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WEST PALM BEACH ROUND TABLE

"CAN A MULTI-PARTY NON-RACIAL SOCIETY EVOLVE IN SOUTH AFRICA?"

WEST PALM BEACH. 5TH FEBRUARY 1992

In South Africa we are extremely fortunate to have retained hope that we can establish a non-racial, non-sexist, multi-party democracy in which all will be totally equal before the law and the constitution. If anything, the 11 long decades of systematic oppression by racist governments and by apartheid has reinforced our felt need for a new South Africa in which there will be these things. We are also inspired by your own American experience in that you also overcame your own race problem.

We have had a Communist Party in South Africa for a long time which has sought to establish itself in every way possible ever since the 1950's. Not only has it struggled to do so in its own right, but it has had the strategic advantage of being part and parcel of the African National Congress and has been given as much positive publicity as it wanted.

Despite these advantages, the South African Communist Party never made any headway amongst the population and today is only kept relevant by the seats its leadership has on the African National Congress Executive Committee. Without this advantage it would be a small splinter party of no real significance.

The African National Congress itself went into exile in 1960 and, in the company of other revolutionary organisations around the world, it evolved the ideal of establishing a Marxist, one-party

state. The ANC has had the advantage of massive international support. It received millions of dollars worth of support from the USSR which promoted it, armed it and provided the maximum

diplomatic support for it around the world.

Quite independent of this support, as well as the allied support it obtained from places like Cuba and Vietnam and from internationally prominent leaders such as Dr Fidel Castro, Colonel Gadaffi and Mr Yasser Arafat, it was given substantial ongoing support by the globally linked anti-apartheid movements. ' )

In addition, the ANC had the advantage of being effgctjvely recognised as the "only true representative of South Africa in many international circles. It was given observer status at the

United Nations, the OAU, Non-Aligned countries and the Commonwealth. :

In addition to all these advantages, the ANC had further advantages of having a network of established offices and full-time staff in dozens of countries around the world. It also had a substantial publishing section in East Germany and it ran broadcast stations in -Africa which beamed ANC propaganda to South Africa.

No revolutionary party could have been given more effective support for its political campaign. Indeed,, there is hardly a Black South African who, prior to 1990 when Mr de Klerk made his now famous February 2 address to Parliament, did not know that the ANC was supported by the Communist Party and sought to establish a one party Socialist or Communist state in South Africa. ;

When after 1990 however the ANC returned home, it had to abandon its direct drive to establish a Marxist, one-party State and in 1991, and now in 1992, it has publicly committed itself to establish a multi-party, non-racial society. It just had to do so to remain in contention for power.

In answering the question of whether or not we can establish a multi-party, non-racial society in South Africa, I start with the statement that we begin our negotiations with this ideal already firmly established in the hearts and minds of many millions of the poorest of the poor, who suffered most-grievously under apartheid and firmly established in the hearts and minds of the majority of privileged White South Africans.

The Black struggle for liberation has always inspired. ordinary Blacks to seek inclusion in the only South Africa that we have. We did not seek its destruction. We sought to strengthen it by our inclusion in it. MWhen, in the early 1970's, Black South Africa was shaking itself out of a "waiting for the ANC to return" mentality there was a vast ferment in Black society.

Blacks had tired of looking over their shoulder for a returning ANC which had been in exile for over a decade. They wanted action now in their midst. They wanted involvement in the struggle for liberation and they rejected the ANC's attitude which claimed that any involvement it may have in non-violent democratic opposition to

apartheid would detract from its prime objectives of pursuing an armed struggle.

The ferment in Black society at that time gave rise to a number of political developments. There was the rise of the whole Black Consciousness Movement and the emergence of the Black People's Convention and the radicalisation of the black student's organisation, the South African Students Organisation. There was the heightened political activity which led to confrontation and there was finally the massive wave of violence across the country

which was triggered off when the police shot a student, Hector Petersen, in Soweto. :

This rising Black Consciousness, as well as the movement towards confrontation and violence, brought forth leaders like Steve Biko, and the whole world saw the rising tide of Black anger promising

the early destruction of apartheid and the removal of the South African Government.

It was in these circumstances in which there was a feeling of euphoria and faith in militancy that Inkatha was born. It emerged to re-proclaim the hallowed values of the Black struggle for liberation to counter all kinds of emerging political adventurism and the demand for the dumping of the old in favour of the new.

