independence of KwaZulu, and continue with its consolidation programme?'

Mr. Botha replied that it was the policy of the Government to proceed with the process of 'meaningful consolidation' of Black areas 'as a matter of urgency'.

'This also applies to KwaZulu, irrespective of whether the

Zulu people would prefer their present status of a self-governing national state to that of full independence.'

I pointed out that Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's power-base was being threatened as never before, and that there were very real fears of a rural/urban civil war in Natal/KwaZulu. Would not some form of unification of the region, within a federal South Africa, partly resolve the Chief's problems, not to mention the general problems of the region?

'While accepting the economic and geographic intertwining of Natal and KwaZulu, I do not believe that Buthelezi's position would necessarily improve if the two areas were politically unified,' Mr. Botha said.

'And I must point out, too, that I do not believe the Natal/KwaZulu situation to be unique. It is not so very different to other regions in South Africa. Therefore, there can be no expectation of unique solutions.'

Could Mr. Botha define the difference between what the President had called a confederation of states (which implies a more specific relationship than the old 'constellation' idea) and the concept of a federal South Africa? What were his views on the latter, especially in relation to a unified Natal/KwaZulu comprising one federal unit?



*Stoffel Botha*

'A confederation is a league, alliance or body of confederate states. The Republic of South Africa, including a non-independent KwaZulu, would be one of the states to enter into such a confederation,' Mr. Botha explained.

'A federal South Africa, on the other hand, would be one where several states form a unity but remain independent in internal affairs. Clearly, you cannot equate the idea of confederation with a federal state. Moreover, the provinces have never since Union been states in the defined sense of the word and thus do not enjoy the authority to enter as a unit into any federal or confederal relationship.

'Therefore,' Mr. Botha stated, 'the notion of a unified Natal/KwaZulu comprising one federal unit in a federal South Africa is a spurious one.'

I asked Mr. Botha what his general view of the future of South Africa was. 'I would like to say this. While the present government is in power, the future will not be based on racial prejudice, on unreal fears, on everything in our thinking that is outmoded. We'll have to be courageous in terms of the legitimate aspirations of all the people in South Africa, but at the same time we dare not be fools.'

'What will be the practical implications of a future not based on racial prejudice? What will happen to the apartheid laws, laws like the Group Areas Act, the Population Registration Act and the Native Urban Areas Act?'

'Racial prejudice is based on the notion of the superiority or inferiority of one racial group in relation to another,' Mr. Botha replied, 'and has no place in a society which aims at justice and fundamental human rights for all. That certainty does not mean, however, that measures which have been designed to maintain the identities of the various groups in our plural society — such as the laws to which you have referred — are unacceptable in a well-ordered, diversified society,' Mr. Botha said.

Categorical words, which leave little room for doubt. No tampering with the legal corner-stones of apartheid; no cessation of removals for the sake of the 'meaningful consolidation' of KwaZulu; no chance of a unified Natal/KwaZulu in a federal South Africa.

Juxtaposed against the problems already highlighted, such firm expression of official policy casts shadows over the future of our region.

## TWO SOMBRE CERTAINTIES

The two sombre certainties of that future are profound administrative confusion amid increasing social conflict. Each is dependent on the other, yet requires separate analysis.

Take the administrative confusion first.

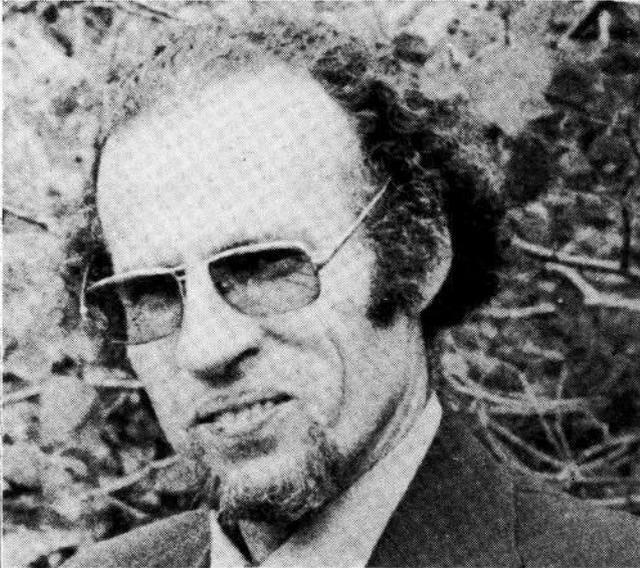
We have already heard from a wide variety of people that some form of joint control of the region is essential. Yet how will this be achieved within the framework of a constitution which makes no provision for Blacks at all, even though a cabinet committee is examining this omission? Black participation at national level will be the next step, say some, others assert that economic and development realities will force a unified administration on the region, but not necessarily coupled to political unity.

