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HE BUSDAY, THURSDI\Y 10 FEBRUARY

Proposal to change Actfo
extend election deadline!

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A PROPOSAL that the Electoral
Act be changed to extend the
deadline for parties to register is
being mooted in government cir-
cles as one of several attempts to

prevent the door being shut on

negotiations with the Freedom
Alliance.

This follows the firm refusal by
Inkatha Freedom Party leader Man-
gosuthu Buthelezi and the Kwazulu
legislative assembly caucus to regis-
ter under the constitution as it now
stands.

The Freedom Alliance approached
government yesterday and called on
it to come up with a further proposal
to take negotiations forward, soften-
ing the tone of its statements made
after its leaders met on Tuesday.

Alliance chairman Rowan Cronje
said it was not shutting the door on
further talks and he would be con-
tacting the ANC to convey the full
tenor and official position of the alli-

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ance leaders.

The ANC's pn
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e ruled out despite
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idea of shifting the
loaded as one mea-
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tatha has a central
lg on Saturday, the
ecide on its stance.
18 not yet been put
; proposal to any of
the other partie: .nd sources stressed
this option could e fraught with dif-
ficulties. The I ependent Electoral
Commission wet 4 have to accept the

plap, and a series of other date prob-
lems would be created. { oae
And there is no guarantee such a
move would facilitate agreement
with the alliance. ;

As it stands, the Freedom Alllance
is facing its own difficulties, with the
possibility that the CP or the Afri-
kaner Volksfront will break ranks
and register as a2 tactical rueasure,
withdrawing later if negotiations fail
to meet their demands. |

Cronje said the alliance was purely
a negotiating front and parties would
each decide what to do to meet the
requirements of their constituencies.

Another initlative to break the
deadlock is a mesting between a Sa-
cob delegation, headed by its presi-
dent Cedric Savage, and Buthelezi in
Ulundi today. i

Constitutional Development Minis-
ter Roelf Meyer was also launching
an initiative to enter into discussions
with parties in the alllance.

Report by 9 Paddockx. TWL, 11 Disgonsl Sv, UMb,

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ght may boycott

South Africa poll

Pretoria, Wednesday

South Africaâ\200\231s right wing has edged closer to a showdown over the wansidon to majority rule, saying it will probably boycott all-race electdons in April.

And the king of the Zulus has demanded that the South African Government cede him a province of eight million people to rule as a sovereign monarchy.

According to Zulu and Govern-ment officials, King Goodwill Zwelithini has told South African

reÃ©sident F.W. de Klerk that he rejzcts South Africaâ\200\231s new Consti-tution. will not abide by the results of the countryâ\200\231s first free elections in April, and intends to secede with all the territory that the British took from his fore-bears.

Conservative black and white groups in the Freedom Alliance said yesterday that they could compromise no further on their demands for ethnic self-deter-mination. â\200\234We've come to the ! conclusion ... there is really no sense in carrying on with the ne-gotadon process,â\200\235 the Freedom Alliance chairman, Mr Rowan Cronje, told reporters after a meetng of zlliance leaders.

The, two main members of the alliante â\200\224 Chief Mangosuthu Butheleziâ\200\231s Inkatha Freedom Par-ty and, the white separatist Afrika-

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King Goodwill Zwelithini:
rejects the Constitution.

ner People's Front have frequently warned of civil war if their demands are not met.

Mr Cronje, saying it was unlikely that the alliance would take part in the elections on 27 April, added that members would now study what alternatives they had to taking part in negotiations.

He said talks with the African National Congress and the Government had reached bottom on the issue of whether the constituent assembly elected in April should have a free hand in writing a final constitution.

Mr Cronje said the ANC, which according to opinion polls could achieve a big enough majority in April to write the constitution by itself, refused to bind the constituent assembly to any accords reached with the alliance now. This made discussion of other issues irrelevant, Mr Cronje said.

The chief Government negotiator, Mr Roelf Meyer, said the alliance was making "a big mistake!". It has won important concessions from the Government and the ANC

s ; |
In recent weeks, he said. .

