

IN LIEU OF A BOOK REVIEW

A BOOK BY ONE OF US

Gatsha Buthelezi: Chief with a Double Agenda, by Mzala (Zed Books Ltd. London and New Jersey, 1988).

Mzala is a cadre of Umkhonto we Sizwe, and a former law student at Ngoye University. He has been writing articles of considerable interest in Sechaba and the African Communist.

In my encounters with him I discerned a dynamic personality. He would always have an issue of revolutionary interest to discuss and apply his mind to penetrate it. **Gatsha Buthelezi: Chief with a Double Agenda**, a well researched and quite readable book, is fruition of such penetration into issues. The title of this book is apt and reflects adequately its balanced and enlightening contents.

I have had occasion to read Gatsha Buthelezi's speeches, listen to him on radio and T.V. Of relevant consequence, I had occasion to see and listen to him in person during the funeral of Robert Sobukwe in Graff-Reinet on 12th March, 1978. The treatment he received there is not of much significance to this review. What struck me odd — his powers to double talk and evoke sympathy and concern — is what Mzala lays bare in this book.

During this incident, after Gatsha had been escorted out of the stadium by the clergy, a brief press conference was held with him. I was part of that brief gathering. It so happened that one foreign correspondent pointed out to Gatsha that there was a spittle on his cheek. With composure, he took out a handkerchief, wiped off the spittle, and

simultaneously uttered that this reminds him that 'in a few weeks to come, we shall be once more marking the crucifixion of our lord, who was insulted, pelted and spat at because he fought for the liberation of the poor'. One journalist asked if he likened himself to Jesus Christ because of what had happened to him a short while ago, without batting an eyelid he rejoined "yes".

I was at a loss whether he meant what he said, or that was just a trick to justify himself on the path of collaboration he has chosen.

"Chief Gatsha Buthelezi is the most controversial black politician in South Africa".

Mzala submits in the opening line of this book. Indeed, looking at Gatsha soberly, and objectively, his personality and approach to the struggle, makes him controversial. He is more refined, complex and intricate than other bantustan leaders. It is just not enough to discard him into the camp of sellouts without properly examining his standpoints. He has plausible facts to justify himself. Hence in many ways he becomes a case study.

Furthermore an examination of such a personality must be substantiated with undisputable facts. It must be a serious effort devoid to provoke untenable mudslinging from the chief. This quality has proved befitting in Mzala with his research capabilities, presentation of facts, and an apparent intimate knowledge of Zulu traditions and history.

For instance, Gatsha argues that as a Buthelezi he was preordained a prime minister to his contemporary Zulu king. His supporters, with his seeming connivance, state that the correct form to address

him is 'umtwana' or 'Infanta'. This is a title meaning prince and given to all direct descendants of Zulu kings.

This is a very serious claim. Our people hold their culture and traditions dear. To dispute issues based on these sentiments without facts could lead one to be mistrusted by the people. This is very dangerous, especially when one speaks from the positions of the liberation movement. Partly, it is through the penting up of sentiments like these that Gatsha prevails over the other bantustan leaders. Lack of adequate facts to disprove the Gatsha myth has over the years made many people to dismiss him only half-heartedly.

In chapter 6 of this book, entitled "Traditional Prime Minister", Mzala eloquently pierces through from a myriad of hypothesis. He states very clear that King Dinizulu had nine daughters in all. Princess Phikisile, the mother to the founding member of the A.N.C, Pixley Seme was the first daughter, while Gatsha's mother, Princess Magogo was the second daughter.

He states "Chief Buthelezi's position in the royal hierachy is no different from that of Pixley Seme, Rogers Shange, Kuthukakwenzeka Cebekhulu Gilbert Mbatha and Langaletu Dlamini, all of whom were sons of daughters of King Dinizulu. They too have a line of descent through their mothers which goes back to King Cetshwayo and King Shaka", (p.104).

