

Courage Within the System

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Ten years ago Gatsha Buthelezi would have been in prison; today he is Chief Executive Counsellor of KwaZulu, a potentially independent "homeland," now within the boundaries of South Africa.

Buthelezi has grasped the limited possibilities of self-government extended by the white government of South Africa. He has chosen to challenge the apartheid structure from within because "no amount of shouting can, by itself, cause the walls of the 'apartheid-Jericho' to crumble." He argues that black people have been voiceless for too long, that whites have for generations arrogated to themselves the right to determine the destinies of millions of Africans. He has chosen to operate within the "white dream" in order to change all that.

For some blacks Buthelezi is simply an extension of the white system, for others he has become a symbol of the modern astute African leader. Because of his international visibility and his sharp criticism of the "homeland" concept, many white South Africans consider him to be "too smart for his own good."

The architect of the separate development dream was the late Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, Prime Minister of South Africa from 1958 to 1966. Verwoerd proposed the creation of eight African national units in an effort to counteract international pressure on South Africa. He knew the emergence of independent black states to the north clearly heralded a changed political context. Separate development was a philosophical refinement of the concept of apartheid, a move from blatant white racism toward the idea of separation in order to preserve ethnic identity and to avoid conflict. In 1959 the South African Parliament passed into law *The Promotion of Self-Government Act*. In 1963 the Transkeian "homeland" came into being, and in June, 1970, KwaZulu, a "homeland" of noncontiguous territories between Durban and Mozambique was established. Buthelezi was elected its first Chief Executive Counsellor on June 17, 1970; the

Executive Council itself consists of five other portfolios. A Legislative Assembly in the first phase of development was proclaimed on March 30, 1972, and formally inaugurated May 4, 1973. According to the 1970 census the resident population of KwaZulu was 2,096,888, but there are also four million Zulus in urban and rural areas.

While insisting that South Africa is one country, Buthelezi regards separate development as a means to an end. "The opportunity to bring black demands into prominence might open up the way for greater African political activity," he says. He rejects the philosophy of apartheid but says he has "to work within its framework for the sake of my people, because there is no option left to us." Critics hold that the participation of Buthelezi and other "homeland" leaders not only lends credibility to the system by sustaining the fiction that Africans have political rights and participation, but substantially contributes to the political equilibrium of the country. Furthermore, this argument goes, a maverick like Buthelezi has even greater importance than the other "homeland" leaders because his position implies that even those who vigorously oppose the system are tolerated. Buthelezi takes this criticism very seriously, insisting that he is not a "stooge" and that he has "consistently opposed the white system from my student days to the present."

Buthelezi acknowledges that political functions have been allocated in order to prevent the growth of independent African bases of power and that upwardly mobile and politically ambitious individuals have been absorbed into the system, thus shifting urban and rural discontent in their direction. He has been an important force, nonetheless, in fostering ideas of black consciousness in South Africa, and to some degree he has been responsible for reviving black political expression since the repression following Sharpeville in 1961. He takes risks and continues to face enormous difficulties. He has had to get used to government intervention and interference and claims that he has even had to face threats from government agents. "From the activities of BOSS [Bureau of State Security] in KwaZulu, now well known, it is clear that my leadership is not favored by the Prime

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Minister as BOSS falls directly under him. These people are doing all they can to topple me. What do I do? Leave the field open for the Government's curly-headed boys to take over in order to create a facade that Zulus and black people like apartheid?"

Buthelezi's charisma and unique style result from his ancestry, his skill, and his courage. Gatsha Buthelezi (meaning "branch of the tree") was born on June 16, 1929. His mother was the Princess Magogo, daughter of King Dinizulu and a full sister of King Solomon. She was the tenth wife of Chief Mathole Buthelezi, to whom she was married in 1926 in an effort to cement historic relationships between the royal house of the Zulus, from which the Paramount Chiefs descend, and the Buthelezis, who were prime ministers to the Zulu kings from the time of Chaka. Both King Solomon and Chief Mathole made it clear that the Buthelezi heir would come from this union. Gatsha Buthelezi therefore grew up and was educated at King Solomon's royal household with Cyprian, who was later to become king. He attended high school at Adams College at a time when the great South African liberal, Edgar Brookes, was principal. After graduating from high school he continued his studies in history and in native law and administration at Fort Hare. In 1950 he was expelled from Fort Hare (the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948) for vociferously objecting to the visit of the Governor-General of South Africa, Gideon Brandt Van Zyl. However, helped by the intervention of Edgar Brookes, he completed his bachelors degree by external examination.