Mr Meyer and an ANC spokesman, Mr Carl Niehaus, said their doors were open for further talks and Mr Cronje also said the alliance was not slamming the door.

ANC and right-wing leaders have spoken in recent weeks of the possibility that their differences will lead to violence.

There is almost no chance the Zulu king's demand will be accommodated, but it has cast an unexpected new shadow over the country's hopes for peaceful, all-inclusive elections in April.

While some Government officials suspect a Machiavellian bargaining manoeuvre, political allies insist that the king is serious and if not satisfied, the Zulu are

of South Africa face civil war.

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Alliance edges nearer
S Africa poll boycott

By ANTON FERREIRA in Pretoria

SOUTH Africaâ\200\231s right wing
has edged closer to a show-
down over transition to ma-
jority rule, saying it would
probably boycott all-race elec-
tions in April.

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The two main members of
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ANC spokesman Mr Cassim

Nielsen said it was regretta-
ble the alliance believed there
was no point in more talks but
the

would not

allow itself to be blackmailed; .
The Government's chief ne-

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major concessions from the
Government and the ANC in
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Both Mr Meyer and Mr Nie-
lsen said that as far as they
were concerned the door was
open for further talks, and Mr
Cronje said the i-
dea of not slamming the door.

AVF head General Const-
and Viljoen said limited vio-
lence might be needed to
achieve white self-rule, and
neo-Nazi leader Mr Eugene
Terreblanche said at the
weekend South Africa would
look like Guy Fawkes night if
whites did not get their own

Rolf Meyer, said

v
Reuters

Was making a point :
It had won

alliance was '

A Kafkaesque dialogue ensues: Mr. Molefe is told he has no permission for the rally. He says he has come to get it. That has to go through internal affairs. So can he call the man responsible for internal affairs? The police say they don't have his number. After a few more minutes, Capt. Cyril Mosupye says: "There's no need to prolong this. The issue is short and precise: You don't have permission to hold this meeting. You don't have any other option but to pack your things and go."

Mr. Molefe complies to avoid a blood-bath. But as he crosses the border between Bophuthatswana and South Africa a mere signpost a final scene drives home how out of step Bophuthatswana is with the country that spawned it: The man who was prevented from bringing the message of black liberation to a black-ruled country stops to share a barbecue with white South

African soldiers, long bitter foes of the .

ANC, who man the border post.

On a map, Bophuthatswana doesn't

make sense. The land consists of six separate enclaves within South Africa, so

that it's often impossible to know which '

country one is in. "At night I walk my dog in Bophuthatswana and go to bed in South Africa," says Alwyn Viljoen, a government spokesman. The country's appearance as a fantasyland is enhanced by the extravagant Lost City complex in Sun City, which features a lagoon with artificial waves, a golf course with crocodiles in the hazards and an area that trembles in a simulated earthquake.

But Bophuthatswana can point to real achievements that make it the only independent homeland that isn't an economic wreck. Its mines produce nearly a third of the world's platinum, its industrial zone attracts multinationals like Germany's Bayerische Motoren Werke AG, and the hotels and casinos of South African leisure giant Sun International Hotels Ltd. bring in tourism and tax revenue. Locally generated revenue provides about 80% of its budget, and the country claims its growth rate outpaces much of Africa's.

Bophuthatswana's high-school graduation rate is nearly double South Africa's, and Mmabatho's manpower center attracts students from South Africa seeking to acquire marketable technical skills. The country has achieved a degree of racial

harmony and social peace that strikes

visitors from South Africa. And then thereâ\200\231s Mmabatho itself, a showcase capital that boasts a variety of gleaming structures, including a 60,000-seat stadium and a recording studio considered one of the best in the world.

â\200\234â\200\230Our people continue to enjoy a standard of living their counterparts in South Africa can only marvel at,â\200\235 Mr. Mangope boasted recently. It is to preserve this that he wants Bop to remain independent or retain control of the regionâ\200\231s wealth.

