

THE MODERN JANUS: INKATHA'S ROLE IN BLACK LIBERATION

by

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Introduction

Inkatha presents a paradox because it is the least obedient of the homeland organizations and confounds all the accepted truths about politics in South Africa's rural areas. Yet Inkatha is a stranger phenomenon because, alone among Black opposition forces, it has maintained its faith in pluralist politics and has the sole luxury of being able to agitate for change by conventional means. Accordingly, Inkatha and its President, Chief Buthelezi, have wide support among white liberals in South Africa and in the West generally. They have been fêted in Britain, West Germany and the United States.

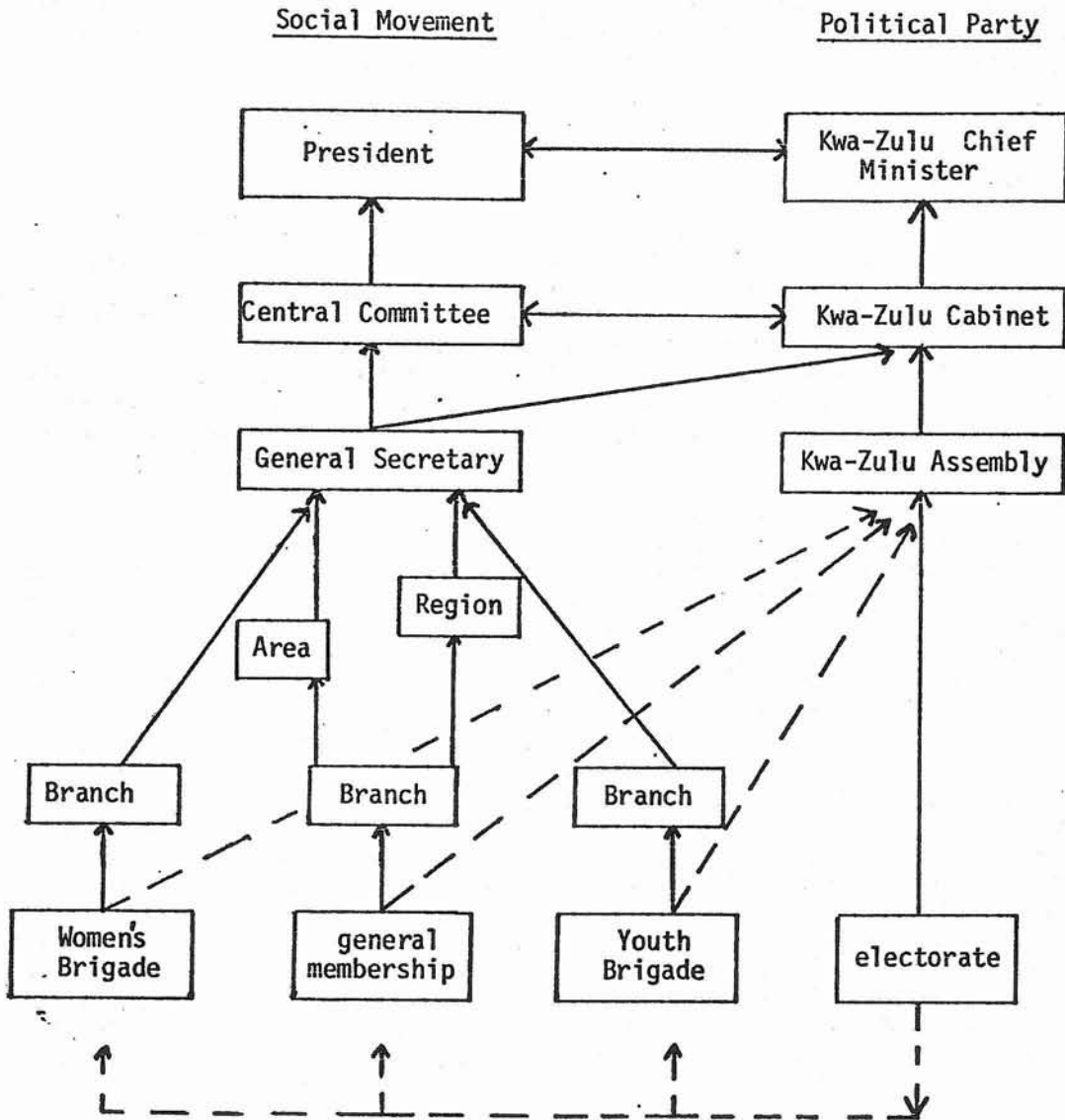
This paper will argue that it is an error to take Inkatha at face value. It is Janus-faced: like the mythological figure Janus, Inkatha presents two images, the second of which is extremely ugly. The paper will seek to show the depth of the contrast between the two faces. The contradiction between them is traced to the dual role Inkatha plays in racial liberation. It is, therefore, inherent to the organization and while this duality remains Inkatha will always present a Janus-face.

