

CHANGING SOUTH

Tupelo march supports United League

By Bill Drew and Jan Thal

TUPELO, MISS.

IT HAD THE MAKINGS OF A BLOODY confrontation, but the United League of North Mississippi's "national march for freedom" in this town of 37,000 went off peacefully, Nov. 25, as 1,000 blacks, whites and Latinos from more than a dozen cities spilled off buses and vans on the outskirts of town to support the eight-month old black struggle against discrimination here.

About two miles away, in the center of Tupelo, 30 robed Ku Klux Klansmen and 20 in plain clothes stood waiting, displaying an arsenal ranging from ax handles to semi-automatic rifles.

As the march assembled, United League president Skip Robinson climbed onto one of the pickup trucks at its front, "we're not here to provoke anything," he announced, standing near two rifles prominently displayed on the truck's gun racks. "But if we're attacked we have the right to defend ourselves." Applause rippled through the columns.

United League security team members with binoculars and walkie-talkies issued reports on the Klan presence and asked participants to "tighten up" the lines of four abreast.

Joined by Tupelo residents, the march swelled to 1,300, including a contingent of 30 strikers from Purnell Pride, a local poultry processing plant, who carried picket signs with demands for unionization.

Demonstrators wore T-shirts and buttons from northern struggles: the anti-Rizzo campaign in Philadelphia, police repression protests of New York City's Black United Front, anti-Bakke activities. Banners and signs identified demonstrators from Atlanta, Chicago, California, Kent State, Minnesota, Washington, D.C., Boston.

Demands against police brutality are part of a 12-point United League program "to deal with the basic problems of black and poor people in Mississippi." League chapters now exist throughout



1300 people marched on Tupelo's Main Street Nov. 25 in support of the United League's boycott of the city's white businesses. The League is demanding jobs in the downtown stores, an end to police harassment and dropping of charges against members.

the state where rapid transformation from a primarily agricultural backwater to an increasing industrialization has failed to improve conditions for blacks.

Driven off their land by manipulation of land titles, blacks face twice the unemployment rates of whites in industry and government.

Tupelo stores that refuse to hire blacks have had no black shoppers since the beginning of a boycott last spring. On Main Street the Thanksgiving weekend marchers saw the signs in Deb's Dollar Store windows which read, "Going Out of Business."

A week before the march, downtown merchants beseeched Mayor Clyde Whitaker to give in to United League demands before their Christmas sales were de-

stroyed. Whitaker met with Skip Robinson that week and promised affirmative action hiring for city jobs. But he did not speak to other demands that League spokesmen say are equally important, including dropping of charges against boycott picketers arrested for "interfering with trade."

The demonstrators got a clear view of the KKK as they turned off Main Street. Bedsheet-bedecked Klansmen stood on the Post Office lawn a block away and aimed their weapons at the march. "They were just posing for pictures," commented one photographer.

But only a week earlier the Klan left its mark in nearby Okolona where they burned down the town's only black-owned gas station, forcing its patrons to go to

boycotted white stations.

Hundreds more Tupelo blacks met the march at the courthouse square and the combined forces jammed the lawn and street. While Robinson and other League leaders spoke, the Klansmen ducked in and out of the police station across a parking lot behind the demonstration.

At sunset the march wound back across town to the community center where the thousand out-of-towners were feasted with ham, turkey, greens and black-eyed peas contributed by Tupelo families.

As the supporters boarded buses for home a local minister remarked, "No town has been shaken like this since Joshua went down to Jericho."

Bill Drew and Jan Thal are writers located in Chicago.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Marion Barry, new left mayor, breaks tradition

By Ronald Walters

ONCE DUBBED A "DAISHIKI-clad militant," newly elected Washington, D.C., mayor Marion Barry is the only black big city leader with bona fide credentials as a participant of the new left movement of the '60s.

A doctoral candidate in chemistry in the '60s, Barry turned to political activism as a founder of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) as well as taking an active role in organizations such as PRIDE, Inc., and the Free D.C. movement.

