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CONFERENCE ON INTERCOMMUNAL RECONCILIATION

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"BLACK PARTICIPATION IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS
INCLUDING PARLIAMENT AS A PREREQUISITE FOR INTERCOMMUNAL
RECONCILIATION IN SOUTH AFRICA"

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There are some rather dramatic aspects of Blacks' experience of
apartheid which somehow escapes so many Whites. It certainly has

escaped consecutive National Party Governments and a great many
political analysts. â\200\230

Let me present the thought this way. Let us say an international
corporation marketing something or other needed to reach perhaps
for the sake of discussion, something like ten million Black South
Africans every day of the week for a year, what kind of campaign
would be designed? Radio, television, messages in the sky;,
pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, the theatre and the cinema, and
dramatic messages at sports meetings, would all have to be invoked
to reach such an audience in such numbers.

Apartheid does not need the multi-billion rand expenditure that
such a campaign would consume. Apartheid presents itself to
millions of Black South Africans when they get up and go to catch a
bus, â\200\230a train orâ\200\234a taxi to work. Virtually every hour of the day,
millions of Black South Africans are being struck by one or another
aspect of apartheid which they resent. Apartheid <creates an
awareness of what it is which no money can buy.

The harsher apartheid becomes, the tougher the Government acts, and
the more Draconian its measures are, the more Blacks are reached
more often. There is a message - apartheid is bad. There is a
demand to eradicate apartheid. The message and the demand are

dramatised every time a Black goes into a white shop where he or she is disdained; every time there is a Whites-only facility; every time a Black travels through a white suburb; every time anything happens which shows the difference in the treatment of Blacks and Whites. .

Apartheid is super-efficient in dramatising and selling its deficiencies to Black South Africa. There is no need for any agitator to be at work and past National Party Governments which sought Communists under every bush to explain Black opposition to apartheid, were blind to the realities of Black life. The media for Blacks covers more than newspapers, 'radio and television. Life itself is a media conveying political messages.

I make this point about the ability of apartheid to communicate its negative aspects to Blacks at the outset of my remarks about Black

participation in central governmental institutions [including Parliament] as a prerequisite for intercommunal reconciliation in South Africa, because I want to look at the concept "reconciliation."

Quite clearly Black experience of apartheid is such that intercommunal reconciliation can in fact only take place among those who are actually committed to join together in its eradication. The message to White South Africa at this juncture of our history must be that reform moves, political turn-about and even changes of heart amongst White South Africans which lead Whites to do their White thing to bring about change, is going to be insufficient. :

I question whether we can actually consider involvement in governmental institutions as a prerequisite for intercommunal reconciliation unless we look at that involvement as part and parcel of a wider move to unite Black and White.

Let us step out of the Black/White situation and let us even step out of the haves/have-nots situation and look at the lessons Africa has to teach us about the need for national unity as a prerequisite for establishing democracy.

Examples abound. The Frelimo/Renamo conflict is a Black/Black conflict and the actual conflict on the ground is a Black/Black conflict between social equals. It is not a class struggle; it is

not a race struggle but simply a consequence of national disunity because there is no consensus about the kind of government under which people want to be ruled. I make a telling point ladies, and gentlemen, when I make this point. Stop and think about it.

I must therefore warn when we talk about Black participation in governmental institutions, including Parliament, as a prerequisite for intercommunal reconciliation, that we must be very aware that it is only that - a prerequisite - a necessary condition. We must look at this necessary condition in conjunction with sufficient condition.

The necessary condition is, amongst other things, the condition in which the message of life to Black South Africans on a daily basis, or even hourly basis, does not convey the rejection of what is around them. This is something Mr. P.W. Botha failed to see. He invited Black participation in the workings of the President's Council within the circumstances then prevailing that were so propitious for political adventurism. He did so in circumstances in which Black politics was mobilising for Black rejection of what Mr. P.W. Botha was doing because he was trying to do something within an ongoing apartheid system.

Mr. Botha also tried to establish first the Special Cabinet Committee and then the Non-Statutory Negotiating Forum, again within an ongoing apartheid system which was daily conveying the total rejection of apartheid by millions of Blacks receiving the message. No propaganda on the part of Government, no persuasion and no political manoeuvring could blunten Black perception of the hideousness of apartheid and entice Blacks into participation in the machinery of oppression.