But critics say Bopâ\200\231s tranquility is achieved through constant harassment of opponents and laws that can turn a meeting between two people into an â\200\234illegal gathering.â\200\235 In the last election, Mr. Mangope was unopposed. His claims of uplifting the Tswana people are contradicted by the fact that the buck usually stops at a white desk. Whites hold top managerial posts in virtually all state companies, and the head of the army is South African.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 193Â¢ A13

Unemployment outside the civil service

i is massive, and those employed often work

in South Africa. And then, does Mmabatho really need a stadium th:at can seat half its population? Or an â\200\234internationalâ\200\231 airport that can take jets? â\200\230â\200\230Bophuthatswanaâ\200\231s

| case is full of holes,â\200\235 asks Francine de

Clercq, a professor at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, who has written on Bophuthatswana.

Indeed, the town of Bodibe, only 18

| miles outside of Mmabatho, reveals a

different Bophuthatswana. Bodibe is a collection of brick and adobe houses without running water, electricity or phones. A man named Joseph, who declines to give

i his last name, lives in a tiny house
' with his wife and four children. He sleeps
' on the one bed with two of the children; the

other two sleep on the floor with his wife. He has been unemployed since 1992, when he gave up a construction job in South Africa because the pay was too low to

justify the long commute, leaving at 5:30 a.m.

Joseph laughs when asked whether Bophuthatswana offers him better oppor-

tunities than South Africa. *â\200\234What opportu-

nities?â\200\235â\200\235 he asks. â\200\234â\200\230Look for yourself. It's a mess.â\200\235

At a neighboring house, a group of 20 people sit down to discuss their lives. Of the 20, three have jobsâ\200\224all in South Africa. â\200\234When Mangope says we're independent and well off, heâ\200\231s referring to himself and his friends,â\200\235 says one. All those interviewed say they wanted to rejoin South Africa, but complain of harassment. As their visitors leave, police cars are seen entering the village.

Many believe Mr. Mangope eventually will have to give in because the change in South Africaâ\200\231s government will deprive him of his only ally - an ally whose army restored him to power in 1988 when he was briefly toppled in a coup. Already, South Africaâ\200\231s Transitional Executive Council, a multiracial advisory body, is tightening the screws, suspending a \$63.5 million loan by the South African Development Bank to Bophuthatswana until free political activity is allowed. E

If that is not enough, ANC and government officials say South Africa could cut off power and water and suspend financial transfers. Some officials of Bophuthatswana speak of retaliating by withholding supplies from the mines, but Finance

' Minister Martin van den Berg, 'a South

African citizen, admits: â\200\234If they're willing to cut electricity, terminate the customs union and 10 other steps I can think of, they could bring Bophuthatswana to its knees economically and financially within six months.â\200\235

And even if Mr. Mangopeâ\200\231s defiance is simply a negotiating ploy to obtain greater regional powers in the hopes of continuing to play a role within South Africa, that move could backfire, too. South African polls show the ANC could get 74% of the vote in the region that would swallow Bophuthatswana. Jacob Buti Malefye, a 46-year-old resident of the town of Phokeng, explains why: *â\200\230I woke up one morning and without moving anywhere, I was told I was in Bophuthatswana and had a new president,â\200\231â\200\235 he says. â\200\234I want to wake up one morning and be back in my own country.â\200\235

Nowhere Land

An Apartheid Creation,

Tribal â\200\230Nationâ\200\231 Wants
To Remain on the Map

Refusal by Bophuthatswana

To Rejoin South Africa;

Threatens April Election
ANC Says Tanks May Roll

By THOoMAS KAMM
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

MMABATHO, South Africa â\200\224 Bop Airâ\200\231s
motto could be: The airline thatâ\200\231s neither
here nor there.

Bophuthatswanaâ\200\231s flag carrier can't fly
international routes because the world
doesnâ\200\231t recognize its home country, saying
it is part of South Africa. And Bop Air canâ\200\231t
fly domestic routes within South Africa be-
cause it is considered a foreign airline.
That leaves it flying only between South
Africa and Bophuthatswana.