Inkatha's Dual Role

The organization utilizes two government-sponsored platforms, not one as usually seen. It has the apartheid platform of Kwa-Zulu, but in leaving it free to operate by conventional means the government is providing Inkatha with an exclusive channel of opposition. The government controls both. This basically is the reason why Inkatha remains legal. Admittedly, it is difficult to ban a homeland leader without throwing apartheid in disgrace, yet the government has discovered that the best form of control is simply to leave it be. Thereby Inkatha is caught in a cleft stick between the government and more radical Black forces. On the one hand, these dual platforms provide numerous subtle controls for the government; conversely, they enforce ostracism from the Left. Inkatha's dilemma is simple: the longer it is trapped between the pressures of these two platforms, the more moderate it is forced to become.

Beyond whatever constraints the government can use to stifle opposition, Inkatha's role is subject to self-imposed constraints. Its dual platforms give it a dual role - as a political party in the sponsored platform of Kwa-Zulu and as a social movement in wider South African politics, where it utilises the second platform. This

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gives Inkatha two contradictory aims. On the one hand, it functions as a political party to govern an ethnic base, while, as a social movement, it calls for solidarity across ethnic divisions among those who are the victims of ethnic discrimination.

Its political party role in Kwa-Zulu integrates it into the established social and political order. It may desire the overthrow of that order, but it plays the existing rules to do it. The problem for Inkatha is that its role as a social movement does not have this need. This role does not require of its members a passive participation through the ballot box and then subservience to elected representatives who will agitate for goals via parliamentary means. Its imperative for change is a heightening of experience and consciousness through participation in the struggle, with the collectivity as a whole being the vehicle for change. The role of political party in Kwa-Zulu requires compromise, barter politicking and negotiation with the central government and an alliance with traditional forces like

Chiefs. In contrast, its social movement role needs to reject the very government it negotiates with, to reject the ethnic base it governs and to reject the traditionalism it is in alliance with. This results in two sets of constraints on the organization which are a direct result of its dual role: the tension between being a social movement and a political party (2), and the tension of using ethnicity to destroy ethnicity. It is these constraints which propel the organization to a progressively more moderate position. These constraints perform a second purpose for from them flow all Inkatha's contradictions and internal conflicts. These contradictions and conflicts represent the vivid contrast of Inkatha's Janus-face.

### Inkatha's Contradictions

In public statements Inkatha is pacifist. In part this is an attempt to define itself vis-à-vis the external liberation forces, and in part a reflection of mass Black opinion which is strongly in favour of a peaceful solution to South Africa's problems. Yet it is intrinsic to the dual role Inkatha plays that violence will be threatened or used against its detractors, opponents or internal dissidents - it is inherent in the strong, disciplined force it wishes to become, in enforcing compulsory membership, and to those who threaten its claim to negotiate with the central government.