Then Mr. P.W. Botha attempted to establish the National Council and for the first time there was at least initially some hope. In the Bill published, the message was conveyed that the Tricameral parliamentary system would be done away with. When pressed to make this intention explicit, there was no satisfactory response and that attempt to woo Blacks into participation with Mr. P.W. Botha in what he was doing, fell flat.

The mass rejection of apartheid based on their daily experience of it is a political reality and I sincerely hope that Mr. F.W. de Klerk understands this. Saying that apartheid was outmoded and outdated did not help Mr. P.W. Botha and I think what Mr. de Klerk already has said, however much more encouraging it may sound, is just not sufficient. He has not yet got up and said:

1 The Tricameral Parliament will be scrapped and negotiation is about replacing it in part and in whole.

24 Negotiation is about a constitution under which social, economic and political systems do not need the Population Registration Act to classify races, and do not need the Group Areas Act to segregate people on the ground.

3% That there will be one South Africa, with one Central Parliament, based on one common voters' roll, with equality before the law for all citizens, regardless of race, colour or creed.

Black South Africans have therefore not yet sat down to seriously consider how individual rights can be guaranteed and how group rights can now be attended to because the threat of White domination has been entirely removed.

I do not know how far Mr. de Klerk is prepared to go in reform because negotiations have not got off the ground yet and the various 'players have not tabled their cards. There is only pre-negotiation manoeuvring and the flexing of political muscles in attempts to determine the weight of a particular negotiating presence at the table.

I know there is the whole question of having to avoid pre-judging issues and having to ensure that negotiations are open and that various Parties will be able to put their requirements on the negotiating agenda. I make the point, however, that until in one or another way the final product of negotiation is agreed to before negotiation begins, there will be no serious negotiations.

We need to distinguish between prescription in a pre-arranged agenda and the openness of agenda written to determine how a particular end should be reached. Quite clearly there will be no big-bang -negotiations in South Africa which in one sitting the future of the country will be decided. These kind of negotiations which belong to situations in which one or another Party is suing for peace, are quite out of sight for us. The National Party, and certainly the Conservative Party, will not be prepared to sit down and negotiate how best to achieve a Marxist, one-Party State.

Conversely, Inkatha - or even the ANC, the UDF or COSATU - will not sit down and negotiate how best to achieve one or another form of apartheid. While the National Party wants one form of apartheid and while Black politics wants one or another form of one-Party, Marxist State, there will be no negotiations.

I Dbelieve that there is the real prospect of achieving sufficient consensus about a normalised South Africa as a modern, Western-type industrial democracy with a multi-Party parliamentary system and an inevitably mixed economy, to make these objectives the givens and to make negotiation about how to best achieve them for Mr. de Klerk to start setting the stage for them. There will be sufficient takers to make negotiations along these lines 'real politik.'

Allow me to change tack and raise another issue. Unquestionably Black involvement in governmental institutions including Parliament is a prerequisite for intercommunal reconciliation in South Africa. This assertion can stand side by side with another assertion and it is that only Black involvement in governmental institutions, including Parliament, achieved as a multi-racial, multi-Party effort will ensure that this involvement leads to inter-group reconciliation.

Blacks of course now know that they will gain full involvement in South Africa's institutional life, including Parliament, in one way or another. If Whites are now politically ungracious and make Blacks struggle for that involvement to the point where they actually achieve it against White opposition, it will be achieved in radicalised politics in which there may be little hope of real reconciliation. Black participation will come, whether it comes through negotiation, through power politics finally achieving Black involvement through the employment of Black bargaining power, or by Blacks finally resorting to revolution. Full Black involvement will come one way or another.

There was a time when these kind of statements that I have just made would have drawn angry White responses in which I was accused of sabre-rattling and threatening. South Africa has progressed beyond the point where such responses should be forthcoming. I make the point in fact within the context of believing that the politics of negotiation is going to get off the ground. I have only met Mr. F.W. de Klerk once in a face-to-face meeting and that was soon after he assumed the leadership role of the National Party. I found his style of politics refreshingly different to that of his predecessor. He is moving forward with a new resolve and I am now as much concerned about ensuring that Blacks do not scuttle the politics of negotiation as I am concerned that Mr. de Klerk will renege on his public statements and his undertakings.

