

ministration squanders the opportunity created by the political capital and leverage that it has in the area today, it should remember the cardinal rule of Middle East politics: If there is no progress toward peace, there is deterioration toward the next round of deadly, destabilizing armed conflict. □

## ■ CHALLENGES IN THE RANKS

# Mandela Tries to Stay Out Front

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*Johannesburg*

**N**elson Mandela is making a belated attempt to change his image. Gone is the picture of the leader pushing conciliation and compromise while holding the hawks in his African National Congress at bay. In its place is the new Mandela, a man who appears more combative than his own militant supporters as he confronts a duplicitous government.

Mandela says the change goes back to last fall, when he began to question his faith in President F.W. de Klerk as a "man of integrity." But only now has he chosen to make his anger public, as negotiations over South Africa's future are accompanied by the violent deaths of thousands of blacks, and as the A.N.C. leadership tries vainly to deny that it is surrendering ground to the government.

Mandela's new, tougher stance is primarily an attempt to shield himself from mounting criticism of his role as chief concession-maker. Yet the change is proving far from enough to reassure the A.N.C.'s varied ranks of supporters. In July, Mandela will face a lesson in grass-roots democracy at the A.N.C.'s national conference in Durban. Although he denies it, factionalism is on the rise within the organization. Unions, civic organizations and township activists all fear that in its overriding concern to achieve the principle of one person, one vote, the A.N.C. will compromise everything else it has stood for. The congress, then, stands at a crossroads: Will it shape a radical alternative for the "new" South Africa or merely accommodate itself to the apartheid system Mark II? Even if this dispute does not come to a head in July, the conference will undoubtedly set the direction of future negotiations with the government. All the indications are that the outcome will not be to Mandela's liking.

It is hard not to sympathize with Mandela, who faces a number of problems that should by rights burden South Africa's white rulers. It is the A.N.C., not the National Party, that must fumble for a strategy to cope with violence, disillusioned supporters and splits in its ranks. Yet so far it has failed to wrest from the government control of the transition to a nonracial system. Instead, it is reduced to largely futile gestures such as calling off talks that were not in any case like-

ly to begin for several weeks, and then saying they may be back on track after all.

Winnie Mandela personifies her husband's difficulties. Few in the A.N.C. generate as much fear and loathing as the so-called Mother of the Nation. Both leadership and rank-and-file critics see her as representative of an undemocratic, thuggish element and as evidence of her husband's weakness. "If he can't even control his own wife . . ." the refrain goes. Her conviction and six-year prison sentence, in the eyes of many in the A.N.C., has virtually ended her career. Evidence of this was her defeat in a secret ballot for the presidency of the A.N.C. Women's League by a margin of more than three to one, after Albertina Sisulu, wife of A.N.C. internal leader Walter Sisulu, withdrew her candidacy and urged her supporters to vote for Winnie's opponent.

But Winnie will not be sidelined so easily. When she lambastes the government in a manner few others would dare, the roar of approval from the angry young comrades can be heard for miles. Yet her diminished influence over the A.N.C. hierarchy strengthens the hand of others who fear the leadership may make too many compromises. Mrs. Mandela alienated many within the core of the Mass Democratic Movement during its years of keeping resistance alive while the A.N.C. was banned. She is no longer an obstacle to their attempts to reassert their influence.

Those who remained in South Africa through the worst of the state of emergency increasingly see the A.N.C. as watering down its commitment to longstanding economic and social ideals. Their criticisms are echoed by political prisoners and exiles, many of whom remain in jail or abroad months after the government promised their release and return, and whose anger toward de Klerk is matched only by their frustration at the A.N.C.'s inability to do anything for them.



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Now the A.N.C. even seems prepared to compromise on the central issue of one person, one vote, as Nelson Mandela recently indicated in a speech at Stellenbosch University, the cradle of Afrikaner intellectual life. A senior official later explained privately that this meant the A.N.C. might go along with the government's refusal to consider a winner-take-all system. In other words, whites would be given influence in a future government out of proportion to their numbers.

Mandela confesses that the A.N.C. is having a hard time preventing the government from acting unilaterally to entrench white privilege under a postapartheid system. The last statutory pillars of apartheid are to be scrapped on June 30. But the bill to reform the Group Areas Act, which segregated residential neighborhoods and confined blacks to townships, gives the authorities power to decide whether people moving into a district will "maintain appropriate norms and standards in any residential area." An inspection board will have the right to inspect premises for "overcrowding," a term open to selective interpretation, since South African blacks tend to have larger families than their white countrymen. A similar bill to scrap the Land Acts, which preserved most farmland for whites, gives officials the right to decide who may farm where.