It is well known that the provincial councils, as we now know them, will probably be phased out, and replaced by some form of appointed bodies to administer the various regions. Put another way, second tier government will be depoliticised. An inevitable result will be the politicising of the third tier. Party politics will enter local government at both town council and metropolitan levels. Local authorities will not only become political, they will also become racially exclusive.

In practical terms, this will mean that Pietermaritzburg, for example, will comprise three separate local authorities, one White, one Indian and one Coloured, all of which will be represented on a metropolitan body (probably to be called a Regional Services Council).

But here Natal/KwaZulu poses immense problems for the theorists. There is no city in the region which, properly seen as such, does not contain significant portions of KwaZulu. Will KwaZulu, or at least Black city-dwellers, sit on these Regional Services Councils? The Regional Services Councils Bill, currently before a select parliamentary committee, makes no provision for this.

But Mr. Stoffel Botha told me that since the main object of these 'regional councils' would be 'to co-ordinate and rationalise the provision of certain local services, it would



*Professor Lawrence Schlemmer*

be logical that the provision of such services to adjoining Black urban areas should not be excluded from such co-ordination'.

'How the authorities of such Black urban areas can best be included in the co-ordination has not yet been fully determined and is receiving attention from a special cabinet committee.'

Professor Lawrence Schlemmer probably summed up the situation most accurately when he said: "The practicalities of local government will come home to roost. There'll be so much confusion, so much ad-hoc stuff going on to keep systems working that it'll become a case of the tail wagging the dog. People will realise that there'll have to be some constitutional concession to reality."

Many people with whom I spoke envisaged the same process occurring at second-tier government level. There will have to be some constitutional concession to the reality of the inextricable interdependence of Natal and KwaZulu.

We have already seen that the new participation politicians and others will attempt to force this reality on the Government. They talk of working out with Chief Buthelezi 'declarations of intent' and forming committees to decide on the details of a common future so that Natal/KwaZulu can speak to the Government with a united voice, and so on. The practicalities WILL come home to roost. And from an admission of the geographic, infrastructural, economic and administrative oneness of the region will follow strong attempts at some form of common political accommodation for all people living here. These attempts will give rise to the possibility of establishing a federal political system in South Africa.

Of course, these attempts to unify Natal and KwaZulu politically and move towards a federal South Africa will be opposed.

Predictably enough, the opposition will come from the extreme right, and for some considerable time, as we have seen, from the Government itself. Yet such a solution might well already be turning over, although privately, in the minds of top Government strategists.

Opposition will also come from the left. Professor Hoosen Coovadia of the UDF had already told me that 'it is for

us incomprehensible to work out a Natal/KwaZulu solution without a South African solution' and that he believed the idea of a 'local solution' to be 'a pipe dream.'

Whether it is or not, a definite element of our future, simply because of these widely divergent stances on the future, will be deepening social conflict.

### **BITTER STRUGGLES**

'The new constitution,' Alan Paton said, 'has made the possibility of a Buthelezi Commission type of future much more difficult. The new constitution has fragmented the population more profoundly than I have ever before seen in my life-time.'

Will our future be marked with bitter struggles between Blacks and Indians/Coloureds, between Inkatha and the far left, between boycotters and participators? Almost certainly. From one point of view, the picture is of a traditional Black opposition (to White domination) in considerable disarray. This opposition will be replaced by a new under-privileged opposition, an opposition in which the trade union movement and community action groups will play a key role.