Violence is of many types. Symbolic violence is evident in Inkatha's allusion to the power that lies in Zulu numbers and military history. This manipulates both the threat of violence and Zulu ethnicity. Much more dangerous is the utilization of physical violence. It could be no more than coincidence that, a few days after Buthelezi appeared in Soweto during the 1976 uprising to investigate alleged intimidation against Zulu migrant workers, the hostel dwellers erupted in violence against the students. The physical violence on Committee of Ten supporters is less coincidental. Following threats, a mob of fifty Inkatha members attacked Alex Mbatha in Durban; he was badly injured. Perhaps even more disillusioning than nullifying Inkatha's claim of pacificism were the statements made by the attackers - "Why does he speak to Indians first? You are not Blacks" - which nullify Inkatha's claim to be advancing Black unity. It is no justification to excuse this as impromptu action by peripheral elements when Buthelezi spent the best of a five-hour speech personally attacking his opponent prior to the attack. Nor were disciplinary measures taken against the perpetrators. Physical violence has been used against Kwa-Masha residents and pupils. These assaults came after Buthelezi had threatened students that any provocation against him in whatever form would be met with force. Two Inkatha officials were killed at the Malakazi squatter camp after intimidating squatters. Buthelezi's arch opponent in Soweto, Lloyd Ndaba, was assassinated. The killers were never found.

The intention of physical violence is to inflict injury. There are other forms of violence which are intended to create fear without the infliction of injury. This can be called psychological violence. To students on the Indian university campus at Durban-Westville who taunted him, Buthelezi threatened a repeat of the bloody Indian-Zulu riots of 1949. To the Coloured and Indian political forces opposing contact with Inkatha in the South African Black Alliance, Buthelezi warned of a civil war of Black against Black. To the editor of the Sunday Tribune who documented Inkatha's violence against boycotting students in May 1980, Buthelezi retorted that he was laying the foundation for anti-white violence. Fear is created by the realization that Inkatha has the resources through the Youth Brigade or the Kwa-Zulu government to carry out these threats. Inkatha has formed local vigilante groups and is now urging for its own police force and defence force.

There is a clear historical parallel. Fascism was unique for its conjunction of a disciplined, armed and violent stratum with a parent political organization. This dichotomy is becoming represented in Inkatha. This brings Inkatha to a contradiction. Its social movement role advocates pacifism, peace and freedom, while its political party role in Kwa-Zulu enforces a vacuum keeping out argument and information which challenge their official ideology, even by violence if necessary.

Inherent in Inkatha's task of building a strong, disciplined force as a demonstration to the government that it cannot be bypassed in any negotiation is the development of a rigid discipline code, hierarchical structure and authoritarian character. It needs to maintain support among Blacks or it loses its potential bargaining power. To this end Inkatha has taken to enforcing compulsory membership and become more disciplinarian. Kwa-Zulu is the product of central government policy rather than successful national liberation. Its government evolved out of a territorial authority that is an instrument of administrative, not political, decentralization of power. Neither is it subject to the normal constraints that come from having a "civic culture", nor to the restraints on autonomy that come from the need to maintain legitimacy. In 1975 the South African government was officially asked to co-operate in prohibiting other forms of political opposition in Kwa-Zulu. This has seen the decline in opposition to Inkatha's role as the governing party in Kwa-Zulu, despite Inkatha seeing the necessity of virulent opposition to the central government. In order for Inkatha to oppose apartheid in its social movement role, opposition to its role as a political party is systematically denied. This is essential for Inkatha's bargaining position. So its value commitment to barter politicking and the pluralist political game is less than total. To realize its ends, Inkatha has chosen negotiation and participation precisely because by the norms of the dominant racial group (if not their political practice) it signals Inkatha out from other opposition forces. Paradoxically, this is the reason why Inkatha can allow no challenge to its role in Kwa-Zulu, for it would threaten its ability to play according to the rules of the dominant racial group: in order to be pluralist it has to deny this right to its opposition or Inkatha is no longer that large, organized, strong, disciplined force which cannot be bypassed.

The function of Inkatha's political party role is to govern Kwa-Zulu but its wider social movement role seeks the liberation of Blacks from white minority rule. A further contradiction is that Black liberation seems to be secondary to Buthelezi's personal accession to power. This has been admitted by one of his lieutenants. "I am fully convinced that Inkatha now has enough power to force a negotiated settlement. We will get everything we want if we succeed in negotiating an alliance with the Afrikaner." (3) If this mirrors the leadership's thinking, Inkatha has no rivals in the liberation struggle: its only real rivals are those who refuse on principle to sully themselves with negotiation. This puts Inkatha in opposition to Black Consciousness and external liberation forces.