But this does not make them princes as Mzala argues:

"The Nguni cultural group, of which the Zulus are part, is patrilineal in its tradition of succession. In Zululand, since, the time of Malandela, who lived six generations before King

Shaka, the general rule of succession was the eldest son of the great wife of the king succeeded his father, and only the sons and daughters of the king were refered to as 'prince' or princess or 'mntwana' not the children of the king's daughters, who would normally not marry another prince in the same tribe." (p.104)

TRADITIONAL PREMIERSHIP

On the traditional premiership of the Buthelezi, Mzala concedes that Gatsha's great-grandfather was the premier chief to King Cetshwayo. This fact is important. But a closer scrutiny into it reveals its serious distortion by Gatsha. This apparent slighting of facts brings to doubt his integrity. Especially that this specific subject has to do with his own family history. Mzala clarifies this point as follows:

"...it is certainly true that Chief Mnyamana was the premier chief or what Gatsha prefers to call 'Prime Minister' during the reign of King Cetshwayo. Chief Mnyamana did not inherit this title. He was appointed by the King in recognition of his leadership qualities. Each Zulu king appointed a councillor or premier chief, but it was certainly not always a Buthelezi chief who was so appointed" (p.104-105).

Mzala goes on to mention the names of the premier chiefs from the era of King Shaka up to King Dinizulu. This nullifies Gatsha's claims of leading Kwa-Zulu bantustan out of traditional considerations.

Also, Gatsha has on numerous occasions submitted that he has a political and moral right to lead the Kwa-Zulu bantustan. He argues this position from the premise that Kwa-Zulu is the ancestral land of the Zulus. Here the analogy is drawn between his bantustan and the former protectorates like

Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland. Mzala counters:

"Buthelezi is a leader of the present Kwa-Zulu bantustan which, like all bantustans, was established on the basis of the 1913 Native Land Act which gave 7.5% of South Africa's land area to the African people, land which comprises today pieces of land that are a caricature of the Zulu territory on its original historic

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MZALA

sense. Millions of people, whom Chief Buthelezi claims are in 'the land of their birth', were actually forced into these ethnic compartments by the relevant departments of the oppressor government, using bulldozers, police squads and other means" (p.30).

To this end, Gatsha's claims and assertions do not hold water. His juggling with the culture and traditions of the people appears to be both:

a desperate and well orchestrated plan to legitimise his role in the bantustan system. He cannot even claim to be the premier chief to King Zwelithini. In fact his wanting treatment of the King has led to a strained if not hostile relationship.

Moreso, the detailed study made by Mzala in this book exposes also the fact that Gatsha swindled his elder brother and heir apparent of the Buthelezi clan, Mceleli, of his chieftainship. The conflict led to his banishment to Sibasa. In this Gatsha's role was not a minor one.

BANTU AUTHORITIES

It is interesting that Gatsha portrays himself as the arch-opponent of the Bantu Authorities Act. This is the basic Act of apartheid. It institutionalised racial domination and discrimination and ethnic division amongst the oppressed and exploited. Through the 40 years of Nationalist Party rule it was formulated and developed. It has along the years modified its functional terms and tactics. But its fundamental tenets and objectives are still the same. The Kwa-Zulu bantustan, like other bantustans, the defunct advisory boards, UBC's, Community Councils and the Town Councils the regime is attempting to initiate in October, are intended structural expressions of this Act. Gatsha has made scathing attacks on this Act in the past, despite the fact that he himself is functioning within it. Whether his criticism is only tokenism in an attempt to command some respectability with the majority which opposes it, is another issue. For a fact he commented in a speech delivered in Mbali on 16 December 1983:

"I more than any other, fought the introduction of homeland machinery designed by Pretoria. I stomped the length and breadth of Kwa-Zulu leading the fight against the introduction of the Bantu Authorities Act". (p.60).

He has also gone on record condemning

the sham independence opted for by his counterparts. How sincere is Gatsha that he has always been opposed to this Act? Is he really honest in checking the fragmentation of South Africa in the form of bantustan independence? In response to these important questions, Mzala digs historical facts one by one. Their impact on Gatsha's claims of opposition to the system of Bantu Authorities and sham bantustan independence is shattering.

