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## S Africans have lost faith in FW — SACC

ORDINARY South Africans had lost faith in President F W de Klerk and confidence in the emergent negotiation process following the "inkathanga" scandal, the SA Council of Churches charged yesterday.

"These exposures have created a serious moral crisis in the country", SACC general secretary the Rev Frank Chikane said in a detailed review of political developments since June 22 — when

church leaders launched their National Peace Initiative.

The government slush funding scandal had led to fears that the peace process and prospects for negotiations were "terminally threatened".

"It has caused ordinary South Africans to lose faith and trust in Mr De Klerk. Those of us who called him a man of integrity had to swallow our words", Mr Chikane said.

This had resulted in a

"strident" demand for an interim government "or some other form of transitional administration", which would remove power from the National Party because it is a player in the negotiation process.

Mr Chikane concluded it was not yet the time to lift remaining sanctions, and urged the international community to maintain them until change in South Africa was "irreversible and profound".



16/1/11

## X Activist backs ANC call for men's release

FIERY American black political activist Angela Davis — who once topped the FBI's list of most wanted people — arrived in South Africa yesterday and immediately backed the ANC's call for the release of the three right-wing hunger strikers on humanitarian grounds.

"Of course our solidarity is with the progressive forces but we agree with the ANC in asking for their release. As progressives we have a responsibility to represent humanity and must not adopt the measures taken by the oppressors," said Professor Davis at a Johannesburg press conference last night.

A guest of the ANC Womens' League, the South African Communist Party and the Institute for Black Research, Ms Davis was accompanied by Charlene Mitchell, President of the National Alliance against Racist and Political Repression.

On the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union Ms Davis, a member of the Communist Party's central committee in the United States, said it was "a very sad and difficult time for those who have fought for socialism around the world."

"I am no less an advocate of socialism than I was before. In the US we are witnessing a crisis of capitalism. We need jobs, housing, health care and education. Socialism is more relevant today," she said.

Asked what she hoped to achieve by visiting South Africa, Ms Davis said: "A few years ago I could never have imagined being here. All my political life we vowed we would not visit until South Africa was free."

"We hope to revitalise the movement for a free South Africa". — Saturday News Correspondent



# Dwindling communists are left out in the cold

By Dominic Evans

THE DEFEAT of the Soviet hardliners leaves the world's remaining Communist powers more isolated than ever.

Countries dependent on Soviet support to prop up shaky economies will take no comfort from Mr Boris Yeltsin's warning that Russia, which faces its own economic crisis, cannot afford to continue its largesse to former client states.

Others, accustomed in the past to the comfort of a powerful ideological sympathiser in the Soviet Union, will have to struggle to resist renewed calls for change.

Many one-party African states, some of which claim Marxist credentials, have been forced towards change since the eastern European revolutions began two years ago.

Ghana and Burkina Faso, for example, whose regimes until recently paid lip service to Marxism, are both moving towards greater pluralism.

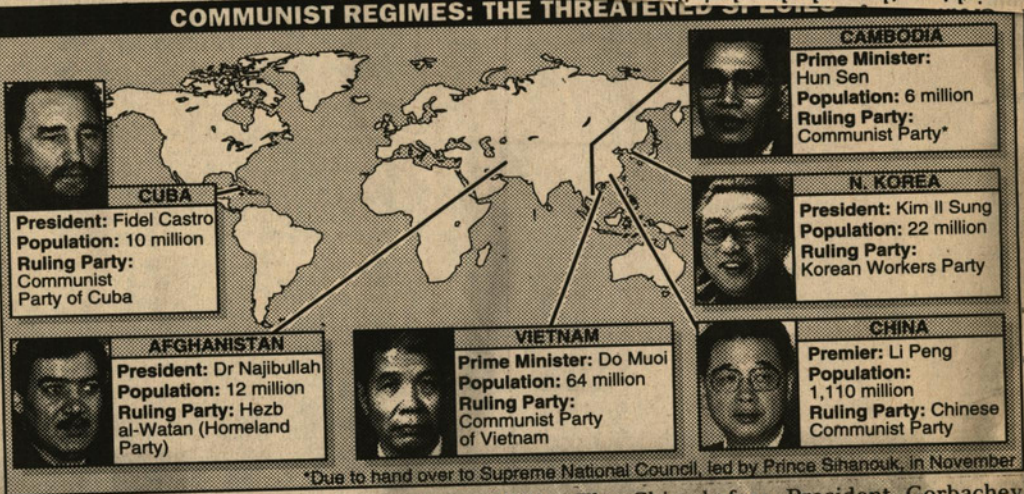
The main Communist states now under pressure are:

● **Afghanistan:** Since Soviet troops withdrew in 1989, the Kabul government has continued to receive oil, wheat, military and financial aid worth millions of pounds from Moscow.

Despite Soviet support, President Najibullah's forces control only a handful of cities, including Kabul, while Muslim Mujahideen rebels control much of the countryside.

Iran, which with Pakistan hosts five million Afghan refugees, has expressed hope that the defeat of the Moscow coup may aid moves to establish an Islamic and non-aligned government in Kabul.

● **Cambodia:** The agreement



between the Phnom Penh government and the three Cambodian guerrilla factions on big troop cuts has led all parties to the verge of ending the 12-year civil war.

Agreement has yet to be reached on a system for future elections, but an interim authority, the Supreme National Council, is due to take over in November under United Nations auspices. The 12-member council, presided over by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, will contain a majority of Communists.

UN poll plans may be undermined by China and Vietnam, which may seek to impose a "red solution".

● **China:** The world's last totalitarian giant is not about to fall apart, despite the shock China's leaders must have felt at the reformers' victory in Moscow.

Dissidents may take heart and increase their calls for democracy, but the Chinese military, unlike its Soviet counterpart, showed few qualms when called upon to put down popular demonstrations in 1989 with ruthless force.

Despite its size, more than 92 per cent of China's population belongs to the same ethnic group. This, and the government's willingness to impose martial law on restive minorities means any disintegration of China on the Soviet

model is unlikely. The Chinese economy, which is in much better shape than Moscow's, is another factor keeping revolution at bay.

Standards of living have improved greatly in the past 10 years and shops are full of a wide range of goods. Further economic liberalisation may follow, if only to stem, rather than encourage, pressure for political reform.

● **Cuba:** Havana has pledged not to abandon President Castro's austere version of Marxism-Leninism.

But the country faces severe financial difficulties. The crumbling of the East European bloc cost Cuba an estimated 90 per cent of its foreign markets, and the recent reduction of Soviet support — estimated at more than £1.5 billion last year — has led to shortages of food, fuel and spare parts.

Dr Castro, a long-standing opponent of perestroika, banned reports on recent Soviet reforms. But with Cuba barely 100 miles from the US mainland, state control of the media cannot prevent news of a changing world filtering through to a restive population.

● **North Korea:** Pyongyang is expected to maintain its strict Stalinist ideology, while seeking to ease its growing diplomatic isolation.

For decades, Moscow was North Korea's closest ally,

before President Gorbachev shifted the financially-pressed Soviet Union's loyalty to South Korea.

The Soviet turmoil may delay the transfer of power from North Korea's ageing leader, Kim Il-sung, to his son. This had been expected next year.

● **Vietnam:** Since 1986, Hanoi has attempted wide-ranging economic reforms, allowing private enterprise and foreign investment. But the country's economic and diplomatic isolation, due in part to a resolute refusal to institute corresponding political reform, has stifled any economic resurgence.

Since the Soviet Union, Vietnam's main ally, withdrew most of its aid and preferential trade terms last year, Vietnam's attempts to improve ties with China have intensified. Relations with China will now become increasingly important, not least in the attempt to resolve the issue of Cambodia.

In 1979, Vietnam invaded Cambodia and ousted the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge forces.

Now the two countries appear to be assisting UN attempts to resolve the Cambodian civil war.

Increased government vigilance is likely as Vietnam tries to ensure that the events in the Soviet Union are not mirrored at home.