In order to negotiate itself into power there has been a metamorphosis in Inkatha's policy. It has begun formal and regular contact with the political representatives of the ruling group independent of contact between the South African and Kwa-Zulu governments. Contact is no bad thing if it does not compromise that which Blacks are fighting for. Inkatha's policy metamorphosis suggests it is prepared to sacrifice a great deal. One such sacrifice is Inkatha's support for Black Consciousness. The once close links have faded and their opposition has become vituperative. The main divide between them is participation with dominant ruling group initiatives. Although Inkatha has long been using government-sponsored platforms and and been participating in its political framework by representing a homeland, it was strictly against any further participation. For example, it was very critical of Community Council elections. In 1980 Inkatha has decided to participate in the Soweto Community Council elections. A corollary is a change in opinion of Thebehali, the leader of the Soweto Council. In October 1978 relations were so bad that Thebehali was threatening to sue Inkatha. Within exactly a year, Thebehali was sitting on a platform with Buthelezi as a member of Inkatha, announcing "Soweto belongs to Inkatha". Holding the political power of Soweto would put Inkatha in a stronger bargaining position in any negotiation.

The greatest compromise is on the question of majority rule. Its position has caused a division within the Black bourgeoisie between those working for universal franchise and those prepared to concede a federalist solution, like Inkatha. Both sides of this divide face a dilemma. Those who refuse negotiation and participation reduce their immediate influence; those who do participate in order to negotiate lose their credibility among most of the Black elite, if not many of the masses. They bring to their dilemmas different assumptions about the transference of power. Inkatha is visualizing a relatively ordered transfer, with the dominant racial group granting



power and legitimacy to its chosen Black heir; the other liberation forces visualize the transference being disorderly enough for this procedure to be bypassed and for their lack of influence among the dominant racial group to be of no consequence. In other words, the decision on participation presupposes not only different strategies to achieve Black liberation but also fundamentally different views on the transference of power and the independence of a Black government from white domination. It is not only the strategy Inkatha has adopted that has changed, therefore, but also the assumptions behind it. In this way Inkatha sells out both the urban Blacks and the ANC: the first because they can never become states, the second because of their overriding goal of a unitary state.

The most flagrant contradiction Inkatha has is on ethnicity. Its party role manipulates a Zulu ethnic base, while its movement role needs to rid itself of ethnicity. Zulu ethnicity is built into the very name of the organization. The deliberate manipulation of tradition is manifest in another way. Buthelezi had earlier tried to revive Inkatha in 1959, but King Cyprian withdrew his support. That Buthelezi thereupon abandoned the idea is indicative that the support of the traditional Zulu figure was essential to the purpose of the organization - that it was necessary to be seen as part of the Zulu heritage. Extracts from the 1975 Constitution and the "Aims and Objectives" (4) made this clear.

In a more recent "Statement of Inkatha Principles", Buthelezi lists seventeen commandments which have significant differences and emphases. The references to Kwa-Zulu were deleted. Explicit references were made to the "poor" and "under-privileged", implying a liberation for all the oppressed. There was an increasingly political shift, reflected in the listing of specific demands of the South African government. In July 1979 Inkatha scrapped 19 of the 20 references in its constitution to Kwa-Zulu, its peoples, institutions and King. Both "Zulu" and "African" were replaced by "Black". No longer are only Zulu eligible for membership of the Central Committee and the King is not automatically Patron-in-Chief. There is no racial restriction of any sort on membership. But even after these changes the ambiguity has not been resolved. To urban Blacks in Soweto, Buthelezi said Kwa-Zulu meant no more to Inkatha than "just a local regional administration". That was in 1978. Ten months later, at King Shaka Day celebrations in Kwa-Zulu, he answered those who criticized him for advocating a Zulu empire by rhetorically asking if the whites had abandoned their cultural heritage. To a crowd at Kwa-Zulu's Umlazi township in March 1980, Buthelezi said he would apologise to no one for being Zulu - history had decreed that he serve the Zulu. Certainly in these instances Inkatha was reserving one image for Kwa-Zulu audiences and quite another for urban Blacks.

