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THE STATE WE'RE IN - FOR F.M.

Let me start by declaring that I write as a committed Liberal Democrat who believes that the economy should be market driven, but that the government has a responsibility to stimulate growth and to use the benefits of growth to assist in the social and economic transformation of the country. I state this at the outset for two purposes:

I am quite prepared to be shown how my value commitments influence, or even distort my analysis and secondly, I am not concerned with entering into a debate about the virtues of competing ideologies. This is primarily an attempt to analyse the state we are in and needless to say it cannot be definitive nor complete.

I wish to focus on Government since 1994 and look at three inter-related aspects of Government: The goals it sets for the country' secondly, the instruments it creates to pursue those goals and thirdly, the efficiency of delivery. I claim that this kind of analyses can be done on any country: Venezuela, U.S.A., Russia, China etc. Therein lies the advantages of comparative analyses.

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What exactly are South-Africa's goals as defined by Government, On May 9, 1996 our current President, then Deputy-President, in adopting our current constitution said: "The constitution whose adoption we celebrate, constitutes an unequivocal statement that we refuse to accept that our Africanness shall be defined by our race, colour, gender, or historical origin" (my emphases). In other words all South African citizens are Africans who together pursue the overarching goal of bringing about a non-racial South Africa. This is Freedom Charter rhetoric at its best.

But scarcely 10 years later we have the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act which tries, unsuccessfully to give definable legal content to the word Black by flippantly saying it isa Generic term which referres to Coloureds, Asians and Africans! Suddenly Africans are "Blacks of a special kind". This is further reinforced by in Umrabolo 23rd Edition which served before the June 2005 ANC Congress and which declares that part one of the National Question is the challenge to bring about "the economic liberation of Blacks in general and Africans in particular. (My emphasis).

Is it totally unreasonable to ask of the Government: Do you want us to be a non-racial democracy or a racially classified democracy? If the latter, our Constitution is undermined and contradicted (of course it becomes a bit ridiculous when one

moves beyond the borders of South Africa. Tunisians, Egyptians, Algerians, Liberians are all Africans but they are not Black.

Unless you wish to tell me with a straight face, Ghadaffi and Mubarak are black. Here at home however, you cannot be an African because you are not Black, despite the fact that our President assures us that our "Africaness" shall never again be deferred by race, colour, gender or historical origins. It is all as clear as mud.

But the confusion about our overarching goal is confounded by the sub-goals that have been formulated for South Africa. In order to contextualise the overarching goal of a non-racial or racial democracy, within the context of a liberal-democracy we need, democratic centralism in order to be an effective "developmental state". What does this mean? Democratic centralism historically has always been a contradiction of a liberal democracy, and a developmental State, alias China, depends heavily on authoritarian stabilization to pursue the goodies for a few and for the deprivation of the many. But that does not mean we cannot give a special South African meaning to these goals. If we can do it with African, we can do it with anything. But what do they mean for us?

Clarity of purpose is vital for identifying and grooming the means to pursue them. In our new democracy these means must refer

to the Presidency, the Cabinet, Parliament, Provincial Councils, local Governments, special purpose units. (e.g. Small Business Developments,) and a host of voluntary organizations from civil society. In my recent book The other Side of History, I identify five common mistakes made by Governments when creating these mechanisms to pursue common goals:

- Confusing democratic representability with competence. Legitimacy does not automatically confer skills.
- Rewarding loyalty above competence
- Confusing authority with intelligence. A very common mistake.
- Dealing with corruption selectively and inconsistently. Very dangerous.
- Sacrificing domestic policy for foreign policy.

I am not going to dwell on these issues; they are largely self explanatory. We have a surfeit of officials in positions of authority and competence, and when they have to explain to us in understandable language what they intend doing to meet the challenges: they define the "mission and vision"; "mobilise experts" to "strategise" and "workshop" the problem so that we all can have a more "reliable understanding" etc etc etc. It is a classic case where activity is confused with work. Of course the per diem vultures flock to such occasions and spend

enormous time convincing everyone that "another meeting is essential".

The cancer at the level of performance is corruption. It is necessary to remind ourselves that corruption is a crime and when the Auditor General tells us it is a endemic and pervasive, we better sit up and take notice: The common tendency is to associate crime with assault, physical violence, rape and murder. Nobody denies that this too is a problem. Ask our Minister of Police. But it is the dishonesty and greed of officials in key areas of delivery of essential services that will have the most destructive effect in the long run. When the Minister of Welfare says in Parlaiment he has 40,000 (forty thousand) corrupt officials in his department, you have to keep in mind the poor, aged and disabled who sometimes walk for miles to get their grants and are confronted by an empty counter. Which brings me to the third leg of my analysis. Nobody knows more about the crises of delivery better than the President and his colleagues. They have gone around the country talking to people in rural and urban areas and gained first hand information of the problem.

If anything should persuade them that it is pointless making speeches on how the ANC (particularly in exile) "crushed the head of the Apartheid snake" and there was a "glorious

successful revolution" where the "vanquished" were destroyed and the "masses liberated" it is to go around villages, settlements and townships and hear people ask for water, houses, sewerage etc. And yet they cannot resist inventing history. The point is, there was a political settlement which led to a negotiated transition. This transition left the socio-economic infrastructure largely intact. The massive challenge is to change the socio-economic infrastructure of an Apartheid state into a vibrant growing post Apartheid one. Can we do it? I am convinced we can, but not if we gravely sit and twiddle our thumbs, saying "indeed" and "obviously" a hundred times in a speech, and end up with an abundance of contradictory overarching goals, and a multitude of incompetent and corrupt means to pursue them.

We have the people, the resources and the infrastructure to mobilise the people of this country to respond to these challenges. I have met some of them and have been honoured with their friendship: in Housing there is NURCHA (National Urban Reconstruction Housing Agency), responsible for building 160 thousand houses and assisting 70 "emerging contractors"; in Education - CIDA, in Banking - Women's Development Bank; in urban renewal - Taffy Adler, through Adcorp and the tireless work of Mathodzi Liphosa, 8 vegetable gardens have been

planted at schools in Kathlehong, Vosloorus, Soweto etc. and there are more to come.

Instead of allowing the 2010 World Cup event to descend into a tired old racist debate, why not seize upon it to mobilize the whole country and help make it an enormous success. Youth can be mobilised in "peace corps" type activities which will take them off the street and keep them occupied. Ordinary citizens can be mobilised to assist in combating crime. Fire every corrupt official from Cabinet Minister to local Government Official. Others well and can be found.

Let me conclude where I began: Do we wish to become a fully functioning non-racial democracy or a struggling racial democracy. Nothing is going to epitomise the latter more than the BBBEE Act. Prepare generously for litigation and corruption. I am fully in favour of allowing the discriminated majority into corporate economic life. In fact the sooner the better. But even if we make a huge success of it, we will only have touched the tip of the transformation iceberg. Perish the thought that the non-racial liberation of the majority once again be held hostage to "a new privileged" racial minority.

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