SAVE SUMMER

Counter-coup  
for Americans

Afghan leader



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Sunday Times Review 31/8/91

# Man of the momentum

Frederik van Zyl Slabbert is a politician without a party, but as Justin Cartwright reports, this may qualify him perfectly as leader of post-apartheid South Africa

In a South Africa, any number of roads seem to lead to Dr Frederik van Zyl Slabbert. The more tense the situation, the more apparent it becomes that Slabbert is crucial to a peaceful outcome. Last month he was made chairman of the Metropolitan Chamber, a quango set up by the government to look at non-racial and democratic ways of integrating and improving the administration of the black and white cities which orbit uneasily around Johannesburg. This is the first of what will be many interim arrangements for the practical changes in South Africa, and the first step on the road to a transitional government.

Not long ago a poll in *The Sowetan* newspaper rated him the third best choice — after Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu — for president of South Africa. He has the ear of F.W. de Klerk, the state president, of leaders of the African National Congress, of

upbringing was based on lies and falsehoods led eventually to his gaining a seat in South Africa's parliament as a Progressive party member. By 1981 he was leader of the party, which soon became the official opposition. Across the floor he faced P.W. Botha.

There is a Mount Rushmore quality about Slabbert. You get the feeling that he is motivated by an almost monumental sense of justice. He is not — and this is why he is universally respected — in the thrall of any faction in the present struggle. Even as leader of a political party it became clear that party advantage was never his first interest. By 1986 he had decided that parliament was a sham. The real struggle was taking place outside parliament, between the ANC and the security establishment, a conflict which still rumbles on.

He could no longer stay in parliament and, as he sees it, he lied to. He resigned, causing great



Cometh the hour, cometh the man: Frederik van Zyl Slabbert

minister, remarked, de rigueur in business circles and on the cocktail party circuit to have been to Lusaka to meet the ANC. In February 1990 Nelson Mandela was released. It is not fanciful to suggest that without Slabbert's initiatives, Mandela would still be in jail.

Slabbert points out that in the process which lies ahead the South African government is both player and referee, while the ANC is struggling to transform itself into an effective political party. The government has rejected an interim administration, but Slabbert believes that interim "structures" will assume that role in all but name. The Metropolitan Chamber is the first such structure.

Sooner or later a multi-party conference must take place where all interested parties can stake a claim. There are elements both in the ANC and in the know-nothing tendency of the Afrikaner right which can see no point in talks. But there will be talks and there will be further joint initiatives; it would be a great surprise if Slabbert was not asked to be chairman of any such conference. He would accept, but on the condition that the government and the other participants are serious about the agenda which, to his



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the Conservative party - the main opposition in parliament to the ruling National party - of Chief Buthelezi, of businessmen and academics, of foreign ambassadors and African premiers. Some are saying that Slabbert is ideally placed to start a new, non-racial party, drawing in all those who are keener on social democracy than ideology; all those who do not wish to march forward into an increasingly uncertain future under increasingly tattered banners.

How did it happen? How did a 15 stone, rugby-playing, Afrikaans-speaking, former theology student from Pietersburg in the very conservative northern Transvaal, come, at the age of 51, to this position of influence and - although he would deny it - power?

As with many white South Africans, but few of them Afrikaners, 1960 was the year the scales fell from his eyes. He was at Stellenbosch university, studying theology in the divinity school where five former prime ministers spent their formative years, when he was sent on mission work to Langa, a desolate black township outside Cape Town. Until then he had been unaware that the lives of black South Africans in the townships were anything other than arduous. He was frogmarched out of Langa by the police, but he had seen and heard enough to convince him that the Afrikaner people were being deceived. A system of brutal repression was being presented to them as a necessary system of "separate development".

The realisation that his people's

bitterness among his colleagues in the Progressive party, including the redoubtable Helen Suzman. She accused him of desertion. For many years she had fought a lone liberal battle in parliament; now, as she saw it, Slabbert had thrown it all away, causing a crisis in the party she had so heroically kept alive in the darkest days. But the issue went deeper: even if the Progressives were being used, they were doing excellent work exposing deaths in detention, abuses of police and ministerial power, and in providing advice, comfort and hope for detainees and their families.