There is also evidence for this in many diverse acts. The flag of Inkatha is Kwa-Zulu's flag. Its party organ, the Nation, is printed in Zulu. Inkatha was once very critical of the Makgotla - tribal movements like community guards to prevent crime in the townships by imposing tribal punishment and discipline codes. It is now co-operating with them in fighting the Soweto Community Council elections. It expressed its opposition to tribal dancing, which it described as a homeland circus. Yet at all Inkatha meetings bands of Zulu impis, in full tribal dress, chant in the speakers. Buthelezi has often danced a Zulu Royal Salute to guests sharing his platform. Symbolic aspects of a social movement are important in developing loyalty to it. It needs values, standards and symbols. Despite what it says about tribalism, the cathectic symbols Inkatha utilizes are predominantly Zulu - its flag, tribal dancing, impis, and so on. As if to emphasize its ambiguity, however, its uniform is in the old colours of the ANC, an organization which epitomizes modernity in African politics.

#### Inkatha's Social Base

This ambiguity on ethnicity has a symbiotic relationship with Inkatha's membership (and Buthelezi's style of leadership). In effect, Inkatha is calling for non-Zulu support for an expression of political opposition that utilizes Zulu ethnic symbols in its mobilization. On Inkatha's estimate this has met with "less than"

20% of its membership coming from other ethnic groups. To what extent does this predominantly Zulu collectivity influence the individual Zulu to accept its ideological belief system? Marxists argue consciousness is broadly determined by social position and the common interests that arise from that shared social position. Consensus theorists see ideology functioning to integrate actors into a collectivity expressing a value system. In reality both interests and values play their part. So in any organization there will be multiple sources of membership motivation. This multiplicity means different social bases may be involved in the movement which have to be coalesced. Nazism, for example, was able to link agrarian populism, the petite bourgeoisie and unstable conservative elites. Until a membership study is undertaken, one can only make general statements about Inkatha. It claims a membership of 300,000, which was 5.59% of the de jure population of Kwa-Zulu in 1979. Inkatha did win 90.99% of the votes cast in the 1978 election, but this was only 34.7% of those who registered to vote, and 4.08% of the de jure population. Its support is highest in the rural areas of Kwa-Zulu. This says a lot about its base in Zulu ethnicity. However, compulsion has played a large part. This is especially the case where the Kwa-Zulu government has a hold over citizens and can enforce membership. Tales are common of students having to join the Youth Brigade before they can enrol in school, or teachers being forced to take out membership before they are employed, of pensioners being refused benefits unless they are members, or public servants having to join before they can continue their career, of the homeless needing membership before a house is allocated. There is no way of judging the true extent of this practice, but what Inkatha needs to learn is that total numbers mean little. What counts is the level of commitment.

In the urban townships Inkatha has no benefits to redistribute and few controls. It would say much for its social base if it had support from urban Blacks who possessed motivations other than ethnic in character. In Soweto's Jabulani Amphitheatre Buthelezi draws crowds of up to 30,000. The longitudinal study by the Arnold-Bergstraesser Institute (5) found 43.8% of urban Blacks rated Buthelezi as the leader they most admired. There is a reverse to these figures: 56.2% admired other leaders, 21.7% of Zulu in Durban voted for other leaders, which increased to 45.8% for Zulu in Soweto. Nationally, 40% of urban Blacks had not heard of Inkatha. If support for Buthelezi weakens even for Zulu when they reside in more metropolitan townships, support from non-Zulu urban Blacks is probably very weak.