â\200\234This makes our life extremely diffi-
cult,â\200\235 complains finance manager Glenn
Orsmond. â\200\230â\200\230We're squeezed on all sides.â\200\235

Bop Airâ\200\231s predicament goes to the heart
of a question that is bedeviling South
Africaâ\200\231s historic transition to black rule:
Where does Bophuthatswana fit in the
nascent multiracial South Africa?

To many, the demise of apartheid has
stripped the nominally independent black

tribal homeland, which is recognized only

by South Africa, of its raison dâ\200\231etre â\200\224 if it
ever had one. Bophuthatswana â\200\224 pro-
nounced Bop-pooh-tats-wana but com-
monly called Bop--should be bopped off the

world map, its detractors say. â\200\230â\200\234These are |

the very last days of Bophuthatswana,â\200\235

says Thaba Seboka, a law professor at the |

University of Bophuthatswana. â\200\234If nothing
dramatic happens, its fate is sealed: Itâ\200\231s
bye bye Bop.â\200\235

â\200\230Ruled by Our Peopleâ\200\231

But drama there is: Bophuthatswana's autocratic president, Lucas Mangope, is resisting reincorporation, defying not only South Africa's likely future president, Nelson Mandela, but also, in all likelihood, a majority of his own 2.3 million citizens. We are not going to willingly revert to a system where once again we will be oppressed and deprived by a far-away government, the only difference this time

around being the color of the skin of the !

people at the top, Mr. Mangope, who has ruled the homeland since its 1977 independence, said recently. We want to be ruled by our own people, for our own people.

As Suvuth Africa prepares for its first democratic elections April 26 to April 28, this challenge highlights how the dismantling of apartheid has unleashed a complex power struggle between ethnic groups that was long obscured by the overriding issue of race.

Joining Bophuthatswana in resisting South Africa's new constitution, the king of the Zulu tribe is reported to want to secede from South Africa, and white supremacists are threatening total war if they

BoTn:tflatswana
(6 enclaves)

SOUTH

involving the government, the African National Congress and the unhappy parties of the new South Africa broke down Tuesday and are given little chance of resuming before parties are to register for the ballot on Saturday.

While unlikely to derail the elections themselves, the clash raises serious doubts over how free the ballot will be and threatens to turn what began as a negotiated revolution into a messy, violent affair.

It would be the ultimate irony of apartheid that a homeland ostensibly created to give blacks the rights they were denied in South Africa could be the spoiler in the country's transition to black rule. But by insisting on continued independence or at the very least, broad powers within a federal South Africa, Mr. Mangope is on a confrontation course that could turn what was the playground of apartheid, where whites flocked to taste the domestically

forbidden fruits of gambling and pornography, into a battleground of the new South Africa. If the only option left to us is to roll in the tanks, then that is what we would do,â Matthew Phosa, the ANC's legal adviser, said recently.

Make-Believe Nations

Bophuthatswana is one of the 10 black tribal homelands created by apartheid's architects in the heyday of white supremacy. In a form of ethnic cleansing, South Africa sought to create a white majority by stripping blacks of their South African citizenship, rights and benefits and making them citizens of make-believe nations created for them.

Through forced removals, gerrymandering and the redrawing of borders, about 18 million of South Africa's 28 million blacks were parked on these reservations, which represented barely 15% of South Africa's territory. Now, as apartheid goes, many feel the homelands should go, too. Their citizens recently regained South African citizenship, and plans have been

Please Turn to Page A15, Column 4

-@F, AS seems increasingly likely, an inclusive constitutional settlement can not be reached and the three components of

the Freedom Alliance â\200\224 Inkatha, the CP/Afrikaner Volksfront and

Bophuthatswana â\200\224 resolve to

boycott the election, the question that arises is: What then?

