

Remember the circumstances.

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EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY 8 PM 29/10/85

STATE OF THE NATION RALLY - CLAREMONT CIVIC CENTRE

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The State of Emergency has been extended to the Western Cape as had been rumoured and expected. People have been arrested and meetings have been banned on a wide scale. Stringent conditions have been announced for the inhabitants in the area, affecting everyone from school children to old people. However, the declaration of the State of Emergency is the culmination of a process in which enormous damage has been done. The Cape Flats and Cape Town will never quite be the same again. Hostilities have flared up and attitudes have hardened. I am afraid the State of Emergency is going to compound this rather than resolve it.

Why do I say so? Two reasons. In the first place the most important consequence of the State of Emergency is not so much the additional powers and indemnity of the Security forces - they already have awesome powers at their disposal. The most important consequence is the clampdown on information. All of us are going to know less and will be forced to choose our most reliable source of rumour and gossip. The surest sign that a process of reform is in trouble in any society is when the Press become the victim of such a process. This brings me to the second reason.

Do we really know where this Government wants to go with South Africa?

What does it mean by reform ? Do the townships know ? Do the Police and security forces know ? I certainly do not. If the goals of reform are unclear and unacceptable then the maintenance of law and order and so-called stability becomes a farce that drifts into simple repression. Obviously there has to be stability in transition; obviously no Government can reform or change in a situation of anarchy and chaos. But the manner in which stability is maintained is crucial for the success of reform. In fact, if the goals of reform cannot justify the way in which we maintain stability, then stability becomes a goal in itself and we all lose sight of where we are supposed to go and what we hope to achieve.

Increasingly in South Africa and here in the Cape the relationship between reform and the maintenance of stability is becoming more difficult to understand. How can the indiscriminate use of a sjambok encourage co-operation for reform ? How can the Government hope to negotiate if those with whom they have to do so are banned, detained or in jail ? We seem to be trapped in a cycle of repression and revolt in which the concepts of reform, negotiation, justice, democracy, political participation sound almost quaint and otherworldly. How are we going to break out of this ratchet ?

The Chinese have a game that they call the connecting link. They capture two birds and tie them together, loosely with a thin but strong and long rope. When the birds are released, they think they are free and take their flight, rejoicing in the wideness of the sky. But suddenly crack, the cord is stretched taut. They flutter and whirl in all directions, blood drips from their bruised wings while feathers and fluff fall on the onlookers.

... Sometimes, the cord gets tangled in a tree, sometimes it twines around the birds and they struggle as though caught in a trap, peck at each other's eye, beaks and wings and if Providence does not impale them on a branch, one of them dies before the game is over. Alone. Or with the other. Both of them. Together. Strangled. Blinded. (An African novelist)

I read this disturbing tale to you with apologies to my friend, Prof. Heribert Adam, who uses it in a new and brilliant analysis of our benighted land due to be published soon, because it so evocatively captures the macabre and vicious political cycle of repression and revolt that is pulling us all into its vortex. It is a dance of death in which the politically antagonistic partners, the polar opposites, appeal for our support.

The one side says : "Join us, we are winning. The other side is talking negotiation and reason because the armed struggle, the revolt is losing. That is why they want to see businessmen, politicians, students and churchmen. The State of Emergency is working and the struggle for law and order, for stability is going our way. That is why we have to extend the State of Emergency, arrest as many ringleaders as possible - unfortunately some innocent ones as well. violence from the State is necessary and inevitable, but it will be shortlived and applied with responsibility, because the forces of civilized Government will succeed. There can be no reform without stability."

The other side says : "Join us, we are winning. The regime is talking negotiation and reason because the armed struggle, our revolt, has taken the initiative away from them, they are losing control. That is why they stop the students and churchmen from going to talk. The struggle for liberation is going our way. Do not betray the masses, do not collaborate. Violence is unfortunately necessary and inevitable because of the violence of the State. Unfortunately innocent people will get hurt but no victory is possible without sacrifice and suffering."