Those who wanted this dumping and the replacement of old leadership with new leadership, gathered together in great throngs to be given very substantial publicity. If you read the media coverage during the 1976 - 1979 period, you would read about predictions regarding the fall of the South African Government and the unstoppable nature of these new politically emerging developments.

The IFP was the only black political organisation to stand up to be counted at that time and to proclaim the necessity for Black South Africans to develop membership based organisations. There was a great outcry that this could not be done because of the harshness of the State and the degree to which the State had crushed Black

democratic opposition through the wide battery of draconian powers it possessed.

If anything could prove the basic, deep-down commitment of Black South Africa to the hallowed Black struggle for liberation, and the way it supported the ideal of a non-racial, multi-party democracy it was the way in which Inkatha was supported at that time.

The IFP, then, Inkatha in the form of a liberation movement, began doubling and re-doubling its membership every year. In the space of two years it had gathered more paid-up members than the ANC had had in its heyday in the 1950's - after three and a half decades of political work. This massive surge towards Inkatha was produced by those committed to the old ANC. Indeed Inkatha was established and publicised as an organisation which would give ANC supporters a legal base from within which to operate.

I was at this time constantly in touch with the President of the ANC Mission in exile, Mr Oliver Tambo. We actually met in many parts of the world and in other countries such as England, Sweden, Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria. At times we even exchanged emissaries to keep in touch. This went on until November 1979, when Mr Oliver Tambo and members of his National Executive met with me and members of Inkatha Central Committee in London for two and a half days.

It was in June 1980, that the ANC through its then Secretary-General Mr Alfred Nzo, launched its attacks on the IFP and also stepped up personal attacks on me. Our differences revolved around -our unwillingness in the IFP to support violence as a strategy to bring about the destruction of apartheid, and our unwillingness to support economic sanctions against South Africa.

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I have gone into this in detail because it really is important for the world to understand why the ANC, on its return to, South Africa, has had to abandon its radicalism and its call for a Marxist, one-party state, in order to gain popular support.

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The vast majority of Black South Africans want a non-racial, multi-party society in South Africa. There is also very substantial support for the ideal of making quite sure that we never again see any government in South Africa acquire the monolithic powers which successive National Party governments built around themselves. We do not want any government to be so powerful as to establish tyranny over the population. 7

Not only is there a strong commitment to the multi-party ideal but there is very strong support for the substantial evolution of power downwards and outwards. Those who call for a constitutional separation of first, second and third tier governments and the entrenchment of regional government in a federal or other type of system, will win very substantial support.

We thus not only want a multi-party democracy but we want to adopt a constitution which will ensure that the democracy we do establish will remain intact. Not one of the 20 political parties which participated in the ongoing work of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa, which was initiated in December last year, has not stated its commitment to multi-party, non-racial ideals.

This is not at all surprising because the reality in South Africa is that it is not political parties who are calling the shots. The ~political parties which have come together at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) to do what they are doing, are responding to a call to do so by institutionalised South Africa.

Opinion makers across the ccuntry are calliag for a non-racial, multi-party democracy. Institutionalised South Africa has always been ahead of Mr de Klerk, and his February 2 1990 address to Parliament, which set the scene for the whole of today's politics,

was. delivered because of the call by institutionalised South Africa for him to say what he said. v

Big business has long since turned against apartheid. Captains of industry saw the writing on the wall long before Mr de Klerk spoke. They knew that apartheid spelt doom to a free enterprise system. Big business, and very importantly major foreign investors in South Africa, began actual preparation for survival in a post-apartheid, multi-party democracy.

The ideal of a multi-party democracy is so institutionalised in South Africa that the only show in town today is a political ballgame in centre stage politics where negotiations for a non-racial multi-party democracy is taking place in CODESA.

Every political party is facing the pressures which are herding it towards centre stage politics. The National Party has made astounding moves and are now strongly seeking to establish themselves as a party relevant to centre stage, middle-of-the-road politics. The ANC has made equally astounding moves to do the same. We feel very vindicated by the fact that both the National Party and the ANC are moving down to where Inkatha has stood ever since its inception in 1975.

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Whether or not we are finally going to see the evolution of a non-racial, multi-party democracy will be determined by the outcome of present day politics. Institutionalised South Africa and the general population want a non-racial, multi-party democracy, and are pushing political parties towards this ideal but political parties need to make adjustments and they need to come to terms with the realities around them.

