

Afrikaner nationalism and making a horse talk

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The Pattern of Politics

By Hermann Giliomee

TWELVE years ago the South African Prime Minister, John Vorster, attempted to persuade Ian Smith of Rhodesia to accept a settlement he had secretly negotiated for Rhodesia.

In return for Rhodesia committing itself to hand over power to blacks in 15 years' time, three or four African states, and possibly Britain as well, would lift sanctions against the beleaguered ex-colony. Ian Smith refused the deal: he insisted on another 30 years of white rule.

Six years later, on the very day Robert Mugabe took office, John Vorster told me how he reasoned with Ian Smith to change his mind. Characteristically, he tried to clinch the argument by quoting some political fiction — "The Fable of the Sultan's Horse".

A sultan had sentenced two men to death, but added: "Anyone who can make my horse talk will be set free." As one of the men was being dragged through the street the next day to be beheaded he saw the other man standing there — free. Frantically the doomed man shouted: "What did you tell the sultan? I said to him it was humanly impossible to make horses talk."

Said the free man: "I told the sultan I can teach horses to talk, but I need a year. And the sultan let me go." He continued, with a glint in his eye: "You know a lot can happen in a year — the horse can perish, the sultan can die, or who knows, perhaps I can even make the damn horse talk."

John Vorster left little doubt that this story was directly applicable to South Africa as well. Here indeed was a story which illuminated the political mind set not only of a John Vorster but of the leadership of Afrikaner nationalism. It captures the way Afrikaner nationalism is living the present and awaiting the political future.

Grudging process

But what does it mean? Two conflicting interpretations are possible. The one interpretation emphasizes that Afrikaner rule of South Africa is essentially a political holding action to delay the ultimate fate of black rule as long as possible — perhaps until the middle of the next century.

Afrikaner nationalism's only political principle is the refusal to share power and its highest art that of creative procrastination. Reform is a grudging process.

The evacuation of an outlying apartheid outpost such as influx control is executed not out of any moral conviction but because it has become impossible to maintain it any longer.

The object is to retreat to more defensible positions behind which Afrikaner rule could entrench itself with less effort but more efficiently.

The second interpretation stands in stark contrast to the previous one. "Making a horse talk" refers to the challenge which the Afrikaners took up in the early 1970s of modernizing the entire South African society starting with the massive expansion of black education and the training of black workers.

This assignment is a radical one in the fullest sense of the word. As Manfred Halpern has written in a different context: "The revolution of modernization involved the transformation of all systems by which man organizes his society — the political, social, economic, intellectual, religious and psychological systems. That is what I mean by revolution, any revolution..."

The rising level of unrest and instability which South Africa has experienced since 1976 cannot, according to this interpreta-



Mr John Vorster



Mr Ian Smith

tion, be taken as evidence of the failure of the Afrikaners to modernize South African society.

It in fact bears testimony to its progress. As Halpern remarks: "In the context of the revolution of modernization, economic development is destabilizing, by creating, for example, the *nouveaux pauvres*, men who for the first time turn their poverty into an issue because they have learnt that it can be remedied".

Indeed, modernization needs to be destabilizing — for "unless old habits, values and institutions are exchanged for new, investments cannot be creative, or even secure".

In this view, South Africa is not in the first place experiencing a crisis produced by apartheid but the inevitable birth pains of the revolution of modernization.

To understand this South Africa must be compared with some other newly industrializing countries (NICs) (South Korea, Algeria, Argentina, Yugoslavia and Venezuela). Wolfgang Thomas observes that South Africa appears to be in the early phase of a comprehensive drive to educate, train and develop manpower quite similar to that experienced by some of the NICs in an earlier phase of their development.

It is in the nature of such transformation that the process takes several years before it manages to produce the first tangible evidence of success. In the mean time, Thomas observes, "frustration, bottlenecks, incompetence, low productivity, strikes, etc will characterize the labour scene and overall growth performance will suffer".

It also seems to be a typical feature of the modernization process that there is a tendency among the subordinate population who are the objects of the policy both to pitch their expectations at impossible heights and to deny that any significant improvement in their condition has occurred.

Over the past 15 years, South African black workers in responding to the queries of observers have usually denied that they were better off, or even said they were worse off despite the fact that black workers have experienced sharp occupational advances and higher incomes since 1970.

This is not unique to South Africa. In their study of ethnic politics in New York, Glazer and Moynihan observed that while the 1960s saw an enormous increase in the number of negroes in stable jobs, it simultaneously experienced a dramatic rise in black militancy. It was quite common for spokesmen to insist that "nothing has changed, indeed that blacks are worse off than before".