Bophuthatswana appears to be the easiest â\200\234problemâ\200\235 to resolve, but even then it is not simple. The homeland governmentâ\200\231s position as a key negotiating partner is curious. Unlike its alliance allies which have a measurable base of support, polls consistently fail to register support for President Lucas Mangopeâ\200\231s party equivalent to the 0,25% necessary to win a single parliamen seat.

In that light, the Bophuthatswana governmentâ\200\231s vigorous struggle for enhanced and protected regional powers, while perhaps inherently worthy, is fairly meaningless given that it would not be represented at all in a national legislature and

. would have minimal representation

in the relevant regional ones.

It does, however, have a full-scale administration including security forces. And as has been demonstrated during ANC attempts to elec-

~ tioneer in Bophuthatswana, those

forces are able to to block those activities and, presumably, voting, in April. Unless the administration simply concedes defeat, overcoming those problems could be a complicated, even bloody, exercise.

The Inkatha/KwaZulu situation is far more complex, though. As a poorer region, and a self-governing -rather than an independent homeland, KwaZuluâ\200\231s;ghysical resources are more limited than Bophuthatswanaâ\200\231s. Inkatha Freedom Party leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi, according to the latest polls, can claim the support of about 23% of the voters of KwaZulu/Natal â\200\224 or less than 5% of the national total.

However, this is a solid constituent-
câ¥, made more potent by the factor
of Zulu nationalism which he ex-
ploits, not least by his close identifi-
cation with Zulu king Goodwill Zwe-
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{_Zwelithini is
now the kingpin
in talks impasse

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ALAN FINE

lithini. Nevertheless, his support is
significantly down on earlier polls,
which gave him real hope of control-
ling Natal. An election which con-
firms the latest polls may be too

g:gaâ\200\230t a humiliation for Buthelezi to.

r, and probably explains his re-
sistance to any deal.

His problems, though, may in-
crease. Centre for Policy Studies di-
rector Steven Friedman says there is
talk out of Natal that the NP and
ANCâ\200\231s patient work with Zwelithini
may yet bear fruit.

Parallel to the inconclusive trilat-
eral talks, the two parties, and Presi-
dent FW de Klerk in particular,
have been holding intensive discus-
sions with the king, and some say the
kingâ\200\231s advisers are suggesting that
he accept a deal on offer which for-
malises his status and that of his
kingdom at a level no worse than
exists now.

As important, it would guarantee
the income he currently receives

from the KwaZulu administration â\200\224

funds which originate in the central treasury but which would in future be channelled through the new Kwa-Zulu/Natal region established by the new constitution and dominated, in

- Inkatha's absence, by the ANC.

- Would Zwelithini forsake Buthelezi? It may seem unlikely. But the

OO ZWELITHINI

air's relationship has not always been a happy one. In the 1970s it was particularly tense when Buthelezi accused the king of using state funds

to establish an opposition party to Inkatha. And in December two incidents hinted at tension between

them. First, Zwelithini criticised the -

alliance's withdrawal from talks, and then he appeared to set himself up for a clash with Buthelezi over the appointments of certain chiefs.

Other incidents were quietly smoothed over, but doubts about the relationship remain. And the NP/ANC offer to the king may just be sufficient to wean him away from Buthelezi. This would be close to a death blow to the Inkatha leader who has depended on ethnic politics to maintain his position.

And that may not be the end of Buthelezi's problems, Friedman surmises. A further drain on his support base would occur if those lieutenants, like Joe Matthews and Ben Ngubane, who have consistently fought within Inkatha-for a constitutional settlement, then felt sufficiently confident to contest the election under another banner. The, would be joined by most of the Dg and NP MPs and others who deserted their parties in the hope of fighting the election in Inkatha colours.

The polls point to a drop in Inkatha's national support of three to five percentage points in the past year, coinciding with the party's

toughening negotiating stance. It is feasible that those votes, plus some

- which a participating Inkatha would

otherwise receive, would go to those:
candidates.