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While Mandela insists that the new laws show how much the National Party has been forced to abandon its traditional prerogatives, that is not how some important A.N.C. allies see it. The 1.2 million-strong Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the popular and experienced United Democratic Front have loosened their ties to the A.N.C. in order to give themselves greater freedom to challenge shifts in policy. The two have joined forces with several housing rights organizations to form a new civic association. Although they deny that this new body is in competition with the A.N.C., Cosatu general secretary Jay Naidoo is clearly frustrated by the leadership's abandonment of many of its socialist policies, particularly on the question of nationalization. "We are redefining our role," says Naidoo. "We do not see ourselves becoming apolitical; in fact we see ourselves becoming more political. Unless a political transition is accompanied by a meeting of the needs of the people, that transition will be a mere illusion." Ultimately, Cosatu and its allies may prove to be what the A.N.C. is not—an organization with a clear political platform.

The A.N.C. says it cannot transform itself into a political party at this stage because that would mean rejecting the many diverse political views that it now incorporates. But in pursuing that supposedly loftier purpose, the leadership has essentially rejected a grass-roots voice on bread-and-butter concerns. Because the A.N.C. has no clear policy on many issues, there

is therefore no sense of participation. Sometimes the only substantive contact with the organization in the townships comes in the form of intimidation by young comrades forcing people to take part in a protest.

Those who worked with the United Democratic Front feel particularly aggrieved that the A.N.C. has chosen to overlook the experience they had built up organizing at the local level during the state of emergency. "The A.N.C. has demonstrated an inability to deal with grass-roots issues like housing and containing the violence and crime in the townships," says U.D.F. co-president Archie Gumede. "And in many ways its leadership has grown out of touch with its membership."

The continued carnage in the Reef townships is costing the A.N.C. one of its most important areas of support, urbanized families who are desperate for change—but not at any price. They are well aware that Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party is responsible for most of the slaughter, with significant help from the police, but they are equally concerned about the A.N.C.'s inability to stop it.

If Mandela is so influential with the government, it is often asked, why can he not force it to do the one thing that would make a difference—ban the carrying of all weapons in public? The National Party, whose power has always been based on the widespread and systematic abuse of individual and collective rights, has suddenly discovered one that is inalienable: the right of Zulus to bear "cultural weapons." Blacks still cannot vote, live where they wish, seek many jobs or buy land. But their right to carry a spear in public is not to be infringed.

There have been fewer than forty prosecutions for the 10,000 deaths in factional violence. Yet Mandela's response has been so naive as to be almost laughable. He recently told de Klerk that the way to get the police to cease their support for the killings was to force a full investigation of each case: Since the police would not have the personnel to look into every one, Mandela argued, they would therefore stop the carnage. This presupposes good will on the part of the police, but as Mandela has said so often, the police are complicit in the killings. In May, after the A.N.C. had issued an ultimatum demanding that de Klerk take dramatic action to end the violence—including the dismissal of two Cabinet ministers—the government issued only ineffective restrictions on weapons in "unrest areas." The A.N.C.'s unimpressive response was to say it would not participate in constitutional talks that have yet to begin. Talks already under way on other issues would continue.

Mandela's dilemma is to reconcile his relationships with men who continue to act in bad faith—including de Klerk—with his effort to insure the best deal for South Africa's black majority. His mistake, perhaps, is that he has continued to show a degree of respect for his negotiating partners that few in the townships consider merited. Having demanded the resignation of Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok for failing to control the violence, Mandela has made a point of stressing his good personal relationship with Vlok, who heads a police force guilty of innumerable crimes. And while most people in the townships blame the police for abetting the daily terror, they see Chief Buthelezi as the true villain. Mandela has evaded this issue, however, with his talk of a shadowy "Third Force." Such a thing obviously exists, but only as a loosely

coordinated group of white ultrarightists capable of no more than exacerbating the level of violence.

Mandela has not only refrained from pointing the finger at Inkatha; he insists on calling Buthelezi his "good friend"—even after nearly 10,000 deaths and the Zulu chief's assertion that South Africa's salvation lies in a Zulu-Afrikaner alliance. The A.N.C. leadership may have good reasons for placating Buthelezi, but it wins them no friends among those who live near the Inkatha-dominated workers' hostels and who conclude that the leadership is out of touch, or even that it has lost its nerve.