It is, moreover, easy to see that the formation of a huge popular base to this opposition, not only in Natal but throughout the country, will be greatly assisted by economic pressures. Listen to the opinion of Mr. Chris Saunders.

'I believe this country is on a disaster course economically. We are paying now for all the problems and mistakes made over the last 35 years by men like Strydom, Verwoerd and Vorster. The economic expectations created by the Government are simply not being met, and this will give rise to a polarisation of political opinion. The extreme right will use economic arguments for a return to full apartheid; the left will use the same arguments to try to bring about some form of socialism. In the short term, the problem is undoubtedly related to the falling gold price and the weakness of the rand. In the long term, we are paying, very simply, for the apartheid system.'

It is difficult to decide what impact the new tricameral parliament will have on this process. If many participation politicians are to be believed, a sustained assault on key apartheid legislation can be expected. Of course the inten-



*Chris Saunders*

sity of the assault will depend on the quality and resolve of the people elected. The Government's determination to press ahead with the tricameral system will give the new parliamentarians a clout which, to judge by the percentage polls, they do not really merit. Many people believe, however, that the real quality has remained outside of the new system, and that the activities of the houses of Delegates and Representatives will quickly degenerate to jockeying for power and squabbles about 'own affairs'.

But what if the new constitution fails, if it is destroyed from without by the boycott politicians, or from within either by an excess of pressure or a lack of it? Some say that this will lead to the calling of a national convention; others that it would spell the end of National Party rule and the coming to power of the extreme right; and yet others that the result could well be a military take-over.

The future of Natal/KwaZulu, and of the country of which it forms a part, is a sombre vista full of impasses, of con-

fusion and potential conflict, at the end of which is the shadow either of full-scale confrontation or some form of co-operation. The shadow is too far away to identify.

Whatever the shadow turns out to be, apartheid and the White domination it has so successfully supported will be swept away. On a purely regional level, it is safe to say that if this province does not attempt to take some form of initiative now (now that the whole question of second tier government is in the melting pot), if it does not come to some definite idea of what its future should be and an equally definite idea of how to achieve such a future, the power to decide its own fate, never considerable since Union in 1910, will disappear altogether.

Our future will be shaped, not in Pietermaritzburg, or in Durban, or in Ulundi, but in some remote corridors of power, corridors which have in the past all too clearly demonstrated an insensitivity to the complexities of this unique region. □

by JILL NATTRASS

## RURAL POVERTY IN KWAZULU

South Africa boasts that in general she is not only able to feed herself but is also a member of that elite band of nations who are able to export food to those countries whose agriculture cannot support their people. Yet despite this proud (and true) claim, poverty continues to stalk almost unchecked in South Africa's countryside.

White farms prosper, white farmers enjoy exceptionally high standards of living. Black farming families cannot grow sufficient to support themselves and, if they are to survive, must send their menfolk to seek work in the towns.

Why is this so? Why also is it that in the face of exceptional economic progress in one of the best endowed countries in the world this has remained so?

Although the rate of economic development in South Africa during the twentieth century has been high and, indeed, the yearly growth rate of the money value of Gross Domestic Product over the past fifty-year period averaged 8 percent, the spatial and racial aspects of this change in economic activity was extremely uneven. And

further, the spatial patterns of development bore little relationship to the historical patterns of population distribution.

In most economies, such an imbalance in economic resources would have been largely corrected by massive levels of labour migration. In South Africa, however, the initial gulf that existed between the population cultures retarded migration in the early stages of industrialisation. As the culture gap narrowed, so it was replaced by increasing levels of State controls over black population movements. These legal controls, coupled with the spatially uneven development patterns, have had the effect of chaining large numbers of people, almost all of whom are Africans, to the wheel of rural poverty.

### KWAZULU

KwaZulu is one of the victims of this history. In 1980 the value of goods and services produced within KwaZulu per head of the population resident there was R124, whereas that for South Africa as a whole (including the TBVC countries) was R1 950.