He won election to Washington's school board in 1971 and a seat on the city council in 1974, later becoming chair of the school board and of the influential city council Finance and Revenue Committee.

The September mayoral primaries saw city council chairman Sterling Tucker billed as the "change vote." There was fear that Tucker and Barry would split the opposition vote against incumbent Walter Washington. Mayor Washington went into the contest with strong support among labor, religious, business and older black, middle class voters.

Of all the polls, only the community-based Afro-American Datamatics showed Barry as the winner of the Democratic nomination. But with some shrewd help from campaign manager Ivanhoe Donald-

son, Barry gained endorsements from the city's Policemen's Union as well as the *Washington Post*. The *Post*, in a pre-primary story Sept. 6 by Leon Dash, traced Barry's political course from the militant symbol of black rage to his transformation into "a groomed and restrained city politician."

Barry narrowly won the primary election with 34 percent of the vote against Tucker's 33 percent and Washington's 31 percent.

In the general election, Barry squared off against Republican candidate Arthur Fletcher, whose major claim to political experience was as a special assistant to President Ford.

With a meager \$52,000 war chest—compared to \$424,000 for the Barry campaign—Fletcher barely put a dent in Barry's black base.

Fletcher did attract some support from religious leaders, apparently due to Barry's history of support for gay rights and gambling.

The D.C. Democratic party leaders, including Washington and Tucker, united in support of Barry, who won by a 70 percent landslide.

Barry's election signaled a break with the city's traditional political culture, and a victory over an opposition that had tried to label Barry as the "white folks' candidate" due to his popularity in certain predominantly white areas of the capital.

But in white wards where he ran well in

the primary, he suffered important voter defections: Black wards, on the other hand, united behind Barry in the general election—helping to erase his "white folks' candidate" image.

The effect of the Barry victory on city politics and public policy is difficult to assess. For all the display of black unity in the general election, there were important defections in the traditional black middle class constituency.

The break with tradition has been made. But Barry will have to overcome "old guard" skepticism, including the conservative vote against him in white precincts. He will also have to navigate class and race divisions to win support for his programs and for his reelection bid. This may be the key to his apparent caution in carrying out a campaign pledge to fire officials of Mayor Washington's administration.

Nevertheless, the new mayor's advisers may perceive that, having broken with the old establishment, he will be free to try new approaches to city management. Judging by his recent appointments, Barry seems intent on implementing his campaign pledge of an "aggressive tone" after a decade of cautious government. But he'll be limited by the nature of the district's ties to the federal government in budgetary and revenue matters.

While Congress has signalled eventual approval of a new D.C. convention center as a boost to economic growth, President Carter recently rejected federal re-

Former SNCC leader faces difficult problems as a leftist governing the nation's capital.

sponsibility for funding the District pension plan amounting to more than \$1 billion. That's a problem Barry will have to grapple with as mayor.

On a personal level, Barry has often appeared to opt for political solutions rather than standing on principle, a source of widespread dissatisfaction among low income blacks.

Yet the voter turnout of 42 percent in the general election gives reason for optimism that the 1974 Home Rule legislation passed by Congress will broaden the political participation by D.C. citizens. Barry's clearest challenge will be to avoid becoming a captive of traditional politics and to continue to "free D.C." by inaugurating a new leadership committed to increasing the level of participation, and the well-being, of those traditionally kept outside the system of city government and its benefits.

Ron Walters is a professor of political science at Howard University, Washington, D.C.

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IN THE WORLD

SOUTH AFRICA

Independence for black bantustans a curse, not cure

By our Southern Africa Correspondent

AT 5 P.M. IN ANY SOUTH AFRICAN city, you can see a stream of blacks moving towards the train station. From there, they go out to their homes in black townships, often two hours away from the whites-only areas where they work.