And the party for which they
would stand? There is no real evi-
dence so far. But Friedman suggests
that the new African Christian
Democratic Party, which currently
seems merely a new project by ele-
ments of the defunct Afrikaner
Volksunie and assorted conservative
black politicians, may provide a
home for them. 7

And they may have natural allies
among the more moderate sections
of the white right wing â\200\224 which has
suffered, like Inkatha, a pattern of
lost electoral support in the period. -

A constitutional settlement with
the neo-Nazi right is, and rrobably
always has been, impossible. Their
guerilla war has begun, as shown by
the rash of bombings. Countering it is
a law and order function.

What Friedman calls the â\200\234concili-
atory rightâ\200\235 â\200\224 which includes Gen
Constand Viljoen and parts of the
Afrikaner Volksfront â\200\224 is probably
not yet ready for a deal. Althou,
there were claims that Viljoen and
some of his colleagues were close to
a settlement with the ANC, involvixÃ@lgl
a new constitutional principle which =
fudged until later the issue of a volk-:
staat, it seems he cannot sell a stra-:

. tegic compromise to the more mili-

tant and impatient Volksfront:
constituents. rejection at a rally:*
11 days ago is evidence of that.

A deal with Viljoen and his allies
may have to wait until some time in
the post-election future, until (and if)
sufficient numbers of their constitu-
ents discover that life under an ANC
government, while not ideal, is toler-
able â\200\224 allowing them to reduce their.
sights from a full-scale volkstaat to
something less.

Painting scenarios about SAâ\200\231s
medium-term future is a tricky,
probably foolish, task. The only cer-
tainty, perhaps, is uncertainty. But
while the country faces a further
period of uncertainty and possibly
instability, it need not necessarily be
unmanageable.

L

ILL we, five or 10 years

from now, look back on

the events of the past few

weeks in SA and say:

That was when it all started?

That was when SA's dream of a stable, prosperous, multiracial nation turned to ethnic nightmare? Every South African, every international investor, every foreign government everyone with a constructive interest in the African continent must hope that scenario is mere hysterical fantasy. -

Many believe it is: they argue that the far right's support is minimal and the strength of the military overwhelming; that SA's security forces can crush violent dissent from the black and white right, which have vowed to resist April's elections, so casting doubts over whether a poll can be conducted in all parts of SA.

But if no one can quite believe that SA could join the list of ethnic horror stories of our time, the country's politicians have yet to demonstrate the will to avert such an outcome.

The collapse of talks between government, the ANC and the Freedom Alliance illustrates a spectacular failure of political will on all sides. A deal was within reach which

might have brought at least a large

proportion of the white far right and the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party into elections, consolidating the centre and leaving only the lunatic fringes in violent opposition. But in the end, SA's politicians failed to reach out and take it.

It is easy to hear most of the blame on Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi: he shouts at journalists, insults ambassadors, exasperates businessmen and, in the words of political columnist Ken Owen, 'has alienated his democratic friends, here and abroad, by petulant quarrels. . . surrounded himself with eccentric foreigners and sycophants

. (and) drifted into shabby alli-

ances with bantustan leaders and
right-wing racistsâ\200\235 â\200\224 among them

AWB leader Eugene Terreâ\200\231Blanche. "

Buthelezi is his own worst enemy.
But if his behaviour is outrageous,

i_â\200\230:si,' SIAEES

Dy

democracy

_Politicians lack
the will to make

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/Lâ\200\231; (o9 "â\200\2317â\200\230, hior

succeed

PATTI WALDMEIR

his demands for constitutional
change are not. One can question his

motives, his reliability as a negotia-

tor, his willingness to contest free
elections. But his basic constitution-
al demand is far from unreasonable:
he wants a federal SA, arguing that
such a model would best cater for
one of most ethnically fragmented
societies on earth.

No issue is so central to SA's
future: will the political system
guarantee ethnic minorities real

. power, or relegate them to the role

of permanent, impotent opposition?
Every democracy is, in some sense,
the dictatorship of the majority. But
can SA democracy survive if the con-
stitution creates permanent losers
who can never hope to rule? Can it
prosper if a significant minority of
the electorate rejects the legitimacy
of the constitution?

