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MIPT (NOT TO ALL): MANDELA

1. ALL THOSE WHO VISITED MANDELA IN PRISON WERE STRUCK BY HIS COURAGE AND DIGNITY. JAN STEYN AND HELEN SUZMAN, WHO GOT TO KNOW HIM BEST, WERE IMPRESSED BY THE QUALITY OF THE MAN AND HIS LACK OF BITTERNESS. MY OWN EXPERIENCE IS THE SAME. MANDELA HAS A NATURAL DIGNITY AND AUTHORITY. HE IS NOT AS INTELLIGENT AS MUGABE, BUT A GREAT DEAL NICER.
2. NOT SURPRISINGLY AFTER TWENTY YEARS IN PRISON, ALL HIS ATTITUDES ARE AFFECTED BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT TOOK HIM THERE. HE STATED ON BEING SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO SUPPRESS ALL FORMS OF PEACEFUL OPPOSITION FROM THE BLACK COMMUNITY, THE COUNTRY FACED A VIOLENT FUTURE, BUT THE MAJORITY WOULD IN THE END PREVAIL. HE CONSIDERS THAT, CONFRONTED BY VERWOERD AND HIS PLANS PERMANENTLY TO DIS-ENFRANCHISE THE BLACK MAJORITY, HE HAD NO OPTION BUT TO TAKE UP THE 'ARMED STRUGGLE', THOUGH IN MANDELA'S DAY THIS CONSISTED OF ACTS OF SABOTAGE AND NOT BOMBS IN THE STREET OR SUPERMARKETS. WHEN TACKLED ON THIS SUBJECT HE CONTENDS THAT A GREAT DEAL MORE VIOLENCE WAS USED BY THE APARTHEID GOVERNMENT AND THAT POLICE VIOLENCE IS STILL CONTINUING DESPITE DE KLERK'S EFFORTS TO STOP IT. THIS EXTENDS TO TRYING TO BLAME THE VIOLENCE IN NATAL MAINLY ON THE GOVERNMENT OR AT ANY RATE THE KWAZULU POLICE.
3. MANDELA'S CONDUCT SINCE LEAVING PRISON HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POSITION AS LEADER OF THE ANC WHO ARE LIKELY TO ELECT HIM PRESIDENT AT THEIR CONGRESS IN DECEMBER. HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS ARE INTENDED TO RETAIN AND MOBILISE BLACK SUPPORT RATHER THAN TO PLEASE WHITE AUDIENCES. AT ONE MOMENT HE IS RIGID AND DOGMATIC, AT THE NEXT MORE STATESMANLIKE. THE HARSH PUBLIC RHETORIC ALTERNATES WITH MORE REASONED APPEALS. HE HAS URGED THE CHILDREN WHO WERE BOYCOTTING CLASSES TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL - ONLY TO FIND THAT HE THEN HAD TO URGE THE TEACHERS WHO ALSO WERE ON STRIKE TO GO BACK AS WELL. HE HAS INSISTED THAT PROTEST MARCHES AND DEMONSTRATIONS MUST BE ALLOWED TO TAKE PLACE BUT HAS CONDEMNED THE MINDLESS VIOLENCE, LOOTING AND ARSON WHICH HAS ACCOMPANIED SOME OF THESE MARCHES. HE CONSISTENTLY HAS DESCRIBED DE KLERK AS A MAN OF INTEGRITY WITH WHOM

HE BELIEVES HE CAN HELP TO WORK OUT A SOLUTION TO SOUTH AFRICA'S PROBLEMS.

4. YET IN THE SAME BREATH HE TALKS ABOUT CONTINUANCE OF THE "ARMED STRUGGLE" EVEN THOUGH, EFFECTIVELY, IT HAS BEEN SUSPENDED: THERE HAVE BEEN NO MORE BOMBS OR ATTACKS IN ANY OF THE WHITE AREAS, THOUGH INTRA-BLACK VIOLENCE CONTINUES. HE CULTIVATES AN ALMOST SLAVISH LOYALTY TO THE ORGANISATION TO WHICH HE HAS DEVOTED HIS ENTIRE POLITICAL LIFE AND BELIEVES ALL THE INFORMATION THEY FEED HIM. HE NEVER MAKES A MOVE WITHOUT TRYING TO ENSURE THAT HIS OWN SUPPORTERS WILL FOLLOW HIM FAILING WHICH, AS HE SAID TO ME, IT WOULD REMAIN ONLY FOR HIM TO WRITE HIS MEMOIRS. HE CANNOT AFFORD TO BE LABELLED A MODERATE. YET HE REGARDS HIMSELF AS BEING ONE WHERE IT MATTERS: HIS AUTHORITY HAS BEEN EXERTED IN PUSHING THE ANC TOWARDS NEGOTIATIONS AND DE FACTO COOPERATION WITH DE KLERK.