But, whether by accident or design, Slabbert had made what has proved to be his shrewdest move: he had established his credibility with black leaders. He also saw that, as an Afrikaner and a former party leader, he would be safe from the attentions of the security forces.

What Slabbert saw was that the ANC and the South African government had reached an impasse. Neither could move forward without the other. Worsening economic conditions and increasing unrest had made the government aware that the country was sliding into a state of siege, at the same time the ANC could see that its "armed struggle" was largely symbolic.

Slabbert felt that the two sides could talk once Botha was out of the way. In 1986, with Alex Boraine, his colleague from the Progressives, Slabbert set up the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (Idasa). It had no money and very little support. In the course of a casual conversation Slabbert was

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able to raise \$75,000 from a single benefactor in America. For the rest, the money has come largely from Scandinavia.

Idasa set about trying to convince both sides, but more particularly the whites, that the stalemate could be broken. A meeting with ANC leaders Alfred Nzo and Thabo Mbeki, who has become a close friend, convinced Slabbert that there was room for manoeuvre. Mbeki has since playfully described Slabbert as "my future president".

The most extraordinary event took place in July, 1987. Slabbert and his colleagues had, against all odds, brought together a group of Afrikaner South Africans and a group of ANC exiles in Dakar, Senegal. As the Afrikaners arrived in the tropical night, drums were beating and the air was heavy with apprehension for ten days, at one point in front of a hostile audience of 2,000 people, the Afrikaners were both traumatised and liberated by

this contact with the enemy. Mbeki, whose father Govan was soon to be released from detention by the South African government, swung the audience in favour of accepting the Afrikaners.

"My name is Thabo Mbeki, I am an Afrikaner," he said by way of introduction. Crowned a victor.

Breyten Breytenbach, the poet, who had helped set the whole thing up from Paris, realised that nothing would ever be the same in the closed world of the Afrikaner Slabbert and he have been friends since Slabbert visited him in 1977 while he was serving seven and a half years in jail for terrorism and conspiring with the ANC. Breytenbach credits Slabbert with "de-mythologising" the ANC, but none less cautions Slabbert about being a politician without a constituency. He also feels that Slabbert with underestimates the significance of, and has a distaste for "mass democratic action". When the chips are down, the ANC, Inkatha and the extreme right-wing Afrikaner parties (such as the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, or AWB) has shown, can put people on the streets. He fears that Slabbert - theorist, academic and determined liberal - may be used by all sides and pushed aside.

After Dakar, there were howls of protest and calls for prosecution for treason back home. At the same time it became clear that many Afrikaners, as Slabbert had suspected, were desperate for a way out of the cul-de-sac. Events moved at great speed. There were other meetings with the ANC. Soon it was, as Pik Botha, the South African foreign

mind, is the implementation of a process to create a genuine democracy in South Africa. There are pressing problems of health, unemployment, education and wealth creation which any administration will have to tackle and any settlement will have to address.

Slabbert is perhaps hoping for some sort of interim administration of reasonable and like-minded people. This may well be where his mission comes unstuck. None the less, the process is having the unlooked-for effect of introducing politics - in the classic sense of negotiation and discussion - into the South African situation. The ground rules themselves are now the subject of the debate, not the timing of the handover. If Afrikaners must accept democracy, so must the ANC; if South Africa must accept democracy, so must black Africa. It is from these beliefs that Slabbert's reputation has grown.

But there is nothing pompous or self-important about him. Seeing Joe Sofo, of the South African Communist Party, at Frankfurt Airport recently, he said: "Hello, Joe, what are you doing here?"

"I'm addressing all the communist parties of Europe."

"Hell man, that should take about five minutes."

Improbable as it may now seem, the troubled history of South Africa is pointing to Slabbert rather than Mandela as the first president of a new South Africa. ●

Justin Carwright, a novelist and documentary film-maker, was born in South Africa and has lived in England since 1965.

*London*