

Observers help ease election tensions, local man finds

dio suddenly goes dead and we are unable to contact "the base." We still proceed and arrive at the Rati-trading store in the center of the village. Days before, a few of us were interviewed on Bop TV and the store clerk shakes my hand saying, "I saw you on television, pleased to meet you." Tensions ease as the hosts are gracious and welcome us.

We park in the shade and a crowd of mostly children gather around us. One boy, who must be no more than 12, brandishes a large knife, not in a menacing fashion, but more in the way that youth would be sharing a novel toy. The police approach in a green pickup and slowly pass by our van.

The interviews begin, at first in the local language, Twana, but later a young woman speaks to us in English. We listen to tales of police abuse, fears of armament caches, and a hand grenade that may have turned out to be just a tear gas canister. After securing statements, we are on our way out of the village. It is not as volatile as expected and an unlikely case for formal mediation efforts of the IEC. However, the investigation will continue into the alleged police misconduct. Just the presence of someone concerned and addressing their concerns teaches the people a lot about true democracy.

Spirits of the people remain high and pieces of the election puzzle are coming together. I had people who never voted before ask me, why vote? As Americans we often take it for granted and the question took me back a little.

As one official noted, "This is a day for which we have dreamed, just to put an X on the election ballot." Another worker tells us how her 9-year-old nephew, after listening to so much about freedom and the elections, cries, "My heart is so sore. I want to vote!"



Eric Sirotkin

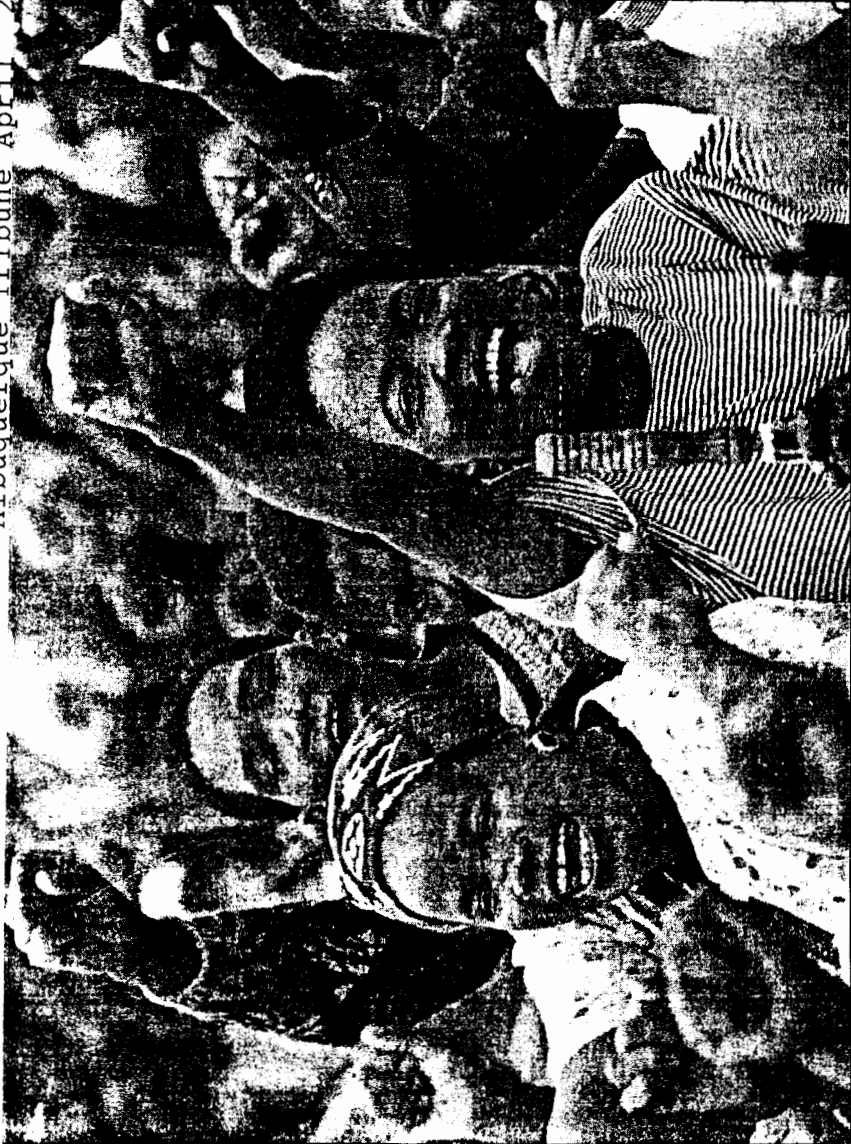
EDITOR'S NOTE: Albuquerque attorney Eric Sirotkin is one of 15 attorneys from the U.S. who'll observe South Africa's first multi-racial election next week. He is working in the homeland of Bophuthatswana. Only three weeks ago, the people of the homeland toppled their government so they could vote.

