

# Mandela needs a miracle

**W**hen Nelson Mandela made his triumphant exit from prison this week, many of South Africa's 20.6 million blacks believed the day of deliverance had arrived. Mandela, the redeemer and miracle worker would bring them dignity, political power and riches. A lot of people in other countries share this rosy view.

Unfortunately, miracles are not about to happen soon in this ethnically and politically complex nation of 30 million. The long South African drama is about to enter its second and perhaps most turbulent act, not its finale.

From afar, the political situation in South Africa looks like a simple struggle between oppressed blacks and exploiting whites. Up close, however, the black and white morality play turns into a grey and confusing muddle.

Mandela and his organization, the African National Congress and its sister organization, the United Democratic Front, represent about 35% of the black majority — not the totality, as many foreign news reports suggest. When the government sits down to talk about how to share power, other key groups will have to be included.

Chief among them is Inkatha, the two-million strong Zulu political and cultural movement led by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, whose power base is centred in Natal province. Inkatha supports peaceful change, democracy and free enterprise — unlike the ANC, which has until now espoused a typical African one-party state and socialism. The two movements are bitter rivals. In recent years, more than 3,000 of their supporters have died in inter-black fighting.

Last year, Buthelezi sent me a copy of a letter he received from Mandela in which the ANC leader says his greatest fear for the future was the threat of civil war between blacks. South Africa's six million Zulus are the nation's largest ethnic

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group, renowned fighters and traditional enemies of the Xhosa tribe which dominates the ANC.

Other players in the negotiations will be the smaller, militant Pan-Africanist Congress, which wants to drive all whites, coloreds and Asians out of South Africa. Other organizations represent the nation's 3.1 million coloreds, one million Asians and leaders of the tribal homelands like Venda or Transkei.

Then there are the whites. About 60% will back the ruling Nationalist Party of President F.W. de Klerk. The rest, terrified by the spectre of black domination and chaos, will back the Conservatives or the neo-fascists of the far right in a last ditch attempt to stop black power.

As if all this were not complicated enough, a clear split is emerging in the ranks of the ANC between the more moderate "old guard" led by Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo, and the radical "young lions" led by the ambitious union boss, Cyril Ramaphosa and Chris Hani. The latter are opposed to compromise with the whites and free markets — the key to South Africa's wealth.

Out of this swirling political kaleidoscope will come a long, bitter struggle for power that will occur on three distinct levels.

First is an ideological contest between one-party Afro-socialists of the ANC, one side, and a probable alliance of moderate whites and Inkatha on the other.

Second is the terrible threat of ethnic conflict between South Africa's tribes — not only black, but whites, coloreds and Asians. In Africa, tribal politics is at the heart of everything. Almost all of black Africa's states are ruled by one dominant tribe which is often violently opposed by other tribes.

The third level of struggle will be between generations. The revolt and tumult we now see in the communist world is, in good part, a battle between elderly leaders and middle-aged or young rebels. A similar process is afoot in South Africa where half the population is under 16 years of age.

Will the old men who now run the ANC be able to control the young lions and the mobs of illiterate teenagers who roam the black townships? If the moderate black leadership can't provide jobs and housing for this youthful tidal wave, South Africa will face decades of unrest.

Maybe Nelson Mandela will be able to pick a path through these mine fields and lead South Africa to political stability. He must satisfy black demands without scaring off the whites, on whom the economy depends. He must deal with heavily armed whites who will fight to the death for their homes. He must impose unity on blacks who have never known any. He must create a nation out of a collection of hostile tribes.

These may be too many miracles for one man.



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