For a fact, he is virtually participating in the maintenance and development of the bantustan policy. He has become bolder in his defence of this system. But what is most interesting in this issue is that he actually did not see anything wrong in it. This comes to light in his response to an article in *New Age* 5/11/59 alleging his opposition to the Bantu Authorities Act. In a letter to the editor he wrote:

"I wish to correct a certain impression it has created. The writer states, inter-alia, that.... his absence from Eshowe function was interpreted by many as an indication of his open hostility to the establishment of Bantu Authorities, and rumours are rife amongst members of the tribe that Chief Buthelezi may soon be exiled for his opposition to the Government".

He concludes the letter by saying:

"..... never have I ever declared any hostility to the establishment of Bantu Authorities to your correspondent or to anybody either now or at any time. The Bantu Authorities Act is permissive and therefore voluntary, that is legally speaking. I have never opposed the Government either by an act of commission or omission as is averred in this article by your correspondent" (p.63-64).

The contradictory personality of Gatsha juts out immediately. The true nature of

his double talk always takes a definite side when it comes to a crunch. In every instance when there are doubts as to his position and direction, he chooses the side on which his bread is buttered, the side of the apartheid regime.

ALTERNATIVES

As the struggle for liberation heats up, so does the race for alternatives to the noble ideals thousands have perished for. In April 1986 Gatsha unveiled a plan typical of such a race. *"We are exploring for alternatives to apartheid"* (p.206) he said in his opening speech to the Kwa-Zulu Natal Indaba. What this meant is that Gatsha is proposing federalism and sharing power with the whites. In the South African context, sharing power which would be expressed in proportional representation, would only serve to perpetuate racism.

A closer analysis of Gatsha's hunt for 'alternatives' shows that he is seeking politically legitimate methods of opting for the sham Kwa-Zulu bantustan independence. He is in this venture with some industrialists and their intellectuals. For Gatsha and these people a unitary, non-racial and democratic South Africa of the Freedom Charter is an undesirable prospect. Indaba lays the basis for the strengthening of the positions of the bantustans in the future. It anticipates and encourages a scramble for South Africa by ethnic and provincial groupings. This is totally against the desires of our people, whose freedom of movement, association, residence and speech have been stifled to almost non-existence by the apartheid regime.

The book also makes interesting reading on Gatsha's positions on violence. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi is seen by his followers in the international community and his apartheid paymasters as a moderate. They laud him for his non-violence stance for the attainment of political objectives.

NON VIOLENCE.

He who stands firm on the principles of non-violence, when thousands around him are being mowed, must be truly an exceptional man. There have been such exceptions, but the reality of the violence of apartheid is changing such men. This is not a surprise to those who are familiar with the operations of the nature's laws of development.

For every action there must be reaction. For example, the A.N.C turned to armed struggle only in 1961, 49 years after its founding. Its adoption of armed struggle came after almost all avenues of non-violent struggle were closed. It has stated repeatedly in its policy statements and directives to the people, as their leader, that its violence is and must be directed against the apartheid system. It has stressed, in the face of extreme provocation, that its violence is not conducted against the whites per se, but the apartheid machinery and its economic basis.

Gatsha has condemned this approach to violence by the A.N.C. What is important here is to find out if he is at all against violence. This is what Mzala sets out to do under different headings. The testimony contained in this book is enormous. For instance, Gatsha has threatened the Indian people with violence. Not very long ago the Indian people residing in Phoenix were attacked. In 1980 there was a student boycott in Natal. "He called for the creation of vigilante groups which would 'shoot to kill' if they found anyone interfering with school buildings. This step, he said, should be seen against the background of violence which the people were prepared to commit against him and members of his Legislative Assembly".(p.14-15).

In 1981 an Inkatha paramilitary camp was established in Ulundi. In 1983 Gatsha's Inkatha impis killed 5 students and injured more than 100 in Ngoye.

