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Political analysts find themselves in a time of collapsing paradigms. Old intellectual watering holes have dried up - they no longer nourish the bewildering unfolding of events with coherent sense. It is also a time of excitement, confusion and intellectual extravagance. The inconceivable is presented as inevitable, and forced analogies and metaphors parade as well tested generalizations. The downfall of a tyrant is seen as the inevitable birth of democracy and the collapse of institutionalized Marxist-Leninism in Eastern Europe as a vindication of Capitalism in Western Europe. Both are seen as precipitating an inevitable "new dawn" in South and Southern Africa. Common sense tells one it cannot be so simple - but for the time being, common sense is boring.

However, here in South Africa, for the next decade, a few stubborn facts of our situation will not be swept away. They will have to be dealt with politically, before and if we are to enter democratic stability and operational unity of purpose as a country:

- In 1990 there was one black person for every nine not so classified in our urban centres. In 2000, which is now less than 10 years away, there will be three blacks for every person who is not so classified at present. Translate this fact into the inevitable social, cultural and economic transformation of our cities and one begins to understand that white right-wing reaction is also a resistance to the inevitable de-Europification of urban life in South Africa. This decade will see the end of colonial lifestyle in our country and it will not happen without some trauma.



- If, over the next decade, we can maintain an economic growth rate of only 1 percent, unemployment could increase by as much as 2 million over and above what it would have been, had growth averaged between 3 and 4 percent. In the middle of the 80s, ninety-seven percent of whites earned more than ten and a half thousand Rand per annum; sixty-two percent of blacks earned less than five thousand Rand per annum. Translate these facts into a functioning multi-party democracy and guess which way socio-political demands for education, housing, health and transport is going to go.

- Bethlehem makes the point that "because of US, Soviet and East European requirements for surplus savings of other advanced industrial countries, less of such savings can be expected to be available to third world countries. Southern Africa, therefore, is going to have to compete with other developing regions for a shrinking quantum of available investment funds.

In a sense, financial sanctions against South Africa have ceased to be a real issue; continuing to attract media attention more for their symbolic, political importance. Even their removal against a background such as that just described, would not assure South Africa of a return of the investment capital it requires.

¹According to Terblanche, if the South African economy is to be transformed into a post-Apartheid decade, starting now, and maintaining a growth rate of 5 percent in order to absorb the annual growth of the labour force, it will need an influx of at least one hundred billion US dollars foreign capital at current exchange rates. ²Translate these facts into the needed investor confidence in the South African economy and the magnitude of the economic and political changes that have to occur, comes into focus.



- Forty years of Apartheid/Separate Development rule has effectively destroyed the "normal" political infra-structure that has to make democratic politics viable in South Africa. Constituency, issue-related and organised politics, has been superseded by confrontational, charismatic and mass-mobilisation politics. Anyone who thinks that this deficiency is going to be overcome (simply by releasing political prisoners and lifting the State of Emergency, believes that Cinderella really did find her glass slipper.

In short, before we get too excited, and there is much to get excited about, let us not lose sight of the reality that, as we approach the possibility of genuine liberalization in South Africa, we are:

- a) Socially: polarized and riddled with racial relative deprivation;
- b) Economically: domestically underdeveloped, racially unequal and internationally isolated; and
- c) Politically: without the organisational infra-structure to assist us to tackle our socio-economic problems democratically.

As far as prospects for the future are concerned, we have much to be humble about. But we are better off than last year and this is the source of our hope and anticipation. Maybe next year will be even better still.

Perhaps the most important source of hope and anticipation is the fact that most of the key political participants, including, and especially, those who wield power at the moment, have declared themselves willing to explore a genuine democratic alternative to the current state of domination in South Africa. By "genuine democracy" is meant:



- A Constitution that allows for multi-party competition and the electoral change of government on the basis of a racially non-discriminatory adult suffrage;
- Constitutional protection of individual civil liberties through the operation of a judiciary independent of the political executive.

Cautious consensus also seems to be emerging in favour of a "mixed economy" as distinct from a complete "command" or "free" economy.