The countryside seems so peaceful. The high grasses blow in the wind across fields on small hills, and buttes dot the horizon. Other than driving on a different side of the road and viewing greener tones, I could be heading to Las Cruces, as opposed to the Dinokana tribal offices.

Preparing for an election means much more than getting ballot boxes prepared. It is dealing with conflict.

We are traveling by van today with members of the Independent Electoral Commission to a tribal office to follow up on an alleged assault and conflict with the Bophuthatswana police concerning their arrest activities. We are armed with a radio to contact the defense forces in the event of a conflict.

The last time the IEC was here, in a dispute between two tribes, members arrived to find the tribes armed with weapons. The South African Defense Force had to be called by radio and they came in helicopters. As we approach the town the ra-



INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY supporters raise clenched fists at an election rally in the Zulu homeland in Natal Province Thursday, Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi started campaigning after reaching an agreement to participate in South Africa's first all-race election.

Zulu jumps into all-race campaign

N.Y. Times News Service

DURBAN, South Africa — After months of boycotting South Africa's first all-race elections, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the Zulu nationalist leader, has jumped into the campaign with gusto, denouncing the African National Congress as a "dangerous revolutionary organization run by Communists."

Two days after he agreed to have his Inkatha Freedom Party added to the ballot in next week's election, Buthelezi delighted a partisan crowd in Enseleni, a small township in troubled Natal Province, with his mocking denunciations

of what he called the congress plan to introduce "central government tyranny."

"The Communists in the ANC want a central government so they can embark on their program of nationalization and redistribution of wealth directly after the elections," he told about 10,000 supporters.

He defended his persistent demands that the new constitution be amended to give provincial governments greater autonomy, saying a balance of powers among the central government and the provinces was the only guarantee of future economic stability and democracy.

Buthelezi also told reporters that he could not envision losing the election — which is expected to be an overwhelming victory for Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress — but if he did, he and his followers would respect the result.

His decision to lift the boycott came after it became increasingly clear that even threats of violence during balloting would not dissuade Mandela and South African President F. W. de Klerk from pushing ahead with the election.

Buthelezi had been seeking a postponement until he could extract promises of autonomy.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

First-time

voters'

smiles

will touch

me forever



Eric Sirokin

Albuquerque attorney Eric

Sirokin is one of 15 attorneys from

the United States observing South

Africa's first multiracial election.

Minabatho, South Africa.

It has a nice ring to it.

We danced at the Minabatho town

square with 1,000 residents of the for-

mer homeland Bophuthatswana Tues-

day night.

When the clock turned to 12:01 a.m.

today, a new constitution and bill of

rights went into effect.

The all-White parliament and black

homelands were dissolved, and a new

national flag sporting the colors of the

African National Congress was raised

by the South African defense force.

Many of us who have opposed

apartheid for so many years could

hardly have envisioned such a mo-

ment.

Such jubilation was evident through-

out the first day of voting Tuesday, as

thousands of elderly, disabled or infirm

citizens took to the polls. These "spe-

cial voters," in wheelchairs or on

crutches, stood in line for up to eight

hours in the blazing sun waiting their

right to vote for true democracy in

South Africa.

The first line we encountered was at

the museum where there were at least

500 people still seeking voter-identi-

fication cards. Computer photographic

equipment allowed them to leave in-

stantaneously with their voter cards.

No advance voter registration is re-

quired, and one marvels at how inclu-

sive this election is.

I spent my day in the partially reno-

vated wing of the hospital in Masike-

ing. More than 1,000 elderly citizens

cast their votes at our station, and the

fact that it is the first free vote in their

lives is written across their faces.

White South African defense force

soldiers were told to leave their

weapons outside, and they now stand

Please see **SOUTH AFRICA/AB**