In this view, then, apartheid does not cause the conflict in South Africa but merely aggravates the pain and frustration produced by the transformation of society.

Military showdown

Neither of these interpretations may necessarily be more valid than the other.

If there is a sudden collapse of internal stability and the government is faced with the prospect of having to abandon power, a military showdown of apocalyptic proportions is not an impossibility.

As President Botha intimated to Dr Van Zyl Slabbert in the bugged private conversation:

□ "He could not agree that whites had to yield their right to self-determination and if necessary, whites would be prepared to fight this thing out".

If, on the other hand, a reasonable level of stability could be maintained over the short medium term there is a chance that the logic of modernization will increasingly compel the Afrikaner leadership to accept a much wider base of power sharing than it was prepared to concede in the past.

The government knows that South Africa is irrevocably engaged in a revolution of modernization and that while its destabilizing effects are enormous this will be surpassed by any attempt to reverse the process.

It has also begun to realize that the social aspirations of blacks will grow faster than the economy could provide for, and that these aspirations will inevitably be turned into ever more effective political demands.

It is discovering that these aspirations can be repressed only at the cost of greater instability, tyrannical repression and economic stagnation. Political power-sharing, at present such an unpalatable prospect, may soon come to be viewed as the only viable basis for stabilizing society.

But these are only two possible interpretations. Only the future will tell how the fable of the sultan's horse will translate itself in South African terms.

HERBERT LONDON

Tambo's Evil ANC Hides From Western Reporters In Shadow of Apartheid

There is something about the reporting on South Africa that sticks in my craw.

It is not the ritualistic denunciation of apartheid or the hope that liberalization will occur; both the denunciation and the hope are valid positions, albeit now said without forethought.

No, what gets me is the faith expressed by many commentators, who should know better, that the African National Congress (ANC) is a legitimate shadow government awaiting the transition to a black majority regime.

Every shred of evidence, including statements by ANC representatives themselves, suggests that this political organization is run by the communists. Winnie Mandela admits that the Soviet Union is her model for a future black-led South Africa.

Oliver Tambo, ANC president, said "yes, we do have some communists on our executive . . ." He went on to note that it made no difference, since their "primary allegiance" was given to the ANC. But Tambo did say Castro's Cuba is his model for a future South Africa.

Most South African journalists — including those with a liberal view — maintain that 19 of the 30-man National Executive Committee is composed of Communist Party members. *African Notes*, a publication issued at Georgetown's Center for Strategic and International Studies, included an article with an estimate that at least half the executive committee is communist. Joe Slovo, a Lithuanian-born communist who directs the ANC military operations, admits that weapons are obtained from Eastern Europe. Intelligence sources contend that the Soviet Union now provides the ANC with \$30 million of military assistance annually.

What I don't understand is why with this information readily available, American and European journalists don't routinely condemn the ANC. Why is it the ANC is treated as a legitimate alternative to the Botha regime?

It seems to me that if one says no to apartheid, one should also say no to communism. After all, the presumption on which opposition to apartheid rests is its racial and undemocratic character. But these are also the quintessential features of communism, along with poverty.

Yet the ANC has been given a free ride by journalists who are usually contemptuous of anyone in power or those lurking in the shadows of power. Moreover, whenever someone argues that black African rule would be catastrophic to the white minority, the reply is, "So what, that is the price for democracy."

However, if slaughter is the price for democracy, what is the price for communist rule in South Africa? The price — as anyone who has observed conditions in Zimbabwe and Mozambique knows — is democracy itself.

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ANC leadership talks of a time when there will be black majority rule in South Africa. What it means, however, as the guidebook on communist takeovers indicates, is control by the Party. As Lenin noted, say what you must, but never lose sight of your goals. The ANC is earnestly promoting its goals.

This South African example is instructive. For Western journalists, opposition to an acknowledged evil makes you good or at the very least neutral. We often lose sight of the fact that an evil force challenging an evil force is not changed in the process. Stalin's attack on Hitler's troops didn't transform Stalin, although this action did affect perceptions in the West.

Similarly, since the ANC has insinuated itself as the alternative to the present South African government, it has gained popular support. Most black South Africans don't realize what the ANC stands for or what its influence bodes for the future. At the moment these concerns are seemingly irrelevant. The ANC is the enemy of apartheid; that is sufficient.

Of course, it may not be sufficient if the Botha regime falls and is replaced by the Communist Party. At that point the journalists will avert their gaze. South Africa will be out of the news. We will have rid ourselves of a racist regime. The Soviet bear will be smiling. Once again the West will have been duped; its decency used as a weapon to hand the South African prize over to Soviet domination.