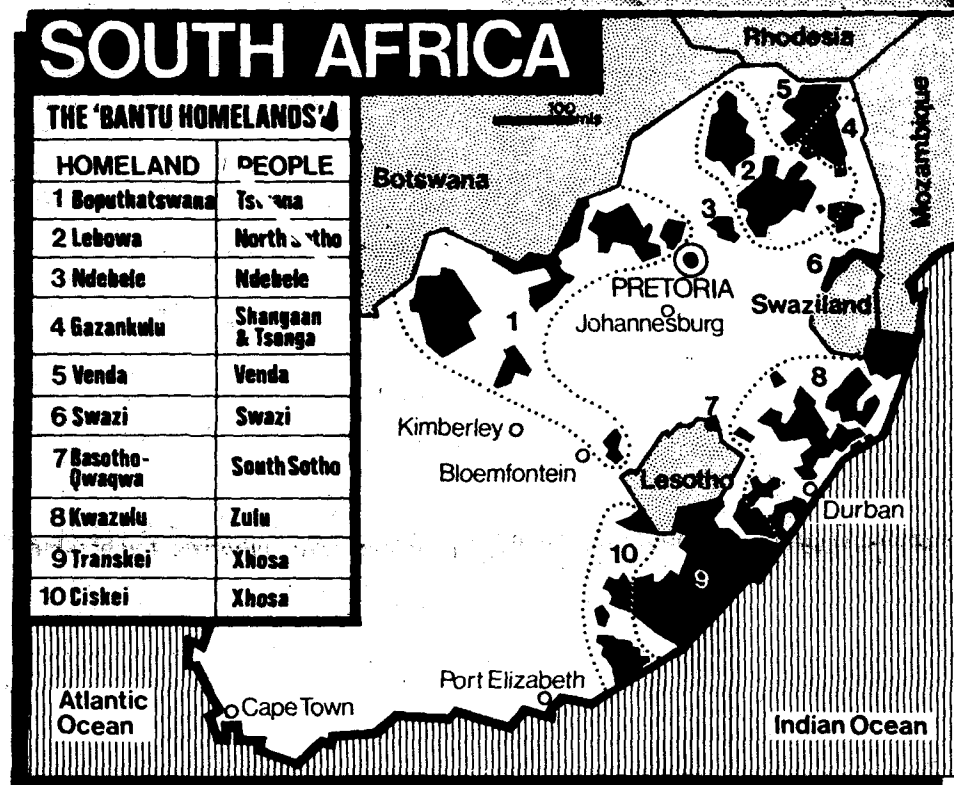
In Pretoria, South Africa's capital, the blacks are not simply going to a township. They are actually leaving South Africa for another country—though they, too, will return in the morning, ready for work at seven. They live in GaRankuwa, part of an independent country called Bophutha-Tswana; if border controls were strictly observed, the GaRankuwa railroad station would have to process 90,000 passports an hour during Pretoria's peak rush hours.

Two years ago, Pretoria's workers were still South Africans. But last December, Bophutha-Tswana's Chief Lucas Mangope took the plunge: his country became the second of South Africa's bantustans to accept independence from the rest of the Republic.

Of course, Bophutha-Tswana has had some difficulty presenting itself as an independent country. To begin with, no one outside of a few Nationalist Party officials knows exactly where its borders are; the country includes six or seven large bits and several black dots, all separated by pieces of South Africa, and no one knows which the bits are. Most of its population had never lived in Bophutha-Tswana; South Africa's white regime assigned them to the bantustan because of their tribal origin.

Bophutha-Tswana is trying hard. It is poor. Most of its gross national income is earned outside its borders, in South Africa's mines, factories and industries, and

The bantustans are dirt-poor reservations that keep South African blacks at the mercy of whites.



in cities like Pretoria: South Africa's Ministry of Foreign Affairs supplies some 70 percent of Chief Mangope's government budget.

But Bophutha-Tswana is doing its best to build up its resources; just last month, Mangope's ministers announced a new development plan, based on tourists from South Africa. The big attraction? Bophutha-Tswana, using aid from South Africa, is about to install an artificial wave-making machine in a large man-made lake, to simulate the beaches that can be found along South Africa's southern coast.

Dumping ground.