In an attempt to extend its social base, Inkatha has formed an alliance with other Black forces in the South African Black Alliance. This widens its ethnic character, having within it the Dikwankwentha Party from Qwa Qwa, the Inyandze Party from KaNgwane and the Coloured Labour Party and the Indian Reform Party. There is less formal association with the Chief Ministers of Gazankulu, Ciskei and Lebowa. In effect, this is an alliance of those already working within central government sponsored institutions - the homelands, Natal Indian Congress and Coloured People's Representative Council. There is no alliance with those outside ethnically defined platforms. There is no mass support in any ethnic group other than the Zulu. Few Indians attend Alliance meetings in Indian townships. Audiences generally are small. This confirms Inkatha's ethnic social base. Those Zulu who support Inkatha seem to have a strong ethnic self-identity and contact with other ethnic groups does not meet with their full support. In fact, the different ethnic interests of the ethnic platforms they have make the Alliance very fragile.

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The/social support is capitalism. The link between political moderation and espousal of the free enterprise system works in two ways. On the one hand, Inkatha's political moderation is a direct consequence of furthering the interests of capitalism; conversely, Inkatha's unwillingness to engage in economic reorganization is a reflection of the compromise it is prepared to make to negotiate itself into power. The causal links are not uni-dimensional - the interests of capital are joined with the overriding self-interest of Buthelezi, for he is fully aware that his is not the only organization backed by capitalism. It shares this aspect of its social base with most, if not all, opposition forces in South Africa, even corners of the National Party. Inkatha has two potentially contradictory aims. It wants to end apartheid, while maintaining the stability and prosperity of South Africa so as not to threaten the leadership of a Black government(s) whether in a unitary state or confederal union. It is for this reason that Inkatha uses whatever

platform the government provides. To go underground is to force Inkatha to become revolutionary and destroy the second aim. It is also for this reason that Inkatha advocates investment in South Africa despite disinvestment being a precipitation of the first aim. A corollary of Inkatha's recent moves to negotiate itself into power - either in a unitary state or in a redrawn confederation - is a metamorphosis in Inkatha's policy on disinvestment. In 1977 Buthelezi announced sanctions were the only mechanism to achieve peaceful change and withdrew his support for foreign investment in South Africa. Inkatha has reversed this position. It is not now prepared to destroy the foundation of the economy. In part this is because it would constrain Inkatha's future action, in part because it is by inclination a supporter of the free enterprise system.

Economic policy is not among Inkatha's clearest points. It has proposed the greatest possible redistribution of wealth but only consistent with maximizing productivity. Buthelezi has often spoken up for capitalism modified with "African communalism". The implications of that qualification on the free enterprise system are unknown, although when Gibson Thula told a businessmen's conference that Inkatha would nationalize the mines Buthelezi explicitly retracted. Maré has shown how Buthelezi supported the interests of capital in granting white chain stores access to Kwa-Zulu.

It is clear that the organization sees a predominantly political solution to Black demands. Economic policy is subservient to geo-political solutions and the granting of territorial and political rights. It does recognize the need for material advancement and economic development but visualizes this following on from a geo-political solution. The emphasis is on redefinition of territorial boundaries and political liberation within them. In contrast, there are a number of studies suggesting mass Black opinion is primarily concerned with an economic solution. Insufficient money, low wages, poverty, the high cost of living and job reservation are the problems listed as the priority. There the dynamics of change are economic; Inkatha sees the dynamics of change as political.

This disparity has two consequences. Inkatha as a social movement will become disunited as members come to realise its view of the future, its aims, strategies and tactics are not theirs. Social movements need their membership to internalize the cognitive categories they offer. Secondly, if Inkatha does achieve its geo-political solution and these economic aspirations and changes are frustrated, as the Black masses see it the struggle will continue. The unrest in Kwa-Zulu could well be due to this phenomenon. Inkatha has a distinct disadvantage in playing a dual role. Most social movements are not in a position to redistribute economic resources prior to achieving power. Inkatha's role as the governing party in Kwa-Zulu does provide it with this opportunity. Therefore the organization can be judged by its ability to meet economic aspirations, to effect the judgement of its social movement role. It is for this reason that Inkatha is very sensitive to allegations of corruption, laziness, drunkenness, theft and mismanagement in the Kwa-Zulu government. Inkatha is circumscribed by Kwa-Zulu's dependence on South Africa. Its dilemma, therefore, is that the longer it governs Kwa-Zulu in its present territorial, political and economic form, the stronger the likelihood that anger in the homeland over shortage of land, rent increases, poor wages, migrant labour, and so on, will become transposed away from the central government on to the Kwa-Zulu government and Inkatha as its governing party. This could well explain the urgency there is in Inkatha for a geo-political solution and their willingness to accept a reconsolidated Kwa-Zulu. Yet, without the development of an economic infrastructure, it presents no solution. That is why the question of the inclusion of the Durban-Pinetown industrial centre in a reconsolidated Kwa-Zulu assumes so much importance. Without this, as the only industrial belt in Natal, Kwa-Zulu will be no better for its geo-political solution. The inclusion of this is probably the only obstacle to Inkatha accepting independence for Kwa-Zulu.

