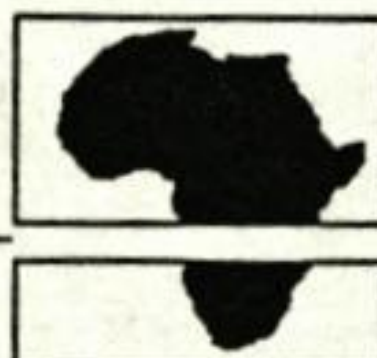


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# SOUTHSCAN

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## Referendum plans aimed at goal of coalition government with ANC

JOHANNESBURG/ The white South African referendum has little to do with white opinion - but in the view of local analysts a great deal to do with President FW de Klerk's plans for a coalition with the African National Congress (ANC) both during the transition and afterwards.

De Klerk entered the campaign confident of victory (see story below) and, after months of National Party scaremongering over the political threat posed by the far-Right Conservatives, assured of massive domestic and international support for his cause.

Even the ANC, which vowed throughout January to block any NP plans for a racially-exclusive referendum - which it characterised as a racial veto on reform - has been unable seri-

ously to oppose De Klerk on the issue.

Internationally, the perception, carefully nurtured by De Klerk throughout 1991, that the far-Right does constitute a real threat precipitated a wave of threats to reverse plans for aid and investment should the Conservative party 'No' vote win a majority.

A Swedish delegation in South Africa last week on a fact-finding mission hurried home in alarm to recommend a delay until after the referendum's outcome on Swedish plans to lift trade sanctions.

With the South African cricket team winning their first international matches since 1970, sports administrators have clambered aboard to warn that the

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## Landslide endorsement by whites seems certain for De Klerk

JOHANNESBURG/ The actual vote is still more than two weeks away, but there is no doubt that President FW de Klerk will win landslide endorsement for negotiations in white South Africa's March 17 referendum.

A government victory over the far-Right Conservative Party was never in doubt - only its size.

And it took De Klerk just 24 hours from his formal announcement of the referendum on Monday to demonstrate that, back on the familiar turn of white electoral politics, he has no equal.

He entered the campaign knowing that four out of five white South African voters believe he is leading fairly or very well, and that 63% of white voters would back him compared to just 15% for CP leader Andries Treurnicht.

And although the National Party is less popular than De Klerk himself, it nevertheless enjoys a 36-point lead over the Conservatives and absolute majority support of 56%, according to the latest opinion poll, conducted by Gallup-affiliated Markinor in November.

There is thus little point in fighting a referendum to decide who, in De Klerk's words, "represents white opinion". He clearly does.

### Destroying the Right

The referendum, analysts here say, is rather about destroying the far-Right as the only real alternative to the National Party in white politics (the pompous enthusiasm of Democratic Party leader Zach de Beer for De Klerk's re-

forms has already seen that party destroy itself as a serious alternative).

So last week, having intentionally tied himself to the result of a white parliamentary by-election in the conservative town of Potchefstroom, he forced the referendum by precipitating a major defeat for his own party's candidate (*SouthScan* v7/7 p49).

Although there had been little chance of a NP victory, De Klerk transformed what would in all probability have been a modest defeat into a 2,100-vote thumping by announcing massive and widely-criticised increases in the cost of white education just 48 hours before the Potchefstroom poll.

Treurnicht's jubilant Conservatives immediately walked into the carefully laid trap - demanding a white general

election. Instead, De Klerk announced a referendum on March 17 (a day ahead of what is likely to be, among white voters, an unpopular budget), which a question guaranteed to elicit from all but the fringes of the far-Right the 'Yes' vote De Klerk is seeking.

This was precisely what the Conservative leadership had not wanted. They had wanted an election because:

- the impact of De Klerk's personal popularity would have been lost in the local constituency struggles; and
- the strong bias towards rural constituencies could conceivably bring them a minority-vote victory similar to that won by the NP in 1948.

### Treurnicht flustered

CP officials vainly pointed out that they too wanted a "new constitution through negotiations", and the party leadership hurriedly gathered in Cape Town on Monday night to cautiously offer the idea of a boycott.

But the CP parliamentary caucus, less tied to the realities of national politics, brushed the idea aside the next morning, leaving their flustered leader Andries Treurnicht to explain the decision to the media.

In a prime-time television appearance, he effectively surrendered the referendum field to De Klerk, referring repeatedly to the prospects for defeat, but never touching on the possibility of victory.

The credibility of Eugene

*Continued on back page*

### Saatchi formulates referendum question

'Do you support continuation of the reform process which the state president began on February 2, 1990, and which is aimed at a new constitution through negotiations'.

This is the question which white South Africans will answer on March 17, and a formulation contested by CP leader Andries Treurnicht. It turns out it was formulated three weeks ago by the public relations firm Saatchi and Saatchi, whose most notable success was in the selling of Margaret Thatcher to a British public.

Saatchi has a Johannesburg branch.