

Older Leaders Take Cue From Youth

By Jim Hoagland

Washington Post Features Service

CAPE TOWN — The children's crusade against apartheid has galvanized adult black politicians into stretching the limits of the system they have tried to work within, revived the hopes of jailed and restricted nationalist leaders and brought black clergymen forward as prominent spokesmen for and interpreters of the new movement.

Six years ago, Parliamentarian Helen Surman called South Africa's demoralized black population "the great silenced majority."

Today there is a strong competition among blacks to speak out and articulate their people's aspirations, and to gain access to the resources, local and international, that will help determine who does emerge in the top black leadership roles here.

The schoolyard rebellion has come at a crucial time. The first of the native reserves contested into "homelands," Transkei, received a formal grant of independence in October and the government was obviously counting on the status and benefits conferred on Prime Minister Kaloo Matanzima to persuade the other homeland leaders to follow him in negotiating independence grants.

Most of the others appear to be falling in line with Zulu chief Gatsha Buthelesi, who has denounced Matanzima and who is emphasizing even more his already clear commitment to Black Consciousness and eventual black liberation.

"I have to start where I am," Buthelesi said of student criticism of him as a government stooge because of his role as hereditary Zulu chief and his efforts to bind the country's 4.5 million Zulus together as his power base. "But what we are talking about is black liberation, not Zulu liberation. We are all black, we are all oppressed."

Buthelesi appears to be playing the most difficult and dangerous game of any of the nine homeland leaders. His efforts to rebuild the Zulu into a political unit that would be able to withstand its lacerate to back on political bargaining revives white fears of the Zulu wars as well as student scorn.

But he appears to believe that he is positioning himself to pick up the pieces if all-out violent confrontation does occur. "We support the reconciliation of all blacks. We want the broadest possible front to fight apartheid," he said in an interview.

He also said the U.S. government should help finance a newspaper he

wants to start and responded, "Why should we tell them?" when asked if the South African government would not forbid such a move.

While the church was once seen as part of the establishment here, a new generation of concerned young black clergymen have come to be important allies of the students. When they needed an adult to try to talk the police into stopping the shooting in Soweto, the students sought out the Rev. Manas Buthelesi, a younger cousin and political foe of chief Gatsha.

"It is only recently that the black man has drawn full implications of the fact that he too was created in the image of God," Reverend Buthelesi says in explaining the Black Theology movement that has contributed to the growth of Black Consciousness. "It is a recent discovery on the part of the black man to realize that he is entitled to interpret the Bible in the light of his own experience."

"I happen to be a biblical conservative," explained the Rev. Wesley Matanzima, a Methodist minister working in townships near Cape Town. "I believe it when the Bible says that God wants justice done, so I get involved. The children are confronting us with the greatest moral issues of our time, and we have to respond."

Asked if he feared jail, he replied with a comment that is one measure of the new black attitude: "It is now that everybody has to do a stint. If mine comes up, I'll do it."

The struggle by the students has also revived long-dormant cells of the outlawed African National Congress, which was responsible for blowing out a wall in Soweto, a black nation in November, and of the United African Congress, its equally banned rival to the 1950s for political leadership here.

ANC leader Nelson Mandela is serving a life sentence in the Robben Island prison, PAC leader Robert Sobukwe, considered by South Africans and foreigners who have met him as one of the country's most brilliant political thinkers of either race, is condemned by the government to live in the small town of Kimberley, under house arrest at night and banned from speaking for publication.

But friends to whom Sobukwe does speak freely say that he is again today quoting Frantz Fanon on the results of guerrilla struggle and believes that any minor guerrilla threats will prevent the white government with innumerable problems "because it cannot trust its own internal population."

David Thebehall, who accepted ap-



CHIEF GATSHA BUTHELESI

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ROBERT SOBUKWE

pointment as the government's "mayor" of Soweto by heading Urban Bantu Council, is dismissed definitively as an Uncle Tom by the students, who feel they have set the new standards of leadership.

"The UBC leaders are not important," said one student. "They don't even get arrested."

But in the wake of the rebellion and its impact, Thebehall, a pliant insurance agent, has formed a political alliance with Gatsha Buthelesi rather than with more conservative homeland chiefs, and begun to speak in terms that were virtually unthinkable for a UBC leader at the beginning of the decade.

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