In 1953 Buthelezi became an acting chief, but the South African Government so suspected and disliked him that it only confirmed his office in 1957. From 1959 until Cyprian's death in 1968 Buthelezi was Prime Minister of the Zulu Nation. After the death of Cyprian he was elbowed out of Zulu affairs until June, 1970, when he was elected Chief Executive Officer of the Zulu Territorial Authority.

In July, 1975, Buthelezi formed InKatha KwaZulu (Zulu National Cultural Liberation Movement), which he regards as a "launching pad" for "Black sons and daughters of Africa" to regain their human rights. The organization appeals to historical Zulu antecedents: "...in 1928, twenty years before the Afrikaners realized their destiny, King Solomon ka Dinizulu, with the assistance of his advisers, founded InKatha KwaZulu, a movement on which the current InKatha is based." In speaking to young Zulus about the movement, Chief Buthelezi reminds them that young men of their age group would have formed the core of the traditional Zulu army. "I have said that I have come here today to tell you that although we are powerless, we Blacks are very powerful."

The original InKatha was a failure, Buthelezi believes, not because its aims and objectives were wrong, but because King Solomon and his people were groping for their destiny against overwhelming difficulties. The contemporary InKatha has the blessing of the reigning monarch, King Goodwill Zwelithini. It also uses the colors of the banned African National Congress, black, green, and yellow. And it has "Robben Island"

graduates on its central committee, that is, former black South African political prisoners.

Buthelezi emphasizes that InKatha is not just for the Zulus but for "all our brothers who are not free, as we are one and our destinies are inseparable."

Although we will use the Constitution in connection with KwaZulu matters, it is machinery all blacks can use if our dreams ever come true. KwaZulu as a Country is neither here nor there, but it is a little base that we found ourselves left with after wars of conquest, and after concerted campaigns to dispossess blacks of what God had given them.

While rallying "Zulu Consciousness" with InKatha, Buthelezi at the same time articulates the cause of black consciousness. He has long been aware of the psychological damage to blacks resulting from the environment in which they live. In his 1974 Hoernlé Memorial Lecture he refers to complexes of superiority and inferiority that have grave effects on Africans, and underscores the need to fight in order to restore a sense of personal nobility.

Buthelezi also stresses the need to encourage black participation in politics, business, and religion. He strongly encourages black businessmen, for example. Appearing at the opening of a black-owned supermarket, he described it as "striking a blow for the liberation of all Blacks." At the ordination of Bishop Mansuet Biyase of Eshowe he told the congregation that the event was fulfilling "a dream which many Black Christians have cherished over the years, a positive step taken towards the Africanization of the Church in South Africa." Buthelezi has also taken up the cause of black women, urging black men, themselves victims of discrimination, to be more sensitive to the discrimination that categorizes their womenfolk as property.

According to InKatha's constitution, no person will be selected as a Zulu candidate for any parliamentary or local election unless he or she is a member of the movement. In answer to the accusation that InKatha appears to be a device to turn KwaZulu into a one-party state, Buthelezi maintains that it was designed to stop infiltration into KwaZulu's politics by BOSS, and he urges Zulus to reject the South African Government organized political party, SPEAR.

The white press, usually favorable to Buthelezi, refers to the InKatha as a "Zulu Broederbond." (The Afrikaner Broederbond is a secret organization founded in 1918. It has been and remains a vital agent in reserving Afrikaner solidarity by ensuring that most of the powerful economic, political, and cultural positions in South Africa go only to Nationalist Afrikaners.) While denying that the InKatha is a secret movement, Buthelezi acknowledges that the Broederbond helped the Afrikaners to ascend to power, and "ascendancy to power, even through a secret organization like the Broederbond, [is] more acceptable to me than through bloodshed." In trying to mobilize the Zulu people, and indeed all blacks of South Africa, the motive is both political and cultural: "Our black culture was battered not just by conquest but through concerted efforts of conquerors to ensure that we lose our roots and become an amorphous mass that would so easily lose its



Photograph by William Raynor
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direction. That is why we have used 'cultural' in the title of the National Movement."