These doubts can be seen most clearly in the failure of the A.N.C.'s membership drive, which has fallen far short of its target of 1 million new members by the July conference. Unlike most South African organizations, however, the A.N.C.'s following is not confined to its membership. If most blacks identify with any organization at all, it is with the A.N.C. Opinion polls have put its standing at between 40 percent and 67 percent of the black population, compared with less than 5 percent each for the National Party and Inkatha.

These figures haunt Mandela. The A.N.C. has demanded a vote for a constituent assembly, as a genuine reflection of the strength of South Africa's contending forces. But Inkatha and the National Party have predictably rejected the idea out of hand. De Klerk will not put his party's popularity to such a test, and Mandela knows it will be all but impossible to force his hand.

This will not stop the A.N.C. grass roots who are trying to force the leadership's hand. A constituent assembly offers blacks a more immediate prospect of representation and control than a new constitution and elections several years down the road. Frustration with de Klerk's continued manipulation of events may produce an open grass-roots revolt at the July conference. The warning signs are already visible. Last December a rebellion in the ranks forced the national executive to abandon a proposal by international affairs head Thabo Mbeki to set a timetable for winding down some international sanctions. Mbeki judged correctly that if the A.N.C. did not offer an alternative to the continuation of comprehensive sanctions, the Europeans would dismantle them of their own accord and the A.N.C. would lose the initiative. But the grass roots were in no mood to offer the government a sign of approval. The sanctions might be lifted anyway, but de Klerk would not be allowed to claim that this was a reward from the A.N.C. rank and file. The final decision to stand firm over sanctions may have damaged the congress abroad and among South African liberals, but it is one of the few points that the leadership has scored recently with its domestic constituency.

In July, grass-roots activists may oblige the A.N.C. to suspend negotiations with the government indefinitely, or refuse to allow Mandela to settle for anything less than a constituent assembly. In part this will depend on the new composition of the A.N.C.'s national executive, which is likely to be expanded from thirty-five to more than a hundred members in an attempt to broaden representation away from the former exiles who now predominate and bring in more of the leaders who remained in South Africa during the state of emergency. But

it will also depend on the extent to which the A.N.C. leadership can calm its branch organizations and continue to make concessions against the wishes of supporters in the townships. It is unlikely that the leadership can succeed in this. And if it fails, Mandela will emerge from the July conference clearer about what kind of "new" South Africa he is expected to deliver. □

## Ethiopia

(Continued From Front Cover)

that if the man who had coined the slogan "The Motherland or Death" wasn't going to risk his own neck, they weren't going to risk theirs either.

The liberation movements arrived in London with victory in their grasp. The elite Second Army had just surrendered to the E.P.L.F. in the Eritrean capital of Asmara. Units of the E.P.R.D.F. held the Ethiopian capital in a stranglehold and were ready to move into the city at will.

As Ethiopian Prime Minister Tesfaye Dinka negotiated in London, acting President Tesfaye Gebre-Kidan went to the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa and revealed that the government had lost control of its army, essentially conceding defeat. Thus in a dramatic announcement on the first afternoon of the talks, the United States "recommended" that E.P.R.D.F. forces enter Addis Ababa to restore law and order. With defeat visible on his face, Dinka walked out of the talks and alleged to the press that the Americans had done a deal with the Devil. The next day Dinka failed to show up for the talks, and so became part of history.

It is clear that the E.P.R.D.F. would have taken Addis Ababa with or without the approval of Washington. In late February it began moving swiftly out of its northern stronghold, gaining control of a new province every two weeks in a direct drive for the capital. But during preliminary meetings with State Department officials in Khartoum in April, the E.P.R.D.F. agreed that it would not enter Addis Ababa before the talks began. The guerrillas were true to their word.

The United States was thus successful in engineering the desired soft landing. Far fewer were killed than would likely have been the case if E.P.R.D.F. forces had stormed the capital. Unlike other cities in war-torn Eritrea, Asmara was not reduced to rubble by the Ethiopian Air Force in the aftermath of its capture. But the E.P.R.D.F. chose not to formalize a transitional government while in London. It opted instead to convene a broad-based conference in early July in which members of the former government may well participate. Newly supported by the United States in its demand for self-determination in Eritrea, the E.P.L.F. declined to make a unilateral declaration of independence but did announce its intention to form a provisional government. And so the negotiators left London with an "interim administrative authority" running Addis Ababa and a cross between a government and a liberation movement administering what is likely to be Africa's newest country—Eritrea.

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