5. ON THE ECONOMY, HIS INITIAL STATEMENTS ABOUT NATIONALISATION BROUGHT A BARRAGE OF CRITICISM AND HE HAS BEEN MORE CAREFUL SINCE. INSOFAR AS MANDELA UNDERSTANDS ANYTHING ABOUT ECONOMICS, HIS IDEAS WERE FORMED IN THE 1950'S. HE IS AN OLD-FASHIONED SOCIALIST, BUT HAS NEVER BEEN A COMMUNIST. HIS CONCERN REALLY IS WITH THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND THE PRESENT INIQUITOUS SYSTEM WHEREBY, THROUGH THE LAND ACTS, A VERY HIGH PROPORTION OF GOOD AGRICULTURAL LAND IN SOUTH AFRICA IS RESERVED FOR THE WHITES. BUT THE ANC'S DOCUMENT ON "THE ECONOMY BEYOND APARTHEID" IS FULL OF THE KIND OF IDEAS ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE STATE THAT HAVE BEEN DISCREDITED AND PROVED DISASTROUS ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA.

6. ON SANCTIONS MANDELA IS A TRUE BELIEVER. HE HAS GIVEN UP CALLING FOR GENERAL SANCTIONS BUT WILL GO ON URGING THAT THOSE ALREADY IN PLACE SHOULD REMAIN UNTIL THE PROCESS IS "IRREVERSIBLE". HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE PROBLEMS IN BLACK EDUCATION AND HOUSING. BUT THERE STILL IS A NAIVE BELIEF THAT INVESTMENT WILL BE EASY TO ATTRACT, AFTER "LIBERATION".

7. MANDELA'S STANDING IN THE POPULATION AT LARGE IS MUCH HIGHER THAN THAT OF ANY OTHER SOUTH AFRICAN LEADER, AND THAT IS BORNE OUT BY ALL THE POLLS. BUTHELEZI IS THE NEXT MOST IMPORTANT BLACK LEADER, BUT HIS SUPPORT IS REGIONAL AND NUMERICALLY INFERIOR. ON A FUTURE CONSTITUTION, MANDELA HAS SHOWN HIMSELF MORE FLEXIBLE THAN OTHER ANC LEADERS IN ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED TO WORK OUT "STRUCTURAL GUARANTEES" FOR THE WHITE MINORITY.

8. IT HAS COME AS A REAL SHOCK TO MANDELA AND THE ANC - WHEN THEY ARE

BEING HONEST - TO DISCOVER THAT THEY ARE NOT FINDING IT EASY TO CONTROL THE YOUTH WHO THEY HAVE REGARDED AS THE BACKBONE OF THEIR SUPPORT. IN THE TOWNSHIPS THEY ARE BEING CHALLENGED ON THE LEFT BY THE PAC AND AZAPO, DENOUNCING THEM AS COLLABORATORS. WITHIN THE ANC THERE ARE MANY WHO ARE CONVINCED THAT MANDELA AND MBEKI ARE BEING LED INTO ACCEPTING DE FACTO CO-RESPONSIBILITY WITH DE KLERK AND HENCE INTO POWER-SHARING RATHER THAN A TRANSFER OF POWER.

9. DE KLERK HAS ACTED SKILFULLY IN TRAPPING THE ANC INTO NEGOTIATIONS. IT IS AN OPTION FOR THEM TO BREAK OFF THE TALKS AND GO BACK INTO EXILE AND TO THE 'ARMED STRUGGLE', BUT THEY WOULD NEED TO FIND AN EXTREMELY GOOD PRETEXT ON WHICH TO DO SO: AND IF THEY DID, THEY WOULD BE LIKELY TO GET MUCH SHORTER SHRIFT FROM THE SOVIET UNION AND NO SUPPORT FROM EASTERN EUROPE. THE RESULT WOULD BE A DEADLOCK IN WHICH THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT COULD MAKE NO REAL PROGRESS INTERNALLY AND WOULD BE FORCED BACK INTO A STATE OF SIEGE, WHILE THE ANC WOULD BE UNABLE TO OVERTHROW THEM.

10. GIVEN THE CONFLICTING PRESSURES FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE CONTITUENCIES IT WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR MANDELA AND DE KLERK TO FIND A WAY THROUGH. BUT MANDELA DOES REALISE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE AND THAT THE OPPORTUNITY WILL NOT ARISE AGAIN. HE IS ATTEMPTING TO WALK A TIGHTROPE, AS IS DE KLERK. HE HAS SUFFERED GREATLY FOR HIS CAUSE AND, NOT SURPRISINGLY, HAS A BURNING SENSE OF THE INJUSTICES THE BLACK POPULATION HAVE SUFFERED. THE MAN HIMSELF IS MUCH MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN HIS PUBLIC UTTERANCES. MANDELA'S DIGNITY GIVES HIM A REAL CHARISMA, FELT EVEN BY HIS OPPONENTS, BY VIRTUALLY ALL BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS AND BY MANY OF THE WHITES WHO ARE MOST STRONGLY OPPOSED TO HIM. AS NEGOTIATIONS DEVELOP HE WILL HAVE TO SHOW THE SAME KIND OF LEADERSHIP VIS A VIS THE ANC DE KLERK HAS SHOWN TOWARDS HIS SUPPORTERS IF THERE IS TO BE A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME. IT HAS YET TO BE SEEN WHETHER MANDELA WILL PROVE CAPABLE OF THIS. HE RELIES HEAVILY ON MBEKI AND MBEKI'S INFLUENCE WILL BE ALMOST AS IMPORTANT IN DECIDING THE ANC'S APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS.

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