Buthelezi wants to maintain a strictly nonviolent position while achieving change. At the same time, he emphasizes the abnormality of South African society: "I am a man of peace, and am filled with trepidation at the abnormality of the society in which we are living, in which the White man forces us into sharing his death wish." He reminds whites that despite their intransigency, blacks are willing to cooperate with those who hold power over them. But: "Whites must abandon the attitude that Blacks can only be good enough for what is left over after other race groups have helped themselves to life's bounty."

Buthelezi is keenly aware of historically ingrained prejudice, and knows that violent clashes between blacks and whites have characterized their relations from the beginning. He sees the murder of Piet Retief in 1838 as a crude attempt by black nationalism to counter white nationalism. He does not exclude a possible escalation of violence: "We should proceed to lead the struggle in a different direction as circumstances permit. Maybe there will be time even for us to die in the cause of our freedom."

The main difference between Buthelezi and the African nationalists is that he operates within the system, as Chief Executive Counsellor of KwaZulu. He has thus acquired a measure of immunity that permits him to raise sensitive issues, such as amnesty for African exiles and political prisoners. Buthelezi apparently has had easy access to Oliver Tambo of the African National Congress (ANC) for a number of years. Before Buthelezi took up his hereditary position he consulted with many of his friends in the ANC and in the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) about whether it was the right thing to do. While

Buthelezi has attempted to keep lines of communication open with the nationalists, the nationalists continue to be highly critical of his role and attack him in their periodicals and whenever he appears abroad. At the same time, they recognize his charismatic appeal and do not dismiss him with the same scorn they pour on other "homeland" leaders. Buthelezi remains very sensitive to their criticism and seems eager for their tacit approval.

Buthelezi has always been opposed to the policy of influx control by which millions of blacks are kept available for labor in "white" urban areas. He believes the policy involves fundamental denials of human rights. With the cooperation of other "homeland" leaders, he has tried to improve the conditions of black urban dwellers by lobbying for freehold tenure and home ownership in areas such as Soweto (outside Johannesburg) and for the improvement of public transportation. Since he is fully aware that there are not enough work opportunities in the "homelands," many of his activities have focused on rights for urban dwellers. He has also criticized the government's recent attempts to introduce rehabilitation centers in the "homelands" for African pass law offenders. "I think it is very unfair of the Government to dump these people in our laps when they are born and bred in the cities." Buthelezi is highly critical of the pass law system itself. He regards it as a humiliation for the African that results in the imprisonment and harassment of hundreds of thousands of people every year, including, in recent years, the late King Cyprian Bhekuzulu, the Right Reverend A.H. Zulu, Bishop of Zululand, and on a couple of occasions Buthelezi himself.

Buthelezi insists that urban Zulus living in townships such as Soweto should be affected by decisions made in the KwaZulu legislature. Thus he frequently reports back to Zulus and other urban Africans and sees much of his legitimacy springing from them. "If I'm rejected by the

Black people in this country, then I would worry about it. But any person who takes an ideological stand against me as a puppet or anything else doesn't worry me."

Buthelezi capitalized on the illegal strikes by sixty thousand African workers in Natal in March, 1973. He maintains that the peaceful work stoppages had wide effects, both on employers and black employees. "This was a case of the Black giant, which is the African people, for the first time flexing his muscles, and the process shook the economy of our land." He emphasizes the need for African trade unions, pointing out that while Africans are the backbone of the labor force in South Africa, they have no real way to communicate with management, and that the South African Parliament represents white employers only. Although he believes there can be no substitute for trade unions (the InKatha Movement provides for a trade union clause based on the Zambian Constitution), Buthelezi is a pragmatist. Until real trade unions are permitted, African workers should make maximum use of the various works liaison-committees that are now in existence. Trade unions may have to come later, for Prime Minister Vorster is convinced that they open the way for "unscrupulous politicians" to exploit the best interests of the African workers.

