

## Untamed South Africa

**T**O MANAGE a revolution against itself is the hardest trick a government can attempt. President F.W. de Klerk in South Africa, like President Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, is trying to bring it off. His party spent 40 years reinforcing his country's divisions by race and by tribe. He now wants the 5m white people who made the mess to unscramble it, and needs the 28m black people who suffered the wrong to unite as partners in the job. Yet the streets run with blood. Something akin to civil war has killed about 1,000 people this year—including 200 so far this month—in the black townships of the Transvaal.

Mr de Klerk has three impressive advantages. First, what he wants to do is right. Second, few of South Africa's whites have so far declared themselves against him. (Those who have are a sorry lot: when the police peppered some of them with birdshot in a drunken riot last week, there was more merriment than horror.) The president's third advantage is the amazing forgiveness of those whom he most needs to do business with. After decades of prison or exile, the leaders of the African National Congress have every reason to resent past wrongs. Yet they would be happy to move peacefully forwards, if only they could make up their minds how.

Nelson Mandela of the ANC, on his release after 28 years in jail in February last year, was hailed as a saviour. He has turned out to be the cautious advocate of an indecisive movement. The sentencing this week of his wife Winnie (an "unblushing liar", said the judge) to six years on kidnapping and assault charges is a shocking blow to him.

South Africa's black politics is dominated by the people of the townships, the hideous dormitory suburbs into which millions of people migrated in the apartheid years. They have bred a generation without hope: unemployed, uneducated and given to violent criminality. Officially, the townships have been ruled by government-sponsored local councillors, challenged by the ANC which, as a banned organisation, could act only outside the law. Both sides had their gangs. Mrs Mandela's "football club" was one of the toughest.

The ANC's leaders distrust her. But they are themselves divided. For decades they were forced to operate in the shadows of the law. They come from jail, from exile, and from among the sympathisers who escaped arrest by working in the so-called Mass Democratic Movement—and they, in turn, must hold the loyalty of the lawless "comrades" of the city gangs, tempted by the simple, violent, anti-white solutions offered by rival splinter-groups.

The latest slaughter, though, has occurred in a separate



conflict. The ANC's township gangs confront mobs organised among Zulu migrant workers, at the behest of the Inkatha Freedom Party. In Natal, where Inkatha's leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, is chief minister of the Zulu "homeland", its members fight other Zulus who belong to the ANC. In the Transvaal all-Zulu Inkatha gangs fight ANC gangs, claiming (with some justice) that the ANC is dominated by Xhosas, among whom Mr Mandela is a greater chief than Mr Buthelezi is among the Zulus.

Zulus and Xhosas, speaking similar languages, are South Africa's biggest tribes. The fighting in the townships is as much a tribal affair as that between Serbs and Croats. But, as in Yugoslavia, it involves real politics too. Mr Buthelezi is admired by many of the white businessmen who persuaded the president to junk apartheid. He wants a federal South Africa, in which the Zulus would run most of Natal's affairs. Businessmen want the same, fearing the strong, black central government that the ANC stands for.

Mr Buthelezi worked alongside the apartheid system, while the ANC stood square against it. Inkatha still co-operates with the congress's old enemies, the government-sponsored township leaders. The police sometimes abet its raids. President de Klerk has expressly allowed Zulus, but not members of other tribes, to carry "traditional" weapons such as clubs and spears, which come in very useful in gang fights.

### First stop the killing

The president would be right to insist that Inkatha, as well as the much larger ANC, is at the constitutional conference he wants. But he must not issue Mr Buthelezi's invitation as a reward for his supporters' violence. He should enforce a ban on all weapons, and ensure punishment for all officials, black or white, who take sides in the conflicts. So long as he appears to do neither, the killing will go on.

As for the ANC, it has to stop behaving like an underground opposition and sort out its leadership. That is supposed to happen at its much-postponed party conference, now set for July, ahead of the constitutional conference. Its general secretary, Alfred Nzo, is widely considered useless. Its president, Oliver Tambo, is sick. His nominal deputy Mr Mandela, though 73 and wounded by his wife's folly, is still its greatest asset. If he stepped, or were pushed, aside, the divisions between the ANC's wiser heads and its hardliners would erupt, testing still further the faith of whites in the possibility of a peaceful transition from apartheid.