The Soviet method is obvious: Oppose the known evils, but don't show your true colors until control is in the offing.

Those colors, by the way, are not black, red and green, nor are they the shades of the rainbow. There is only one color for the Soviets — red, the color of bloodshed, revolution and embarrassment.

Reason: Would you be satisfied with a political reform in South Africa that gave limited political rights—such as in some sort of federalized situation—but not necessarily one-man, one-vote in an overall nationwide sense?

Buthelezi: No. What I've said is my ideal is one-man, one-vote. But in South Africa, you see, I've gone further than anyone else, because I've gone beyond theory in that I set up a commission in which came out with proposals for the region of Natal [KwaZulu is located within Natal province] as one unit of one South Africa. The commission recommended a consociational model, where all races would exercise a vote within one legislature, diluted with the minority veto. As early as '73 or '74, I spoke in Capetown and said that people of South Africa must get away from the idea that the only model that we should look to is the Westminster model and that we should look at the federal solution as a possibility for South Africa.

Reason: So everyone would have a vote with respect to limited powers for a national government and more specific powers for regional or local government?

Buthelezi: Yes, that's it. Kind of devolution of power.

Reason: What are the prospects that your proposed solution could be adopted in the Natal province?

Buthelezi: Negotiations have gone very, very far. In fact, when I left South Africa, the administrator who is the head of the white provincial government had already written to me to say that we must approach Mr. Botha now, because there have been negotiations going on between members of my cabinet and members of his executive council.

Reason: So we might see something, some announcement, within the next six months to a year?

Buthelezi: I hope so. I do really hope so. I hope that the state president will not obstruct us.

Reason: Is your goal for the South African economy a free market, a mixed economy, or...

Buthelezi: I believe in the free market.

Reason: Do you think that's a realistic hope?

Buthelezi: I don't know, but I say that because I don't know of any economic system devised by human beings which is such a potent force for development, which creates jobs as quickly as the free-enterprise system does. I don't say it's perfect. In fact, I've expressed many times to the business community of South Africa that unless they free the

free-enterprise system and unless they make the free-enterprise system meaningful to black people and unless they create more points of entry for black people to be part of it—not just recipients of wages—we have no future in liberation. And therefore, I am anxious myself that as much as possible opportunity should be created for blacks to actually be part and parcel of it. Now.

Reason: Do most black people in South Africa consider the term *capitalism* to be somehow linked with apartheid?

Buthelezi: Yes. The truth of the matter is that business in the past did rake off profits from apartheid. It is true that there were very iniquitous laws and that businessmen avoided the issue by saying that they were not in politics. But I think that they've moved away from that, out of self-interest. They are in the forefront of the campaign now.

Reason: Does the average Zulu see business, then, as a positive force and capitalism as a positive force?

Buthelezi: I think they see it as a positive force because black people in South Africa are cash-dependent today. I mean, there are areas—such as Soweto—that could be cordoned off and people could be starved to death, because all of them are dependent on pay packets.

Reason: Several of the black "homelands" have been declared independent but are not recognized as countries by any other governments. What is your view of their independence? Are they really fictions that are creations

of the South African government?

Buthelezi: I think they are fictions created by the South African government, and that's why although I know some of the leaders and have good relations with them, I find it very difficult to even visit, because I don't want to give the impression that I endorse what they did. I think it was a mistake.

Reason: You have not taken KwaZulu independent.

Buthelezi: It is well known that from the very beginning we have been opposed.

Reason: Because you believe that would be counterproductive to the longer-term goals of reaching full political...

Buthelezi: It is cheeky for whites to say they can give me independence. Zulus are a sovereign nation, and we were smashed by the British and therefore were thrown into unrest with another people. Therefore, while we don't say that the Zulu cultural or language group can be dismantled as such, we are South Africans.

Reason: What do you think of what is going on in the homeland of Ciskei in terms of...

Buthelezi: Well, I only read what is written, because I've never been there. I was educated at Fort Hare University, which is situated there. But lately, what I read is in the papers, what you read from here.

Reason: Our understanding, although I've not been there either, is that companies are coming in and investing and that they've abolished many controls, restrictions, regulations; they've cut taxes; they've abolished the race laws. It has looked to many advocates of freedom in this country as if they've made a great deal of progress in improving the lives of the people there.

Buthelezi: It is inconsequential to me, because as far as I'm concerned, I'm a South African. I want KwaZulu to develop as part of South Africa, not as an entity with any intention of fragmenting either the black people of South Africa or the sovereign nation.