It appears that nothing seems to predispose one more favourably toward the virtues of democratic values than the prospect of one's opponent being in the seat of government. Respect for the rule of law and freedom of speech also seems to increase in direct proportion to the probability of one no longer being in a position of privileged authority to ignore, or deliberately contradict them.

What has happened with accelerating intensity over the last decade in South Africa, is that the social and economic problems mentioned earlier, have outstripped the capacity of the existing political framework to deal with them. All of us have become the victims of serious political lag - some considerably more uncomfortably so than others, and with a concomitant impatience to redress the resultant imbalance.

But it has also become clearer that the socio-economic imbalance is not going to be solved by substituting one form of tyranny for another; one form of "grand social engineering" for another; one form of political deprivation and retribution for another. At least amongst the current diverse leadership emerging in our new political climate, there appears to be a growing realization that we may stand a chance of meeting the socio-economic challenge that faces us, if we can unshackle the human and natural resources locked into our society.



But how? By fundamentally changing the political framework which for decades has trapped, undermined and even destroyed many of these resources.

The first pre-requisite must be to liberalize the current conditions of repression and domination. This initiative must lie with the regime. Only it is in a position to release political prisoners, unban organisations, repeal Apartheid laws and lift the State of Emergency. Only the regime is in a position of power to launch new initiatives which can redress past inequalities and bring about conciliation.

But once this new political space has been created, what then? Who is going to fill that space, and how?

Take another look at Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in this respect. New political space is not automatically filled with a well organised party political infra-structure in touch with grass roots sentiments where most people have at least a minimum commitment and understanding of the democratic rules of the game. There one can find signs of mass hysteria, counter authoritarianism, fascism, racism, religious fanaticism, Xenophobic Nationalism and plain old fashioned desire for punitive-kangaroo-court retribution and revolutionary intolerance.

If anything the knee jerk response to tyranny is counter-tyranny, not democracy. Herein lies the greatest danger to a genuine democratic alternative. The battle in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is first of all a battle to prevent one form of tyranny replacing another, and only in the success of that battle lies the beginning of a new democracy.



Our battle has not seriously begun. We are not even close to where Namibia is at present. Assuming that genuine new political space is created through a process of liberalization from the regime, what for example is the political relationship going to be between:

- The ANC, SACP, UDF, MDM, COSATU? - will they become one political party with one agenda or maintain separate political identities?
- Organized labour union and political parties? - Will there be a new Labour Party versus ANC and SACP or will organised labour remain above party political involvement and allow its members freedom of choice with regard to party political membership?
- Organized interest groups such as NAFCOC, BMF, SABTA, INKATHA, NYANDZA and party political organisations?
- Charterist and Non-charterist organisations?
- Current parliamentary parties and new extra-parliamentary organisations with party political agendas?
- The State agents of coercion or "law and order" and party political opponents of the regime?
- Party political organisations and extreme right and left-wing radical outbidding and militancy?
- Political organisations with party political agendas and voters' roles, constituency representation and election procedure?

The very fact that one can ask these questions seriously is a sign of the progress we have made. A year ago these questions belonged to another country. But the manner in which these



questions are answered during the process of liberalization will determine whether we have the capacity to democratize. And if we democratize it will have a critical bearing on our ability to deal more effectively with the socio-economic dilemmas mentioned at the outset.

The overriding problem for South Africa in the 90s is going to be whether it can rid itself of its political lag and create a political framework with which it can democratically deal with the massive socio-economic problems that face its people.

A good and necessary beginning, as we are about to experience liberalization, would be the conscious creation and spread of as broad a Democratic Culture as possible. By this is meant not only the rhetorical affirmation of, and debate about Democratic Values, but Democratic Action to consciously promote respect for political diversity and tolerance. Practically, this could take the shape of a broad based genuine Democratic Alliance, where differences in policy, tactics and agendas between parties and organisations are accepted and respected but also transcended by a common commitment to:

- a) Guard and act against undemocratic practices within and between political organisations; and,
- b) promote the ideals of a democratic constitution which allow for:
 - i) Multi-party competition on the basis of universal adult suffrage;
 - ii) Protection of individual civil liberties;
 - iii) The Rule of Law to be applied by a judiciary independent of co-option or undue influence by the government of the day.