The nine bantustans—for that is what Bophutha-Tswana and Transkei remain,

KwaZulu's chief Gatsha Buthelezi

despite their so-called independence—serve as the keystones of South Africa's system of grand apartheid (pronounced apart-hate). Under the Nationalist Party's policy of separate development for the different races, blacks are assigned to the bantustans—less than 13 percent of the land, for 87 percent of South Africa's people.

Until 1976, the ultimate goal of independence for the bantustans—or homelands, as the government has taken to calling them in the last decade—remained far in the future, when white South Africa deemed its blacks capable of ruling themselves. But since the Soweto disturbances, the government has speeded up the process. Two bantustans are independent, a third is about to be, and the rest are under pressure to accept independence in the near future.

Many South Africans believe the speed-

Continued on page 9.

Infogate scandal sinks ruling whites

When James T. Kruger, South Africa's Minister of Justice, was informed last year that Steve Biko had died in detention, he told reporters, "Steve Biko's death leaves me cold."

Percy Qoboza, editor of South Africa's largest black newspaper, had a similar reaction to the scandal that has swept the top ranks of the ruling National Party—a scandal that many white South Africans say makes Watergate look like a parking offense. "Connie Mulder's resignation," Qoboza said, referring to one of the scandal's casualties, "leaves me cold."

In fact, as Qoboza was pointing out, the cabinet reshuffling that has followed revelations that National Party officials were misusing government funds will not have much impact on the position of South Africa's black majority. A black cartoon character in Qoboza's *Post* put it succinctly, the day after a commission of inquiry announced the government had funded a conservative English-language newspaper called *The Citizen*: "What I want to know is, when are they going to make me a citizen?"

Certainly the fall-out from the Information scandal has had serious repercussions in the Nationalist leadership, ending the careers of some of the most hated figures

—notably Mulder, former Minister of Plural Relations (the post-Soweto name for Bantu Affairs) who oversaw all aspects of black life. Many others, including State President J.B. Vorster and Prime Minister P.W. Botha, are implicated in a major cover-up attempt.

The scandal revolves around the Department of Information, which has over the last few years channelled huge sums of government money into various schemes designed to improve South Africa's image at home and abroad. Since most of the department's operations—including a 1974 attempt to buy the *Washington Star*—were carried out covertly, to avoid any appearance of propaganda, there was ample opportunity for the men involved to slip well over \$15 million into their own pockets.

The white press has treated the revelations of corruption and cover-up as being of overwhelming importance, pushing even the threat of economic sanctions over Namibia out of the headlines. When Judge A. Mostert, the one-man commission of inquiry, last month confirmed all the misdoings at which the English press had been hinting for over a year, even the Nationalists' Afrikaans-language newspaper began to criticize their leaders.

White rationalizations for minority rule have always stressed the moral purity of South Africa's white rulers; the Afrikaans' Dutch Reformed Church has enormous power in the government, which regulates morality as well as political activity. Temporarily at least, the Information Department scandal has pulled the bottom out of white complacency, as the upper echelons of the Nationalists now look at least as corrupt as those of any other African government.

But the upset will probably prove temporary. Prime Minister Botha has fired Mostert, ending his investigation, and Botha's new commission of inquiry seems likely to produce a complete whitewash.

There appear to be numerous other juicy scandals bubbling just under the National Party's surface, including hints that a South African professor and his wife were brutally murdered before they could reveal that government officials had been smuggling money out of the country.

But already the government has begun to blame the entire episode on the traditionally liberal English press, calling the reporters who followed the story unpatriotic and obstreperous, and threatening the papers with reprisals. Since a crack-



C.P. Mulder

down last year removed the last anti-apartheid organizations, the English press has been the main source of internal criticism, and has become the government's favorite scapegoat for any disturbances.

On the whole, Infogate seems to be only a squabble among South Africa's whites, widening splits within the National Party and between the government and the English press. The only other question is whether or not Mulder's replacement in Plural Relations, Piet Koornhof—who is considered slightly liberal for a Nationalist—will make any significant improvements, and that appears unlikely. It will take more than a little high-level corruption, it seems, to make South African blacks citizens of their own country. ■

—Our Southern Africa correspondent