Many of the internal conflicts within the organization are over issues like these. They are essentially about policy and ideology, and while they are common to most social movements these conflicts are more sensitive in Inkatha because of its dual role. Lack of space prevents elaboration of this point. It is necessary to note, however, that such conflicts propel Inkatha to a further reliance on ethnicity.



Youth Brigade members were expelled in October 1978 on conflicts over the issue of Inkatha's new stand on disinvestment. They wanted to challenge the capitalist system and called for a more radical distribution of wealth and resources than Inkatha proposed. Inkatha's new policy toward participation in Central government sponsored platforms has also caused internal conflicts. An Inkatha official in the Transvaal was expelled because he refused to make a public apology to Gibson Thula, Inkatha's urban representative, after attacking him for participating in Koornhof's Liaison Committees. A similar conflict occurred over Inkatha's participation in the Soweto by-elections, when the Soweto branch was disciplined for criticizing the initial decision to participate. It is significant that these conflicts occurred in urban centres where Black Consciousness is active and the theme of non-participation is popular. If they continue, these conflicts could well cause an urban-rural split in Inkatha, pushing it even further into an ethnic social base. (6)

### Conclusion

Obviously the social base of Inkatha's support is very narrow. Zulu ethnicity can never be a foundation for true Black liberation, and capitalism is as Janus-faced as Inkatha. It lacks a sufficiently strong launching pad for power, and the contradictions of its Janus-face make it moribund and may lose it the support of liberals. Certainly, as internal Black pressure increases, Inkatha's moderacy will isolate it from further sections of the Black community. In this way the political ghost of Muzorewa may shortly find company with that of Buthelezi.

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### Notes

- (1) This is a shortened version of the author's book, Inkatha: a Preliminary Anatomy, shortly to be published simultaneously in Durban by the Institute of Black Research and in New York by the United Nations' Centre Against Apartheid.
- (2) Space prevents elaboration of this conceptual distinction. See G. Smith, "Social Movements and Party Systems in Western Europe", in Kolinsky and Paterson, Social and Political Movements in Western Europe (London, Croom Helm, 1976), pp. 331-354.
- (3) Daily News, 11 April 1980.
- (4) Reprinted in Ben Temkin, Gatsha Buthelezi: Zulu Statesmen (Cape Town, Purnell, 1976), pp. 395 ff.
- (5) Reported in T. Hanf et al., Sudafrika: Freidlicher Wandel (Munich, 1978). Nelson Mandela's 19% was high, considering his imprisonment for the last twenty years, the fact that it is illegal to acknowledge support for Mandela, and that the ANC is not able openly to canvass for support like Inkatha.
- (6) This gives a clue to the nature of interest articulation in Inkatha. Although this question has not formed the basis of this short paper, the arguments presented here indicate that Inkatha articulates two basic sets of interests: those of capital and, separate from this, since the interests of capital and the Botha government are diverging, of the government. This is obvious enough from what has been said about Inkatha's reliance on ethnicity, and a limited federal geo-political solution, and from its refusal to engage in economic reorganization. Inkatha is in a structural and institutional position, the nature of which has formed the basis of this paper, where these two sets of interests are bound up with its development. What this paper has not done is chart the personal links between Inkatha and these two powerful sets of interests. The nature of Buthelezi's personal links with the Kwa-Zulu Development Corporation, the 'sugar barons' and the White chain stores ought to be investigated.