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Mr Charles Powell
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*Prime Minister
quite interesting &
perceptive. I propose
to see him in
September.*

COP s/p.

Dear Mr Powell

The enclosed perspectives on the South African situation which I prepared for a select Chief Executives may be of interest to the Prime Minister. I leave it to your judgment as to whether you think they will be of interest to her. (The one on the Dakar talks between Dr Slabbert's group and the ANC was written before the recent Johannesburg car bomb explosion.)

Wishing you well,

Very sincerely

Denise Worrall

DENISE WORRALL

✓ P S I shall be in London on the 14th and 15th of September and would be very happy to see you or anybody else who might want a run-down on the situation.



Three features characterise the political situation after the election of May 6. One, the strength of the South African state has been reasserted. In mid-1985, when township unrest was at its height, numerous international commentators as well as Black activists believed that South Africa was on the brink of revolution. That perception has been dispelled as a result of the state of emergency and the intrusion of the military. Two, Black South Africa has seldom been so ideologically and politically diffuse. Three, the political debate within White South Africa no longer turns on specific answers or proposals but around procedures for finding answers. The debate is about "negotiation" and what form this should take.

In the May 6 election, Whites chose short-term security. The election result did not represent a "lurch to the right" or a "vote for apartheid" as many overseas observers suggested. The election was not about race relations or reform, but about external interference, the ANC's arms struggle and stability and security. These were the issues on which Whites voted.

The NP was aided in its strategy by SATV and by certain events. The burning of some two dozen railway coaches by SAT's workers and the violence surrounding COSATU House during the last 12 days of the election campaign swung many voters to the NP. (Had the Johannesburg car bomb explosion taken place on May 4 and not May 20, it might have cost the PFP/NRP another 5 seats.)

Misguided Western sanctions also played a role. So Alan Paton wrote after the election: "A second and lesser reason (for the election result) was the ill-advised sanctions campaign of the West. The West, and particularly the US Congress, has made a grave error".

Most Whites realise that fundamental political change is essential for long-term security. Yet most Whites in the election secretly felt reassured by the success (expressed in terms of a reduction in the incidence of violence) of the state of emergency and the role of the Army. The danger, however, is that Whites will become locked into a reliance on the military in the way Whites were in post-UDI Rhodesia.

The assertion of State power and the presence of the Army in Black townships, has also had an impact on Black opinion. While most Blacks privately welcome the presence of the soldiers (it has meant a return to relatively routine living), this has reinforced the perception (created by the election) among Blacks that the great majority of Whites have rejected change by negotiation. This has engendered a fatalistic attitude among Blacks towards the future and encouraged the radical activists who argue that fundamental change would only come about as a result of violence and revolution.

Both from a Black and a White perspective, it is therefore important that the negotiation option be seen to have a chance of succeeding.

Although everybody is talking about "negotiation", people mean different things.

It seems that to succeed in the South African situation a negotiating process must be inclusive as far as participation is concerned and open-ended as far as the possible result. There is also some doubt as to whether a successful process could take place exclusively within existing State institutions.

The Government's latest attempt at starting such a process is the National Statutory Council. In response to Dr Frederick van Zyl Slabbert's Idasa contact meeting with the ANC, Government announced that this body could be elected.

For this attempt to succeed the Government must get the active involvement, at least of Buthlezi and Enos Mabusa. However, neither of these leaders is willing to engage in NSC-type negotiations. This attempt by the Government to negotiate the political future of South Africa, like previous attempts, is likely also to fail. Aside from the fact that the Government's approach is not open-ended and inclusive, the fact is that existing State institutions (with the possible exception of the Judiciary) do not have credibility in Black eyes.

The dilemma in which the country finds itself is reflected in the Black reaction to the NSC proposal and the White reaction to the Dakar talks.

While it surely is an encouraging feature of the present political situation in the country that, with the exception of persons and organisations on the extreme flanks, everybody is talking "negotiation", to anybody who wants to hear, Blacks in their reaction to the NSC and Whites in their reaction to the Dakar talks, are saying something about negotiation.

Whites are saying that an exclusive reliance on extra-Parliamentary process is unacceptable; and Blacks are saying that an exclusive reliance on a negotiating process within existing institutions is unacceptable.

The question all leaders should be focussing on is: How can Whites be encouraged to see their interests in long-term security, and therefore in the ending of apartheid and in fundamental political change reached through open-ended negotiations? And how can Blacks be encouraged to see hope in open-ended negotiations and in resisting the pressures of revolutionary activists?

The key concepts in this situation are therefore stability and negotiation. This, surely, is not an unhealthy situation. It is also a situation full of possibilities.

NO 2. (JULY 1987) THE DAKAR TALKS - A PROVISIONAL ASSESSMENT

While the ANC must be a participant in any successful negotiations of the political future of this country, it is questionable whether the Idasa exercise has brought such negotiations closer. The Idasa-visit (especially given the size of the delegation) has increased the international esteem of the ANC. Internally, while by no means all Black political organisations welcomed the meeting (the UDF and COSATU supported it, ZAPU publicly criticised it, CUSA expressed reservations privately, and Buthelezi certainly would not have welcomed it), on balance the talks increased the ANC's stature within the Black population.

But aside from the ANC it is questionable whether any other organisation or cause benefited from the visit. Even without SABC and SATV assessments of the visit, and the highly critical attitude of The Citizen and the Afrikaans media in general, the visit reinforced the Government's stand against the ANC and its refusal to negotiate with that organisation until it renounces the arms struggle. The visit probably increased White opposition to the ANC and further divided Blacks on the issue of armed resistance.

The visit therefore has generally increased the polarisation of the country and reduced the likelihood of open-ended negotiations. It also provides the Government with an ostensible justification to ban further contacts with the ANC.

The fact that the party was so large, and that this was such an obviously costly exercise, is likely also to put public opinion behind any proposed restriction on foreign funding of extra-Parliamentary initiatives.

The Government's strategy towards the Idasa visit was shrewd. Aided by the fact that Parliament was in recess, the Government refrained from any critical comment while the visit was in progress. The Government also guessed that the Dakar talks would end in a log-jam on the question of violence; and it tried to seize the initiative with Mr Heunis' announcement of elections for the NSC and of the implementation of a Natal-KwaZulu joint executive. In this way the Government hoped to focus attention on its own efforts and draw Buthelezi centre-stage.

The over-whelming rejection by Whites of the Dakar talks and the over-whelming rejection by Blacks of the Government's election proposals for the NSC, says something about negotiation.

Whites are saying that an exclusive reliance on extra-Parliamentary process is unacceptable; and Blacks are saying that an exclusive reliance on a negotiating process within existing institutions is unacceptable.