A major struggle between the "homeland" leaders and Pretoria has been over the language of instruction in the schools, tribal or English. (Afrikaans is also taught.) But language is only one issue. Buthelezi is also concerned about the general quality of education for the Zulus. The dropout problem is enormous, teachers are often badly trained, and the school facilities are inadequate. By the third year the dropout rate is 80 per cent; many more have left by the time of the Standard 6 and the Standard 8 certificates. Above all, says Buthelezi, the existing educational experience is based on a philosophy that aimed to keep Africans away from "the green pastures reserved for the white man."

On foreign investment Buthelezi disagrees with many nationalists. He believes that any development for the blacks, no matter how marginal, is important. He asks for pressures upon multinational corporations "to do the right thing." "I disagree with those who, on purely ideological premises, would halt any participation in entrepreneurship. I think that when you involve Black people, you are advancing towards their liberation."

While the white government seems to go along reluctantly with certain economic concessions, it remains intransigent on the level of social interaction. For example, a top government official expressed concern when Buthelezi danced with a white woman at a recent press ball. Buthelezi also notes that on several occasions the Commissioner-General of KwaZulu (the representative of the South African Government) has arranged receptions for the Cabinet and for the Zulu King, but they always take place at his office complex, not at his home.

Buthelezi has welcomed Prime Minister Vorster's efforts to achieve détente with black African leaders and emphasizes that these leaders are not selling out but are acting within the framework of the Lusaka Manifesto and of the Mogadishu Declaration. "What the Mogadishu

Declaration did was to make this clear and to say that if they don't negotiate on terms outlined by the Lusaka Manifesto, an intensification of the war must take place as the only alternative." In this respect too Buthelezi would seem to be close to the thinking of Zambia's President Kenneth Kaunda.

While building on black consciousness, Buthelezi attempts at the same time to allay white fears. He states unambiguously that whites too are indigenous to South Africa. He and the other "homeland" leaders have also tried to counteract the government's divide-and-rule technique. That technique is one of the key dangers of the homeland policy. Buthelezi therefore encourages the other "homeland" leaders to meet with the Prime Minister as a group and to act in maximum solidarity with respect to the problems of rural and urban blacks.

The "homeland" of Kwa Zulu may evolve along a number of different lines, ranging from chronic dependence to full sovereignty. Ideally it may be a launching pad for black political engagement and for an integrated South Africa. In such a future blacks will participate fully in their political destinies and will have a fair share in the economy of the whole country. Another "solution" might be for the "homelands" to become separate and viable political entities joined with other "homelands" in some form of "Homeland Federation."

KwaZulu and the other "homelands" might, while retaining their unique political identities, then form a federal relationship with white South Africa. The crucial variable remains the political aspirations of the large black urban population. In the recent Hoernlé Memorial Lecture Buthelezi suggests such a federal formula. The current Parliament, which is for whites only, would have to be replaced by a federal parliament in which each state would be represented. The states would enjoy full rights, with the federal parliament responsible for defense and foreign policy. The political rights of urban Africans would be guaranteed. In effect there would be common federal citizenship, in addition to the state citizenship enjoyed by each person. Referring to the common "interracial citizenship of South Africa," Buthelezi stresses that cooperation would prevent balkanized entities from emerging. He wants to avoid breaking up the economic integrity achieved by the economy of South Africa. He believes the autonomous states would greatly reduce or even eliminate the obsession of all groups with controlling the whole. Movement between states in Buthelezi's plan might require visas or travel documents for either visiting or work purposes.

Yet another approach would be an independent KwaZulu (with a degree of economic strength generated by some mineral potential) throwing in its lot with black African states such as Swaziland or Mozambique. All these speculations, however, are haunted by the possibility that the South African Government may finally tire of leaders like Buthelezi and establish in his place a stooge leadership. For the moment Buthelezi has complied with the law, interpreting it as widely as possible, pressing for the unconventional. He is not now attempting to undermine the political system. One can, however, imagine a time when he might be willing to encourage blacks to civil disobedience and disruption of services