Reason: Some American conservatives argue that the South African government is not any more oppressive than the governments of many other black nations in Africa. True?

Buthelezi: It could well be so. But I myself don't think it is relevant, because two wrongs don't make a right.

Reason: All things considered, are you optimistic for the future of your country?

Buthelezi: There is a lot that makes one despondent, but I don't think that one should give up hope. I don't. □

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Africa," they now admit that blacks will be there permanently—that is really quite a shift. That is not to say that the measure has addressed the real issue, which is, of course, participation by blacks in decisionmaking at the center of power. But, I don't think it is fair for anyone to just dismiss those things as cosmetic; because they're much more.

Reason: Do you support the campaign in the United States for disinvestment in South Africa?

Buthelezi: No, I don't support it, because black people in South Africa don't support it. There are voices in South Africa which are in favor of it, but there has been no mass meeting of black people to support it. I address black people in tens of thousands, even in the heart of industrialized South Africa in Soweto, and each time I raise this subject and each time I've never found even one voice saying they favor disinvestment.

Reason: What's the best thing the United States government could do to help end apartheid?

Buthelezi: They should lean on Botha. I think what was proposed by a recent conference is a good thing, of having eminent people really talking to Botha. I don't say that they should dictate to Botha, but I mean leaning on him, diplomatic leaning on him, because of the diplomatic clout which a country like the United States has. I think that the attitudes and the stance adopted by the Reagan administration have been very reasonable, and South Africa should appreciate that. And also the administration has balanced this, in my view. Even forbidding the sale of krugerrands—they've balanced it very nicely with a statement of humanitarian aid.

Reason: Most of the violence in South Africa today seems to be blacks against blacks.

Buthelezi: That's for sure.

Reason: Why is that?

Buthelezi: There are two reasons. Of course, one mustn't expect that blacks are different from other human beings. What worries one in this situation is that the hatred that is generated is just unbelievable.

Then there are differences over strategy. There's no difference on the rejection of apartheid by all black organizations. They are all agreed that apartheid must be eliminated. But you see, the problem comes about when they say that what *they* do is the only thing. This is created by the ANC, who see themselves as the government in exile and therefore want to eliminate any other person.



Violence is something human beings resort to when everything else has failed. And I just don't believe everything else has failed.

Reason: So it's a power struggle for who is going to be seen as representing blacks in South Africa?

Buthelezi: In fact, they see themselves already as a government in exile, so they regard a person like myself as an obstacle who must be removed.

Reason: Is the ANC primarily representative of certain black peoples and not others?

Buthelezi: I was a member of ANC myself until it was banned. And then, of course, they established an "extended mission" for ANC. You know, I can't get over that language. Today, both the media and also people in general talk of the extended mission as if they are *the* ANC, whereas the ANC which was operating democratically through conferences of elected people, prior to being banned, is no longer operating.

Reason: In terms of its goals and methods of operation, what is the difference between your Inkatha movement and the ANC?

Buthelezi: The Inkatha was founded and is structured on the ideals of the old ANC as propounded by its founding fathers in 1912. It operates on the strategy of Chief Albert Lutuli, who was a Nobel Peace Prize laureate—using only nonviolent methods to bring pressure to bear on the regime to bring about change. Inkatha is committed to negotiation, whereas ANC—the extended mission, known as ANC General, now—operates on the stance that there is nothing left to do except to fight. They are even campaigning, for instance, for isolation of South Africa as part and parcel of that, because they really want to break the economy of South Africa.

Reason: So you're saying that they know that disinvestment and embargoes would cause harm in South Africa?

Buthelezi: Their *aim* is to wreck the economy of South Africa. Mr. [Oliver] Tambo [head of the ANC in exile] says that he wants to build something in the ruins. This is the difference between us, because I wouldn't want to be a person who builds something on ruins. I have seen what has happened in Mozambique, for instance. That kind of suffering I would never want to be responsible for.

Reason: Should the South African government free Nelson Mandela?

Buthelezi: I have done more campaigning for his release than anyone else in South Africa. I am not exaggerating. I do it privately, mostly, in correspondence and so on, in the hope that in fact they will free him. If they don't, it makes it difficult for those of us who want to negotiate.

Reason: Is Mandela a communist?

Buthelezi: As far as I knew him—I knew him well—he wasn't. Mr. [John] Vorster [former prime minister] accused him of being a communist, saying that he boasted in court that he was a communist. But I established through Dr. Percy Yutar, who prosecuted, that he never said so. He says all that happened in court is that there was a document, which was one of the exhibits, which was prepared in Mandela's handwriting, on how to become a good communist. And he refused to be examined.