We face the harsh political fact that however widespread the ideal is for a non-racial, multi-party democracy, and however much political parties are responding to societal pressures to work for these ideals, power-plays for political pre-eminence in pursuit of these ideals remains a problem.

If you take the ANC authored Harare Declaration which the OAU adopted and presented as its own, the Declaration calls for the establishment of a Constituent Assembly leading to a Interim Government. The Declaration calls for-all-or-nothing politics in winner-takes all stakes.

The ANC is committing itself to a multi-party democracy and the political game it is playing is to emerge as the dominating force in such a democracy with other political parties being forced to play a supportive role to what it itself wants.

In gathering momentum in opposition to the drive for monolithic political power in a non-racial, multi-party democracy, the IFP is leading in the non-acceptance of ill-conceived hasty steps to

establish the ANC as the dominating political organisation. The ANC are our political kith and kin. The ANC and the IFP come from the same origins. We should be working with each other and

strengthening what each is doing in order to achieve common goals.

Instead, the IFP is under siege by pro ANC forces because the .ANC does not want to become simply one party amongst many parties. They see the IFP as opposition which has to be crushed.

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I pause briefly to state very clearly that the IFP does not see itself as the enemy of the ANC. It has never done so. We are part of the Congress Movement which spawned and suckered the ANC. It . is some of the wrong policies which the ANC has adopted that we are opposed to. We are struggling against the emergence of any monolithic power in South Africa. We will block the ANC's attempt to establish a Constituent Assembly so that it can establish an Interim Government which it wants and which will then author the constitution that the ANC wants.

We so np. We say that the idealâ\200\235 for us is the establishment of a multi-party majority government in South Africa. We want one or another form of government which is a government of national unity. We must put the State as more important than the party and every political party must submerge its individual good in favour of the good of all.

The ANC are calling for a Constituent Assembly by June this year. . There wiTl not be a Constituent Assembly by June this year. There will never be a Constituent Assembly. We will have to make adjustments and come to one or another transitional mechanism but it will not be a Constituent Assembly.

I reject. this notion for the good reason that the llevels of violence are far too high in South Africa at the moment for us â\200\230to even begin thinking about a general election. The ANC remains revolutionary in idiom. It retains a private army in the form of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Umkhonto has not disbanded. It stiil hgs caches of arms and ammunitions secreted around the country. It is ready in the wings, waiting for the collapse of negotiations.

I cannot see how we can have an election while Umkhonto we Sizwe remains intact. I do not see how we can have an election while the ANC retains the position that Dr Mandela enunciated in statements he made during the National Peace Convention on the 14th September last year and which he has subsequently repeated. In these statements he has said that if the peace process fails, and if the negotiation process fails, the ANC will resort to mass action and that means action backed up by intimidation and violence.

Right now we face the difficulty that the ANC is quite openly and blatantly using CODESA as a launch pad for their ideal of a Constituent Assembly.

Whether we can translate the widespread support that there is for a non-racial, multi-party democratic government in a new South Africa therefore, depends upon lowering the levels of violence and moving away from the confrontation which the ANC's drive for a Constituent Assembly will inevitably produce.

CODESA must not be allowed to degenerate into a battlefield for those who are for and against the establishment of a constituent Assembly this year.. CODESA is not a political arena and if it is used as a political arena it will be the end of negotiations.

It is vitally important that the United States, both at the level of government action as well as at the level of private sector action, see the need to back 'the negotiation process itself and to give substantial support to organisations and parties committed to establishing a multi-party democracy. It is democracy that needs to be strengthened and this can only be done by strengthening the capacity of political parties to act democratically.

This means ensuring that political parties have financial, material, logistic and diplomatic support commensurate with the status as a political player. Elections are not going to be won on the soundness of policy only. Elections are going to be won by political parties which have the requisite degree of preparedness to run election campaigns.

A personal statement. I believe that we can achieve a non-racial, multi-party democracy in South Africa. I believe that we will survive the disruptions of contest for monopoly power. The people

of South Africa will, in the end, be sovereign and will get the government they want.

I believe that there are historic and societal events at work pushing South Africa towards a final multi-party democracy as that which makes the most sense out of the past. South Africa is more favourably positioned and developed for the establishment of a multi-party democracy than any other country in Africa has been in its closing stages of a struggle for liberation.

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