

71-10

~~Secret~~
Noform

466

F(b)(1)
F(b)(3)
(S)

Africa Review

Articles

South Africa: Inkatha Retools
for the 1990s

KwaZulu homeland Chief Minister Gatsha Buthelezi, anxious to rally popular support and secure his place as a major player in negotiations to determine South Africa's future political structure, launched the Inkatha Freedom Party last month. The party is likely to attract a modest number of new followers at best, but will afford Buthelezi an opportunity to seek tactical alliances with other groups. Most importantly, Buthelezi wants to be seen as operating on an equal footing with the unbanned African National Congress (ANC).

Buthelezi Adjusts Strategy

Buthelezi has used Inkatha over the years to provide a power base distinct from his formal position as a homeland leader. Beginning in the mid-1970s, he attempted to translate his tribal support—stemming from his role as a traditional Zulu chief—into political strength by resurrecting Inkatha, then a dormant Zulu cultural liberation movement. By July 1989 Inkatha claimed a membership of 1.7 million. Few accept this figure as a true indication of the group's strength in light of allegations that an Inkatha membership card is a prerequisite for employment in KwaZulu as well as for allocation of homesites in certain townships.

Although difficult to verify, press accounts cite a drop in Inkatha's support. It is strongest among older, more traditional Zulus in rural areas, and reportedly has slipped in popularity among younger, urbanized Zulus in Durban and Johannesburg, largely in favor of the ANC. President de Klerk's unbanning of the ANC in February 1990 has accelerated competition for supporters between the two groups and fueled violence.

Following Nelson Mandela's release from prison in February, unrest escalated dramatically in southern Natal, where fighting has persisted for more than four years and resulted in more than 3,000 deaths. Longstanding animosity frustrated early hopes that Mandela might broker an agreement to stop the violence. Buthelezi is determined to protect his power base from ANC efforts to marginalize Inkatha, and appears to have gone on the offensive to attack ANC strongholds outside of Natal, most recently in Transvaal Province. The ANC, seeking inroads among Zulus, has set up offices in Natal. Outraged by the large numbers of casualties among its supporters, the ANC has accused the KwaZulu police of collusion with Inkatha, called for revoking Buthelezi's police powers, and demanded the dissolution of KwaZulu. In our view, only an agreement between Buthelezi and Mandela—which could be difficult to sell at the grassroots level—could reduce the level of violence.

Buthelezi may hope to compensate for his ebbing support by forming a political party open to multiracial membership. Although he claims that Inkatha is a national liberation movement that transcends tribal lines, it has long been regarded as an almost exclusively Zulu group. Nonetheless, Inkatha's advocacy of a nonracial, multiparty democracy, a free market, and redistribution of wealth may attract a modest number of new members.

92010

~~Secret~~

Looking for Allies

Prior to the official launching of the new party, Inkatha officials extended an invitation to other political groups that share common ground with them to join in an alliance in preparation for future democratic elections. Buthelezi has reportedly told the press that in light of Pretoria's reforms, Inkatha could conceivably form an alliance with the ruling National Party. Indeed, both the National Party and the proreform Democratic Party sent delegations to the launching of the Inkatha Freedom Party, presumably to lend support for Inkatha's move and emphasize their support for a future role for Buthelezi in South African politics. [REDACTED]

Seeking a Chair at the Table

Buthelezi has pledged that Inkatha will be a powerful force at the negotiating table despite ANC dominance of initial discussions, and strongly disputes what he sees as the ANC's attempt to monopolize political power. By virtue of his position as the prime voice for the nation's largest ethnic group—7 million Zulus—Buthelezi undoubtedly will play an important role in future constitutional negotiations. Moreover, he may be counting on his popularity with some whites to enhance his position as a negotiator. In the interim, however, Buthelezi undoubtedly feels overshadowed by recent high-profile meetings between the ANC and the government, and is clearly anxious to remind his fellow South Africans of his importance. He probably believes the festive launch of his political party and plans to hold

a special conference in December—shortly before a major ANC conference—will help him to recapture the limelight. [REDACTED]

Outlook

The Inkatha Freedom Party is likely to resemble the old Inkatha in substance if not form. The new party will undoubtedly pick up some support, but its popularity will probably still be confined largely to Zulus in KwaZulu and Natal Province. White support, even in small numbers, will bolster Buthelezi's position. As the party moves farther afield to recruit new members, the potential for clashes with ANC supporters outside of Natal will increase. [REDACTED]

Inkatha's moderate positions on a future political and economic system suggest a natural alliance with the Nationalists during negotiations and beyond. National Party leaders have begun exploring the notion of alliances across racial lines, but are likely to shun formal, public commitments early in the negotiating process. Moreover, even over the longer term, the racial dynamic of the negotiations and Buthelezi's personal ambitions are likely to make a solid front problematic. [REDACTED]

~~Secret~~

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: AUG 2000