Perhaps the time is now ripe for a serious Democratic Action Alliance on the broadest possible basis in our country.

FEBRUARY 1990

FREDERIK VAN ZYL SLABBERT

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 Bethlehem, Ronald (Group Economics Consultant, JCI):
"Economic Development in SA", 1989 December, Paper for
forthcoming Publication: South and Southern Africa into the
Twenty-first Century, Economic Research Unit, University of
Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban. p.34

- 2 Terblanche, S J (Prof of Economics, University of
Stellenbosch) "The Post Apartheid Economy", Paper to be
published in forthcoming edition of USA magazine, ISSUES,
p.7.

PRESS RELEASE

STATEMENT FROM DR FREDERIK VAN ZYL SLABBERT (AT PRESENT AT ALL SOULS COLLEGE, OXFORD) IN RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT FW DE KLERK'S OPENING SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT ON FRIDAY 2 FEBRUARY 1990

President FW de Klerk has demonstrated great courage and good faith as far as the liberalization process in South Africa is concerned. Given the past situation of repression, he has created massive, new political space. The manner in which this space will now be occupied by previously banned organisations will determine whether and how negotiation politics will proceed.

It still remains to be seen as to how existing apartheid laws such as the Population Registration Act and the Group areas Act will be removed - whether by De Klerk's own initiative or by bargaining between him and opponents of his government.

For the first time I think we can talk about a genuine new ball game in politics in South Africa and the danger zone is no longer the government and its immediate extra-parliamentary opponents, but radicalism and militancy on the extreme left and right.

ENDS

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STOP PRESS

FEBRUARY 2 - 14 - DE KLERK & MANDELA

1. In twelve days South Africa went into a new political orbit and the world developed a virile strain of Mandelitis. Modern communications have the ability to trivialize complex and complicated situations and in this instance often managed to reduce the De Klerk - Mandela relationship to a soap-operatic gunfight at South Africa's political corral. If only FW and Mandela could square up and shake hands everything would be OK and we could all continue the barn dance. Even if one realizes it cannot be so simple; one cannot but be overwhelmed by the enormity of events during these 12 days that have changed and shaped South Africa's destiny. Of course it is true that social forces mould and predispose individual actions but they do not completely rob the individual of choice. Within their constraints, the individual can choose to be magnanimous or mean; brave or cowardly; dishonest or honest. Both Mandela and De Klerk, given their histories and constituencies, for a moment transcended their respective pasts, and chose to respect each other's integrity - whatever the problems that may be ahead, that moment will be noted for its uncontaminated humanity and dignity and for the new door it opened for all of us to enter.

2. As I have pointed out, there are bound to be problems:
 - a) De Klerk has to undo decades of propaganda, disinformation and demonizing for which his government has been largely responsible. The right-wing reaction



to his initiatives shows how successful this mind-bending has been. It is going to be difficult and painful for De Klerk to be a "traitor" for the truth, but he stands a reasonable chance of picking up a range of new allies, at home and abroad, to help him sabotage the lies of the past.

- b) Mandela, for a while, will live in a state of political grace, during which his person and stature will transcend divisions and tensions within the ranks of "the movement". He will have to use this period of grace to dampen expectations about the "seizure of power" and "a chicken in every pot", as well as to institutionalize a new mode of negotiation as opposed to confrontationist politics within his own constituency. He, too, has to deal with myths and shibboleths of his movement's past.
 - c) The "international community" is still floundering about for an appropriate response to the pace of events. In the UK the hackneyed old pantomime for or against sanctions is playing to empty houses. For so long "SA" has been a well oiled and pragmatic response to local politics in the UK, Europe and the USA, that the last twelve days has caught them like a blow across the kidneys with a "knobkerrie". Once they recover, their reasoned responses to our new situation will be an important factor facilitating or impeding progress.
3. But for the moment, let us bask in the political magic that has hit us. Six months ago all of this would have been



beyond realistic contemplation. Now that it has become real, the idea that tomorrow could be another country, is more than probable.

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