

27.7.87.

D e a r C d e P r e s i d e n t,

I left Dakar on the Sunday evening and therefore had no opportunity to exchange assessments with other comrades, especially Cde Thabo. So what I say hereunder is very much an individual assessment (forced on me!).

Our overall assessment of the whole exercise must be a strongly positive one. However I shall break down this assessment into separate issues bearing in mind that the group was very much a heterogeneous one. Also a distinction must be made within the group with regard to those who regard themselves as the 'gurus' who believe themselves to be intellectuals with an established reputation of having turned their backs on apartheid and therefore expected to seriously influence us with their views. For example Prof. Herman Giliomee contributed an article in the Star which appeared after the Dakar meeting, but which was written before he left and the whole tone of the article was that 'they' were going to confront us about certain realities about South Africa. Others in the group who had less such pretensions were more open minded. But even with Giliomee I had the impression that there were some factors (may be personal, and other pressures within SA) which were affecting his judgment during the discussions. However, having made the general point about the

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group let me not dwell on the individuals because I could go on for pages and pages on each. I shall therefore pass on to issues:

1. Apartheid: With a few exceptions all in the group had in

one degree or another rejected apartheid. But what each meant by apartheid and what each understood as the necessary implications of this rejection was extremely varied. In general they showed an abysmal lack of understanding of the national liberation struggle. I prefer to see most of the group as having undergone a profound learning session with regard to the implications of rejecting apartheid and the reality of the national liberation struggle. Some may become frightened by this but many would at some stage or other benefit in developing their positions. Dakar has helped broaden the base of the anti-apartheid forces.

2. United South Africa: None could defend the Bantustans and none could find a way of advocating a dismembered SA. A few clearly took the existence of 'independent' bantustans as a reality - but even here it was more a case of introducing these under terms such as the desirability of federalism and decentralisation of power in a future SA (and this was for some a way of smuggling in white fears -- and hence group

rights, and the 'tyranny of the majority' - and hence the

reality of ethnicity which would fragment the 'majority').

What was important is that, none could directly challenge the concept, of a united SA - in fact all granted the validity of

the concept. (I missed the whole discussion on structures of government and the nature of the economy in a free SA which was during the last session - as I got tied up with redrafting the last minute communiqué - so I cannot refer to any nuances in positions that may have appeared during this session). The one person who clearly came as an apologist of the fundamentals of apartheid with regard to organisation of power and who for reasons I cannot fathom believed he could hoodwink us was Leon Louw of the Free Market Foundation. Perhaps his confidence came from the fact that he had managed to get Cde Winnie and others to say favourable things about his book where he claims that the Swiss canton system was the ideal model for SA.

3. Democratic South Africa: Linked to the above two fears

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could be isolated among them: the one is centred around white fears and now surfaces under the strange concept of

anti-majoritarianism. Somewhat more sophisticated was the

idea of seeing the struggle in terms of Afrikaner Nationalism versus African Nationalism and thereby equating the two nationalisms and hence to advancing the need for an accommodation between the two. This latter line of argument was severely attacked by others in the group and its main advocate (Giliomee) was quite* shaken (with results which I think will be good for the struggle). Did we remove the fears? Only partly: some kept seeking refuge under the guise of attaching to the ANC hegemonic designs: basically

reflecting fears of the implications of rejecting apartheid

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and of ways of preserving privileges and class and other interests.

4. Non-racial South Africa: This where most found themselves challenged to confront the implications of rejecting apartheid. Many came thinking that we held to non-racialism as mere lip-service and I am sure went back shaken by our deep feelings on the issue. Some of them who even supported the idea found that our views jolted their understanding. I think this good effect came largely from the fact that we had more/ time for discussion and also because those among them who came supporting non-racialism found themselves stimulated by our ideas. To give one example: Theuns Eloff, a student

theologian at Pretoria University, very sincere and honest in his views came supporting non-racialism. That is, his rejection of apartheid had moved to the positive stance of supporting non-racialism. He participated in a one hour discussion between three of us and three of them on TV for an American TV station. During this discussion he raised the question of religious freedom in free SA where he envisaged the existence of Christian schools and went onto assume that in Christian schools only teachers who were Christians would be allowed to teach. We asked: should such a school deprive

itself of a good Maths teacher simply because the teacher was not a Christian? Preventing such a teacher from taking up the post would amount to anti-semitism (if he was a Jew) or racialism etc. He had not seen the problem from this angle and in the end had to agree that all that could be justly

expected was that the religious instruction in the Christian school would have to be conducted by Christians. I believe he went back profoundly enlightened both on 'non-racialism, our adherence to it and its implications at all levels, including the structure of government in a liberated SA.