Reason: So even though he himself refuses to renounce violence...

Buthelezi: I think he should be released on humanitarian grounds, because he's 67. He's ailing, too.

Gatsha Buthelezi

“Bloody revolutions fought against terrible oppression do not automatically bring about great improvements.” So writes 57-year-old Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi (boot-uh-LAZE-ee), chief minister of the KwaZulu homeland and one of the two most popular leaders of South Africa’s black population (the other being the imprisoned leader of the outlawed African National Congress, Nelson Mandela). In a nation where extremists of both colors dominate world headlines, Gatsha Buthelezi may be the moderates’ last, best chance at averting bloodshed.

Buthelezi descends from a long line of Zulu kings, beginning with King Shaka, founder of the Zulu nation in the early 1800s. He speaks with pride of ancestors who led the Zulu army into battle against the British imperialists. Yet his lineage is of little consequence to South Africa’s white minority government. Buthelezi is subject to the same indignities of apartheid as his black countrymen—he has been arrested more than once for not carrying the required identity papers.

Today Buthelezi wears two hats. As the elected leader of South Africa’s 7 million Zulus, he represents the largest discrete ethnic group in that troubled nation. He is also president of the one-million-strong Inkatha, the largest political association in South Africa.

An articulate man, Buthelezi has made enemies on the left and right. He has enraged the South African government by assailing its homelands policy, by which the government has hoped to segregate its 23 million black subjects into 10 tribal homelands scattered about South Africa. And, although officially committed to securing a one-man, one-vote system in South Africa, Buthelezi has time and again revealed a pragmatic streak that draws the ire of the left. He is an adamant opponent of violence as a weapon of liberation and is willing to accept reforms falling short of one-man, one-vote. “Politics, after all,” he observes, “is the art of the possible.”

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi was interviewed recently by REASON Editor and Publisher Robert W. Poole, Jr., in New Orleans, where Buthelezi was a featured speaker at the annual conference of the National Committee for Monetary Reform.

Reason: As you see the situation in South Africa today, is violent revolution inevitable, or is there hope for a peaceful solution?

Buthelezi: I think there is still hope for a peaceful solution. After all, violence has been tried by the ANC [African National Congress] for quite a long time already, and it has not succeeded. Neither it nor nonviolence has toppled the government.

Reason: Does violence become justified at some point?

Buthelezi: I do believe that there is such a thing as a just war. I don’t, for instance, say that it is not possible in any people’s history that there may come a time when a war is justified. But at the moment my people, the black people of South Africa, have not given me the impression they are keen to try that option. Violence is something human beings resort to when everything else has failed. And I just don’t believe everything else has failed.

Reason: Is it possible for blacks and Afrikaners eventually to live together peaceably in South Africa, or is the legacy of apartheid too great?

Buthelezi: I think really we’ve lived together for a long time—true enough, lived together as enemies rather than as friends, but blacks need whites as well as whites need blacks. So I do believe that Afrikaners and blacks can live together. I think that some of the little cracks—very, very little cracks—that one can point to—repealing, for instance, the Mixed Marriages Act—to me those are really signs that in fact it is possible, because that is one of the things which are very important to them.

Reason: Commentators in the United States often portray measures like that as simply cosmetic.

Buthelezi: If you’re a South African, you can’t dismiss it like that. If you know the psychology of the Afrikaner, and if you know that when this comes up for a vote the Afrikaner says, “Do you want your girl to marry a ‘kaffir’?” (which is equivalent to a “nigger”), then you would know that it is a very difficult thing for them to move away from that. And in 87 percent of the country which they’ve always regarded as “white South





U.S. Envoy Urges S. Africa To Change Racial Policies

JOHANNESBURG—A senior U.S. envoy, saying 1986 was a "year of testing" for South Africa, yesterday urged the white-minority government to implement promised reforms in racial policies swiftly.

Also, government sources who insisted on anonymity confirmed that a six-member fact-finding Commonwealth delegation met secretly Wednesday with jailed black nationalist leader Nelson Mandela and President Pieter W. Botha, United Press International reported. Officials declined to confirm or deny the meetings.

Mandela, serving a life sentence for treason and sabotage, heads the outlawed African National Congress, which is waging a violent campaign against the government and its policy of apartheid.

In Cape Town, Frank Wisner, U.S. undersecretary of state for African Affairs, told reporters that the United States hoped to see quick movement on reforms promised by Botha.

"We want to see a post-apartheid democratic order evolve and evolve as quickly as possible," Wisner said.

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