Referring to the current events Mzala states:

"An alarming feature of the South African political scene since September 1984 has been the emergence of vigilante violence in the black townships. Chief Buthelezi frequently refers to this phenomenon as 'black-on-black violence' "(p.138)

It should be pointed out that this feature is present even in the trade unions. COSATU was formed in 1985. Its positions as a progressive trade union federation are well known. UWUSA was founded in 1986. It stated in its policy statement that: "UWUSA shares the views of the President of Inkatha, Chief Buthelezi, concerning the future political dispensation of South Africa". (p. 179).

In this book, details of two separate cases of UWUSA violence drawn from affidavits to the Natal Supreme Court are cited. In these cases, intimidation and violence often leading to the deaths of members of UDF affiliates is apparent. There is in most cases a clear collaboration with the Inkatha vigilantes, the police and management. The question how Gatsha is linked to these violent activities would be fair.

To secure a clearer picture, Mzala quotes from one of Gatsha's spine-chilling speeches when explaining his non-violent stance "... All I say is: God help anybody who stands on our way. Those who do it will understand more fully how determined we are. If they do not understand now they will understand it tomorrow after they have blundered because they did not understand. If they do not understand it tomorrow, they will perhaps understand it the second time when they have blundered more grievously. If they did not understand it the next time, they will most certainly understand it in the life

hereafter. We are the true sons and daughters of Africa, and those of us who come from this part of our country have warrior blood coursing in our veins. We are quite capable of adopting an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth philosophy for that which we cherish deeply". (p.158).

Inkatha vigilantes and UWUSA violence combined with Gatsha's spurious verbal attacks on opposition, coupled with the defence of such violence, puts him in the centre of these shameful events.

This book leads one, correctly, so, to the fact that Gatsha is a violent man. Gatsha has offered himself to be used as a tool by the racist regime. There has never been an instance when the violence of his Inkatha vigilantes was directed against the state. The members of the mass democratic movement, and those refusing to take up Inkatha membership have been the ones on the receiving end of his Inkatha's violence.

For example, a certain chief Maphumulo, then an M.P. for Mpumalanga was assaulted by Inkatha in full view of Kwa-Zulu police. The following day in Kwa-Zulu Bantustan's Legislative Assembly, Gatsha was reported to have stated that:

"... whoever challenged him, challenged the people and the people would deal with him". (Sowetan 3/10/83).

Chief Maphumulo's challenge to Gatsha was his refusal to join Inkatha.

ANC's ASSOCIATION

The ANC's earlier association with

Gatsha and its assistance in the founding of Inkatha is also clarified in this book. Its approach has an element of self-criticism and mature outlook by the national liberation movement. The problems of post-Rivonia and apparent lack of dynamic contact with the internal are elaborated.

The other interesting aspect of this book is the way it comprehensively deals with the issue of sanctions. Its approach is objective and presents a balanced argument concluding that sanctions could be a vital contribution by the international community for the demise of apartheid. Here Mzala makes a very commendable remark:

"Normally, one would expect Chief Buthelezi as an outspoken advocate of 'non-violence' to give a moral lead in this non-violent strategy for liberation; but this has not been the case. Chief Buthelezi opposes this non-violent method of seeking change, just as he has opposed other methods of non-violent struggle, such as rent and consumer boycotts". (p.204).

This book makes a good reading for a revolutionary approach to the bantustan leadership. It is factual and captures the concentration of the reader. It is unlike academic exercises which appear now and again purporting to be dealing with our struggle. It is not a book written for us, but by one of us.

—Grant moloto

And one person has come to embody the aspirations of all the South African people— Nelson Mandela. ...His life symbolises our people's burning desire for freedom, his imprisonment is the imprisonment of the whole South African nation, the fight for his unconditional release, and that of all political prisoners and detainees, is the glorious fight against injustice, racial bigotry, and man's inhumanity to man. — OR Tambo