5. How can fundamental change come about: Most were really jolted by this discussion. It was; a subject most would have liked to discuss the least because they would have liked to go back satisfied with what they were doing to date; they would have liked to have gone back legitimised by having met the ANC; and some would have liked to have gone back with the impression they had given us a 'telling off' for some aspects
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of our strategy and tactics.'Some specific issues here:

5.1. Can apartheid be reformed? All agreed it cannot but I am not sure whether they understood the implications of this. This is so mainly because none of them made it an issue and therefore we did not have to go into details.

5.2. Where is the locus of change in SA today? Even though they all accepted the bankruptcy and intransigence of PWB they found it difficult to grasp the idea that such change would come primarily through the actions of the deocratic forces. Part of the blockage for them stems from their difficulty of practically seeing how power can be transferred to the people except through the existing parliament being 'democratised', partly because of our

rejection of this path and our 'unwillingness' to then concretely chart another path. Then there is the fact that many of them prefer to reduce the problem to the personal stubbornness of Botha. Overall we made some progress on this aspect but as I say because of their backgrounds and interests and their fear of 'the people' they cannot see change except through Botha and/or the existing white power structure and the existing parliament. Thus the whole.

question for many of them reduces itself to the mechanics of change. To be fair: this is not a uniform position among them and there are many contradictions within their positions, even within their individual positions. At the very least, many found themselves forced to re-examine their positions.

5.3. The armed struggle: Their formula: they accept the

historical reality of the armed struggle but have strong reservations regarding the proliferation of uncontrolled violence constitutes significant movement on their part (and deserves more consideration by us). Even those among them who tended to take the position that we (the Afrikaner) have perpetrated so much evil against them (the blacks) that, they (the blacks) are entitled to act however they please found themselves jolted by our deep humanitarianism and commitment to the struggle. It is very significant that in the communiqué they accepted the view that, violence is fundamental to the existence and maintenance of apartheid and thereby putting the blame ab initio on the system.

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5.4. Regional and local experiments to bring about change::

Taken side by side with clinging to the idea that the only mechanism for change is the democratisation of the existing parliament, their fear of catalysmic change some of them raised the issue of regional initiatives which would be

forthcoming and the usefulness of these. Prof. Schlemmer of

Indaba was their key proponent. But if one looks at the paper he had submitted in writing as the lead paper and the actual verbal presentation he made I am of the view that by the time he spoke he had during the course of listening to the

discussion of strategies for change found himself forced to change his positions. There is need for more discussion with him but I am of the view that we can detach him from Indaba and more to the point from Gatsha. This is also important from the point of shifting back the Institute of Race Relations which has degenerated into a mouthpiece of Gatsha.

5.5. Negotiated resolution: Significant progress; the message got. through that it is the Botha regime that is not.

interested in such a solution and therefore needs to be compelled. Their understanding of this facilitates follow up as well as some of them getting together to develop their own programme of action against the Botha regime.

6. Cde President., you have forced me to hastily make an assessment. What, is more, to do so in a quick burst and without the luxury of re-examining what I have written here. So you have invited on yourself this long â€œwinded ramble. Let

me conclude by saying that I think Slabbert is being honest and to the point when he says that they started off on the road to Dakar thinking that they were riding a donkey and now find themselves riding a tiger! Many will back--slide and

zig-zag but we need to follow.....up and keep up the pressure. I

may be over-optimistic but there exists a real possibility that within the Afrikaners we will find also a small but stable base for agitation among the Afrikaner. This of course leads to many detailed issues and practical matters. But the pre-condition for all this .is the intensification of the mass struggle, the armed struggle and the campaign to isolate apartheid SA.

This letter has become over-long as it is. I have left out many sub-issues that arose at Dakar. I must stop now. Hope that this is of some use to you. Warmest regards from the family.

Maatla!