Both sides have contempt for moderation; for restraint; for attempts at reconciliation. both become increasingly intolerant of any strategy other than their own to achieve their respective goals.

You are either for them or against them, there is no other choice : both talk about reform, negotiation and democracy, but on their own terms. The one side wants to share power without losing any; the other side wants power without sharing any. Each side is convinced of victory on its own terms. That is why the one side needs the other, depends on it to consolidate its own support. The funeral brings out the Police; the Police brings protest; protest brings the Caspir; the Caspir brings the rocks and petrol bombs; the rocks and petrol bombs bring the guns; the guns bring killings; the killings bring more funerals, more funerals bring a State of Emergency; the State of Emergency brings mass action ; consumer boycott, strikes and stay aways, mass action brings collaborators and informers; collaborators and informers bring "necklaces" of retribution; "necklaces" of retribution bring more repression; more repression brings more revolt. And so the cord of violence binds them together as they tear away at each other and demand of all of us to choose either the one side or the other - either for repression or revolt; the sjambok or the rock; the shotgun or the petrol bomb.

I can think of no other more damning indictment on those in this generation who profess a commitment to justice; to reason and conciliation and to a non-racial democratic South Africa, than to have allowed, without protest or every conceivable non-violent effort, this stark and irrational choice, to become the only option available to our land.

It is an option without a conclusion. There can be no winners, only permanent losers.

Let us at least begin by saying this : violence from or against the State cannot resolve our conflict. Let us say to this Government : There is no precedent in history where a minority forcefully imposed its will on the majority without provoking revolt, violence and the destruction of the quality of life for all. Prolonged oppression and coercion from the Government preserves nothing and destroys everything of worth for all. But let us also say to those who believe liberation is around the corner : There is no precedent in history of a successful violent revolution without a disintegration or defection of the security structure of the State. There is not the slightest evidence of this now or in the foreseeable future. And even where such revolutions have been successful, it is questionable whether the consequences have been worth the quality of life achieved. Let us continually remind both sides that each has the capacity to destroy the human and natural resources of this land and this fact alone should compel us all to search for alternatives. Therefore the first we have to do is not to abandon reason because we are afraid to condemn violence from whichever quarter it comes.

But secondly, let us not forget where it all started. Apartheid is the root cause of the crises in which we find ourselves. It cannot survive without force and oppression. Apartheid needs bannings, detention without trial, censorship, states of emergency. There is no other way people can be forced to accept the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, Influx Control, compulsory group membership. The essence of Apartheid is the denial of individual choice because of race or ethnicity. To deny choice is to compel. Compulsion is the beginning of coercion and prolonged coercion sows the seeds of violence. Because Apartheid depends on coercion it breed violence. Therefore it is not enough to say that violence cannot solve our crises. We have to say to this Government ! It is your responsibility to prevent violence by getting rid of Apartheid, finally and completely. To get rid of Apartheid means quite simply to restore freedom of choice for the individual without taking race or ethnicity as official criteria. People, on this basis, must be free to choose their leaders, organizations, residential areas, jobs and Government.

That is why in the third instance we have to say to this Government that negotiations can never get off the ground unless you are prepared to get rid of apartheid.

HOW can the Government expect people to negotiate if they do not have freedom of choice ? WHO is there to negotiate with if the Government denies people this freedom ? WHAT is there to negotiate about if freedom of choice is not the basis of such negotiation ? Therefore there can be no negotiation as long as Apartheid exists. Nor can there be negotiation as long as the coercion which enforces Apartheid continues. People must be free to choose their leaders and their leaders must be free to be chosen and to negotiate. Then only can the reconstruction of a non-racial democratic South Africa begin.