I would not like to see the best constitution in the world foisted on either Blacks or Whites without their approval. Unless people end up being governed the way they are prepared to be governed, there is little hope of stability in South Africa.

There is a long road ahead and in an important sense, all a negotiated political settlement in South Africa will do, will be to make it possible for Blacks and Whites to pull together to overcome the immense difficulties which will be encountered in the battle against poverty, ignorance and disease.

There is going to be political discontent after apartheid has been vanquished regardless of who governs and under what constitution the government of the day governs. We have seen that mass poverty endangers democracy, wherever it keeps spreading. Africa and the Third World abound with examples of poverty destroying democracy.

Once there is full Black involvement in governmental institutions, including Parliament, we will at least be able to face the difficulties which lie ahead in sufficient unity to mobilise a national response. We must not delude ourselves, however, that the poverty-stricken will not blame the Government of the day for their poverty after liberation. In our circumstances there will still be haves and have-nots for a very considerable time ahead and inter-group conflict will not evaporate with political victories over apartheid.

Again I make the point that Black involvement in governmental institutions, including Parliament, must be seen as a minimal requirement for intercommunal reconciliation. How Black involvement is finally secured, what kind of constitution we end up with, the extent to which the new constitution has been achieved through negotiation and a joint Black/White effort, and perhaps above all, the extent to which South Africa is governed in such a way that national unity emerges to make a national response to poverty, ignorance and disease possible, all raise questions which require very careful consideration.

My message to the National Party is that the next six months will be very critical for it. I think it is true to say that some time has been bought by Mr. de Klerk's style of leadership and the action he has taken, particularly him permitting protest marches

and the eight political prisoners who were released. We do not know exactly what he said to Mrs. Thatcher but she has now fought for us in this country. We do not know exactly what Mr. de Klerk

said to the Mocambican government that occasioned the Mocambican Minister of Information to say that Mr. de Klerk had done more in one visit than his predecessor had done during his whole term of office. All we do know is that there is a ' holding of the international hand.

From within a Black political perspective, I make another point. The withdrawal of USSR support for revolutionary activity in Southern Africa in regional conflict in Southern Africa and the ANC's endorsement out of Angola, must necessarily have an impact on the organisation. There is what for me is an unfortunate additional factor - the indisposition of Mr. Oliver Tambo. There is a leadership issue which must impinge on the ANC's adjustment to its circumstances. The ANC was due to have one of its five-year

Consultative Conferences next year. Whether it goes into that Conference having been led by a caretaker president, or whether the National Executive appoints a new President, the leadership issue will complicate the process by which political consensus would have been striven for in the next Consultative Conference.

What the South African Government does in the next months is therefore of particular importance. I probably express the view of a great many observers when I say that Mr. de Klerk's opening address to the 1990 parliamentary session and the No Confidence debate which will follow soon afterwards, will be more than ordinarily important.

I must make the point strongly that anything that can be done to move towards normalising South Africa must be done when it can be done. It is with a sense of total disbelief that I heard that the Durban City Council had again voted to keep some of Durban's beaches white. How Durban City Council can do a Boksburg on Durban and detract from the image that Mr. de Klerk is now beginning to create, is quite beyond me. The whole of the Separate Amenities Act must become defunct in practice before it is scrapped in law. We are not going to be negotiating about the Separate Amenities Act. Fbs a8 outs The Group Areas Act is out. The Race Classification Act is out. The whole present parliamentary system is out.

Start from this premise and manage politics in such a way that it is possible for a new constitution to be legislated into existence. I am one of those who really do hope that change will be legislated into existence because that means that Black and White are joining together to achieve a common end. The legitimacy of the Government is not jeopardised by what its opponents say. A point must be reached, however, when the legitimacy of the Government is in fact on the line and will be forfeited if the Government cannot do what it sets out to do. We have reached the point in history when failure of policy could well turn into failure of legitimacy.

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