South Africa will eventually have a government domi-

nated by its black citizens, most of whom will probably be voting for the ANC. That movement has some talented younger people, who carry the baggage of tribe and dogma more lightly than their fathers did. Given peace and patience, they and the Zulus of Inkatha could surely come to terms. Yet none of them may find the way through, unless Mr de Klerk

ensures that his policemen and soldiers stop playing on, and playing up, tribal tensions. Mikhail Gorbachev, the man the world could do business with, has not managed to steer his multiracial country out of the mess that decades of bad government consigned it to. The South Africans, black and white, may do no better.

## How Labour could win

**Neil Kinnock may be Britain's next prime minister. Especially if he can bring more of his party's ideas up to date**

BRITAIN'S Labour Party, like other western left-wing parties, has spent the past decade moving steadily to the right. In opposition, it has reformed itself almost out of recognition. Its leaders feel they have earned the right to win an election. After a dozen Tory years, voters would normally be keen on a change. Evidence from opinion polls, by-elections and council elections is mildly encouraging for Labour. But only mildly. The party has failed to establish the kind of lead that makes the post-Thatcher Conservatives quake. Few Labour MPs seem convinced they will make it to government. Even fewer are politically excited or intellectually engaged by the prospect. After their long march, the comrades have arrived at the battleground, weary and suspicious.

Some Labour loyalists must wonder what more they can do. Are desperate measures called for? Perhaps a deal on voting reform with the Liberal Democrats is the only way to transform the political map. Perhaps Neil Kinnock should be offered a plum job as a rugby coach, to make way for John Smith. Perhaps Roy Hattersley should go on a diet. Whatever their attractions, none of these proposals goes to the heart of the party's dilemma. Labour's inability to be at ease with itself, and the voters' inability to love it, both stem from issues of policy, not personality. Its programme is moderate and often worthy. It is also dull and, in parts, intellectually confused. And too many people have noticed.

The good news for Labour is that, after the revolution of the Thatcher years, there is still a legitimate job for a left-of-centre party to bid for. The Tory dream of pushing Labour to the margins of politics has evaporated. Labour's promises to improve the education system and the health service and to offer a new deal for the poor do appeal to voters. If it came to power and honoured those promises, Labour—like other western social-democratic parties—would be back in business. Labour has difficulty not over defining goals, but over finding the right means to achieve its ends.

### Let sleeping dogmas lie

When the Conservatives counter-attack by saying that Labour's sums do not add up, they too strike a chord with voters. For a party with so many clever people in it, which has spent so much time trying to impress others with its new economic realism, Labour is still regarded as hopelessly inept at economic management. The biggest area of doubt is whether Labour would raise the extra £20 billion it says it needs for its social programmes without damaging the economy. Strong

and sustained economic growth is needed to pay for those programmes, yet the supply-side effects of other policies would hold that growth back. Raising top marginal income-tax rates from 40% to 59% is hardly a recipe to encourage entrepreneurs. Nor is it any more credible for Labour to claim that it will both reduce unemployment and introduce a job-destroying minimum wage. In each case, the problem is the same: sinewy old dogmas are strangling new thinking.

The second area of doubt is whether, having raised the money, Labour would then spend it wisely. Wisely, in this context, means buying changes that produce better services, even when they hurt state employees, rather than simply passing the taxpayers' money on as higher wages. People may not like the first effects of the Tories' internal market for the health service, or the opting-out of schools from local education authorities. But anyone who has spent time in a state hospital, or has children at state schools, knows how much these services could be improved. As the government is discovering, the British feel proud and protective of their health service and (less so) their state schooling. But as their expectations as consumers of privately produced goods rise, so do their demands of public services. For them, higher taxes to pay for "more of the same" is a weak battle-cry.

Labour has started to recognise this fact. Talk of a citizen's charter and of rights for patients and parents is already embedded in the party's programme. But Labour has been less radical in its suggestions for improving services than the Conservatives. Far from reforming itself too much, Labour's rethinking has not gone far enough.

How might a fully reformed Labour manifesto read? On pages 19-21 we offer our version of a rational, left-of-centre agenda. Some of the ideas are already accepted by Labour. But others require drastic changes—to tax policy and middle-class subsidies, to the balance of resources in education, to industrial policy, to a transport policy that would make private motoring more expensive, to a limited market in healthcare. At first glance they may make Mr Kinnock laugh, cry or swallow his pipe. But a party that really accepted profits and markets could find better ways to raise the money it needs, and more effective ways of spending it. Making the changes would hurt many of its traditional backers and some of its oldest friends. But it would make the party electable. And—which matters far more—it would ensure that Labour became effective in government.

