

Report of a Meeting Held in England on 1st and 2nd November 19871. Introduction

- 1.1 A meeting was held in Henley, England on the 1st - 2nd November 1987 between members of the ANC (Comrades Aziz Pahad, Wally Serote, Tony Trew and Harold Wolpe) and Willie Breytenbach, Willie Esterhuyse and Sampie Terblanche.

P. de Lange, Rector of Potchefstroom (?) University was also due to attend the meeting but he was unable because of the university crisis and Tjaart van der Walt (Potchefstroom) was also unable to attend.

The meeting was organised on the initiative of Michael Young of Consolidated Goldfields, who acted as chairman. He had previously discussed his interest in taking initiatives of this type with Comrades Tambo and Mbeki.

Although it was emphasised by us and reiterated by them that the meeting was not about negotiations, and although there was unclarity about who they represented and who they would report back to, we believe that Breytenbach and Esterhuyse and, perhaps, Terblanche also, would be reporting back to people within the security establishment. That is, they seemed to be serving, as it were, an 'emmissary' role. These people, the top 'managers' of the National Management Security System, were referred to as 'seclurocrats'.

What did not emerge clearly was the relationship between the Presidential structures and the NSMS. WB etc presented the NSMS as the dominant apparatus of the state, with the implication that it is separate from the presidential structures and has a capacity to act, at least to an important degree, autonomously. They did suggest, however, that it was not inconceivable that the State Security Council would move to negotiations with the ANC if its calculations pointed in that direction. (Indeed we were told that the security establishment already talks to the 'internal ANC', and the instance of Langa (Uitenhage) was cited, in connection with some project to do with a school). The thinking behind this statement started from an analysis of the security structure as a complex one (60 percent civilian and 40 percent security personnel), with an inner group of 'controllers' who have been strengthened in the short-term by the success of the emergency, as they see it. However there is another group which sees control not as an end in itself, but as a means of buying time. This group subscribes to the thesis that success can only be 20 percent military and must be 80 percent political. They hold that in the medium to long-term it is necessary to get political support, and differ at the moment on how to get that support.

In this respect the meeting was quite different to Dakar. At Dakar, most of the Idasa group came to learn about the ANC, some to persuade it to revise its strategy and some to get first hand information about it. At the Henley meeting, their object was to obtain information about how the ANC would react to various possible moves by the state and especially the release of Govan Mbeki and, then, Nelson Mandela - aimed at opening, it was stated, the path to negotiations.

- 1.2 For this reason it is important to establish the political position of W.B, W.E and S.T and their relationship to P.W.Botha and to the command structures of the NSMS.

W. Breytenbach

- \* Presently Professor and Head of the Department of African Studies, University of Stellenbosch; formerly senior researcher African Institute, University of Pretoria.
- \* Formerly Director of Constitutional Planning in the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning under Botha's regime; Secretary of the Special Cabinet Committee on Black Constitutional Development under Heunis's chairmanship.
- \* He played an innovative role in devising the terms and structure of the Tri-Cameral Parliament. He states that he was very enthusiastic about the T-C.P and, in particular, the Standing Committee System but, he states, he now realises that it was a total failure and a disaster.
- \* He has never been a member of the NP or the Broederbond but was drafted into the civil service because of his 'technocratic' skills, that is, his comparative knowledge of African political systems.
- \* He broke publicly with the regime (he signed the Group of 28 declaration), but he had no intention, he stated, 'of burning his bridges' and although he was heavily criticised, he still retains close formal and informal ties with state apparatuses and personnel. He is a frequent lecturer at 3 different military colleges and lectures to military 'think tanks' e.g. on 5th November he will address high ranking military officers (about 100) and 40 co-opted Africans.

He will analyse 'traditional' (anti-colonial) and 'modern' struggles of the African people and his purpose will be to draw out the lesson that stabilization cannot be achieved by military power, it

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- \* According to Breytenbach (and not denied) he is still a member of the Broederbond.
- \* It would seem that he now has no formal links with the 'establishment' but obviously was closely involved at the highest levels and now retains informal connections although he seems to be less acceptable to Botha etc than the other two.

1.3 The discussion ranged over a wide range of topics (the political process, the economy and security) and the minutes of this discussion will be recorded in section 3 of this report.

Section 2, however, will set out the information relevant to the 'emissary' role of the three, a role of which Young was certainly aware.

## 2. The 'Emissary' Purpose of the Meeting

2.1 During the first session, W.B. gave what he called his analysis of the 'perceptions' and position of the 'securocrats'. This was the major intervention from their side and needs to be set out fully:

2.1.1 In the last election the security question was the dominant issue. In the 2 years before the 6th May election, the mass struggles had raised doubts about the NP's ability and willingness to govern.

The relevance of the election lies only in the fact that the result was an endorsement of the NSMS and the role and policy of the 'securocrats'. It had no importance in relation to parliament which has virtually become irrelevant.

Power lies in the hands of the NSMS. [However, it should be noted, no clear analysis was offered of the relationship between the president and other state structures and the NSMS. In fact, while ST argued that the possibility of change turned on the disintegration of the NP and the 'succession' crisis in 1989 presented a slim hope that this might occur, WB suggested that the 'succession crisis' would be a damp squib if the state of emergency was still in force. In any event, he premised his whole contribution on the assumption that a strategy of negotiation could be on the agenda immediately depending on the ANC's response to

was necessary to shift it to the 'political', that is to communication with the ANC.

The problem was then raised by WB that the meeting was secret as was their attendance and that they could not communicate with the 'securocrats' about this. It is possible that this was said in order to make it appear that there was no prior mandate from the 'securocrats' but this is against the tenor of the whole presentation.

In any event, the solution suggested was that WE would communicate with Peter de Lange who would pass the appropriate message to the 'securocrats'.

## 2.3 Summary and Conclusion

2.3.1 Other matters were discussed (including the 'bottom line') and these are summarised elsewhere. But, the main purpose of the meeting was for WB and WE to represent the position of what was presented as the dominant apparatus of the state.

2.3.2 The position of that apparatus is based on the perception that the mass democratic and armed struggle and the impact of the ANC has been sufficiently controlled so as to reestablish a considerable degree of stability.

Given this stability, the state can now act to try to further stabilise the situation by taking steps, which, if properly responded to, can lead to full scale negotiations. A first step is the release of Mbeki and, if there is an appropriate response from the ANC, Mandela, leading, possibly later to the unbanning of the ANC.

2.3.3 It is quite clear that this move is taken from what is believed to be a position of strength and in a situation in which it is believed that the ANC has little room for manoeuvre. (WB even posed the question of whether the ANC 'was willing to be coopted.')

Although this view is held, the state is also acutely aware of the fact that without the release of prisoners further moves to stability are doomed (e.g. NSC participation).

By releasing the prisoners, they believe the way will be opened to make viable the 'reformist' political measures and in that way weaken the position of the ANC especially if it stays outside the 'reformed' structures.



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