Fourthly, we have to make it clear that no one group, organization, movement or party, whether responsible for Apartheid or against it, is going to determine on its own what a non-racial democratic South Africa is going to look like. The PFP has been attacked for talking to the ANC, to members of the UDF, Inkatha and even the Government. We have been accused of being collaborators of the system and "hobnobbing with terrorists"; of being defenders of the status quo as well as being "useful idiots" for the revolutionary plans of Communists. We have been told choose for or against one or the other organization. We say to them all. Forget about it. We have our own identity. We not only know what we are against, but we also know what kind of non-racial democratic South Africa we believe in.



Further more, we know how to get there and how to struggle for it. That is why when we say to this Government :

1. Dismantle Apartheid completely;
2. Release political prisoners and all who are detained without trial;
3. End the State of Emergency and allow freedom of organization;
4. Call a National Convention to determine a new non-racial democratic constitution for South Africa;

We say so not to curry favour with any individual or group or to usurp the role of any movement or front. We say so because it has always been consistent with our principles and policy in which we cherish individual liberty, social justice and democratic government and because we believe such demands to be in the best interests of our country and the politics of negotiation. And that is also why we will oppose intolerance, authoritarianism and prejudice, whether it comes from the left or right, above or below.

Finally, I wish to make a few comments about the Convention Alliance and respond to some critical comments against it.

The concept is not a new one. It is one of many attempts to bring together as many organizations and prominent people who are engaged in non-violent opposition to Apartheid as possible, so that they can do two things :

bring pressure to bear for the systematic dismantling of Apartheid and to create a climate for negotiating a non-racial democratic constitution for our country.

It is true that the concept of a Convention Alliance was publicly announced by myself and immediately endorsed by the President of Inkatha. But it is not true that either of us had any intention to exclude any organization or person from such an Alliance, or that I and my colleagues did not go to great lengths to include as many others as possible, particularly from the UDF. Thusfar we have not been successful. Either Inkatha or the PFP or both has been used to object to participation; motives or hidden agendas have been conjured up as excuses and it was felt that a too high profile PFP or Inkatha presence was an obstacle to the concept getting off the ground.

In this light the PFP and Inkatha have decided to withdraw from the Steering Committee in order to allow the concept of a Convention Alliance to be given a chance. I wish the management committee of the Movement the very best and assure them of my and my Party's support for its success. But I wish to make a few critical observations of my own :

There are some spokesmen in the UDF who are no different from President P.W. Botha and his Government. They also insist on choosing who they want to negotiate with and on their own terms.

I have said to this Government this attitude contradicts the very essence of negotiation and it remains true of whoever adopts it. It is ideological imperialism.

Also, history will show that more energy and time has been consumed between opponents of Apartheid fighting one another, than fighting Apartheid itself. After more than three decades of this objectionable system, most of its opposition movements remain committed to their own strategy defining each other into irrelevance. In the process the Apartheid Government has laughed all the way to the political bank. Once again it has waited for the appropriate moment to pick off its opponents. Until we are prepared to accept each other's bona fides in wanting to get rid of Apartheid and to work for a genuine non-racial democracy in South Africa, and until we are prepared to tolerate a wide range of strategies to pursue these objectives, we will remain in our respective corners posturing, declaiming and issuing threats and promises that cannot be fulfilled or sustained.

Apartheid must go, but it is not going to disappear simply because of a change of heart of Government. It is going to go because the people of this country, in different categories, organizations, movements and communities can consolidate their opposition and show how it has to go.

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I wish to end with the tale of the two birds. The more they fly off on their own, the more the cord that binds them will destroy them. This is true not only of the White and Black birds in South Africa, but also of those birds which oppose Apartheid. We must learn to recognize the cord for what it is. Yes - it does bind us together, but in our bondage also lies our opportunity to work together. One thing is certain : If we do not learn to fly together, we will most certainly die together.

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We must get together. → The detention of a friend.  
 seduced into the ritual of serge.  
 We are governed by a bunch of incompetent  
 megalomaniacs.

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