Federalism would offer regional
minorities, such as the Zulus, a
chance to secure a political base, and
use it to keep the majority â\200\224 ruling

from the centre â\200\224 in check. But the ANC is suspicious of this argument: for its goal has always been to create a colour-blind SA where ethnicity is subsumed in a single nationhood. (Afrikaner Volksfront leader Gen Constand Viljoen mocks this, saying nations cannot be built â\200\234like {ou make instant coffee: a little black, a

little white, a little bit of coloured. ...â\200\235)

Still, the ANC seems willing to accept the need to accommodate Afrikaner ethnicity. For though it is easy to dismiss the white far right as neo-fascist racists, the ANC accepts that some ordinary, decent Afrikaners also want a homeland. Indeed, though the deal has since fallen through, the ANC agreed in principle to establish such a volkstaat after the elections, with a separate Afrikaner chamber in Parliament to work out the details. But when it comes to assuaging Zulu fears of domination, the ANC draws the line. It believes Buthelezi's only goal in arguing for federalism is to perpetuate his power in a tribal state called KwaZulu,

While it is prepared to allow

Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini to re-

â\200\230main a symbolic monarch under Na-

tal's new constitution, it refuses Buthelezi the â\200\234strong provincial powers he demands. It is almost as though the ANC accepts that whites may fear blacks â\200\224 but that blacks may not fear other blacks. Yet the history of African decolonisation suggests the highest price is usually

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paid by Africans.

So, after two-and-a-half years of stop-start constitutional negotiations, the gulf between the right wing and the ANC remains as wide as ever. The ANC believes it needs a strong central state to carry out its sacred charge: to empower blacks economically, after centuries of deprivation. And the right wants regional autonomy to protect itself if the ANC uses that central power to oppress rather than to uplift.

et even some ANC officials believe the party did not try hard enough to accommodate the Freedom Alliance. It could have conceded-

ed marginally greater powers to regions, including limited regional taxation, and offered to entrench these powers in the final constitution. Such a deal was on the table, agreed between the Freedom Alliance and government last year, but the ANC rejected it. In the end, the ANC made a purely tactical offer: two ballots, but nothing on regional powers. It won the tactical battle, but lost the moral high ground.

"I put myself 10 years down the road and I say: should we have been so stubborn on this and that? Was it worth it?" asks one ANC official.

His concern is echoed by a government negotiator: "Is this ANC really prepared to accept a civil war to

ensure central government has overriding powers on health policy? Even now, it is not too late to avert this grim prospect. Parliament could retroactively extend the election registration deadline. Creative solutions could be found to allow last-minute participation, but only if parties find the will to reach real agreements, and not just move deadlines. At least all parties say they are still committed to negotiations, and have stopped short of an overt call to violence.

There is a chance that the white far right could yet be persuaded to participate: both the ANC and Afri-

kaner Volksfront tried hard to do a deal, and may yet succeed. But the breach with Inkatha appears permanent. Inkatha negotiator Ben Nkomo accuses the ANC of "sacrificing national unity for power"; it is far from clear that the ANC is willing to reverse that order of preference.

Either way, April's elections will almost certainly go ahead, however violently the right resists. Government officials vow that they will be "ruthless" in suppressing dissent (with full ANC support). As one government official says: "If the fight is on, then it is on. We will act with full force right at the beginning and wipe them out." But one can be forgiven for wondering whether the right - the Zulu impis and conservative whites with military training and access to commercial explosives from the mines and, possibly, to larger arms from military armouries - can be crushed so easily.

Neither is a majority, even within

their own ethnic group; but each, and especially both together, can cause havoc through sabotage and terrorism, and a sharp increase in serious township violence.

Ngubane warns: "The constitution should reflect the diversity of SA. If it does not, there is every chance that there will be no new SA." Ngubane is almost certainly wrong. The new SA will be born on schedule; but it could prove less stable, prosperous and democratic than seemed possible only months ago. SA's politicians can step back from the brink but first they must find the will to do so.

Financial Times ;

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