

CRC's conversations with the

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Prime Minister

THE meeting between the Prime Minister, Mr P W Botha, and members of the executive of the Coloured Persons Representative Council in Pretoria on November 9 has led to conflicting interpretations of what transpired.

"We can perhaps bring other problems to your attention as a community, and we can say more about our political views, but first, Mr Prime Minister, we want to hear how you see the future in connection with your initiative."
— the Rev Allan Hendrickse.

The Cape Times is publishing, in a series of articles, the verbatim completed transcript of the discussion released by the Prime Minister's office last week. The remaining extracts will appear later this week.

Present were Mr Botha, the

Minister of Coloured Relations, Mr Marais Steyn, the Secretary for Coloured Relations, Mr Jan Mills, the nominated chairman of the CRC executive, Mrs Alatheia Jansen, the leader of the Labour Party, the Rev Allan Hendrickse, the party's deputy leader, Mr Norman Middleton and the Labour Party chairman, Mr David Curry.

Passages marked (Afr) are translated from Afrikaans.

PRIME MINISTER: I welcome you to this meeting today, arranged by my colleague Mr Marais Steyn.

(Afr) He expressed the thought that, with these discussions, you perhaps wanted to have more talks with me, and after he told me this, I said to him that I would create an opportunity as soon as possible to make it possible for you, which we have done and this is why we are here together today. As you can see, a small machine is being set up here to record our discussions on tape. I will arrange for you to have a copy if you want it. Then, we will all perhaps have to talk slightly loudly; I do not know if

these tape recorders are always so efficient.

Now, after having said this, welcoming you once again I'll leave it to you to address this meeting.

MRS JANSEN: Mr Prime Minister, first of all, on behalf I think of my colleagues, I voice their sentiments when I thank you for arranging the possibility of being here with you today and I think I voice their sentiments if I say to you congratulations for the way you are proceeding to bring about change and we hope that we will be helpful to you in bringing about that change. With that perhaps and with some of my other colleagues I want to talk to you about other aspects and as we go along maybe (either) want to join me — we'll see how the discussion goes further, Mr Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you, Mrs Jansen. (Afr) Thank you. Anyone else, gentlemen?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) Mr Prime Minister, yes, thank you also for this opportunity, we have been looking forward to it. I think you know the

background to our request to our Minister actually to arrange such a meeting is that we were worried by the fact that we get the impression through the press that you said you get the co-operation of all population groups except the coloureds, and you are also aware of the fact that the vast majority of coloureds are more revolutionary in their actions or their hopes and in our talks with Minister Steyn we took exception in a sense, a very soft exception but nevertheless.

(Afr) We felt, Mr Prime Minister, that after our meeting of February 1 we have not again had the opportunity of having discussions with you, and that we read that you had discussions with other people

"We said our future does not lie in violence, but that we must meet around the conference table to talk about the future. That is why we are here." — the Rev Allan Hendrickse.

and my reaction was, as the Minister said, "either the Prime Minister is misinformed, or he is misleading the people". But we have not yet had the opportunity of sitting personally with you and talking about these things. I want to associate myself with Mrs Jansen to a degree in the sense that we — I said this to the press — welcome the fact that you were man enough to move in a certain direction and to say certain things. I said it in the press, I admire you for your speech and the — our Minister can also confirm this — I said the speech firstly at Upington, your analysis of Koe-doespoort and so on and your willingness to, notwithstanding these things, to move. I also said in the press yesterday that, although we do not agree with all the things you are saying, that I believe that what you will perhaps lose in party ranks will be less than you will win in support in the total South Africa.

(Afr) But one of the things we would like to raise is to hear from you, Mr Prime Min-

ister, how you see the future. We have now read what you said at the congresses, at other occasions, but I think we would like to come to hear from you and to obtain more clarity in connection with where we are going, *quo vadis* as South Africans and that we can perhaps bring other problems to your attention as a community and that we can perhaps say more

"You can take exception! I take exception to many things you do and say." — Mr P W Botha.

about our political views, but I think I really express the feeling that we would rather first, Mr Prime Minister, hear from you in connection with your initiative, how you see the future and that we can talk about that. Not that we already want to talk about other things at this stage — I don't know of other things. We can perhaps still add other things, Mr Prime Minister, but we want to say to

you thank you very much for the opportunity of being here this morning.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) What was the reason why you asked for this interview?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) Firstly, we made it clear in this year to the wide public that, as Executive and as party, of which Mrs Jansen and I ... we are prepared to talk. We said our future does not lie in violence, but that we must meet around a conference table to talk about the future. That is why we are here and the second reason, as arose from our meeting with our Minister, was that we felt you made contact with and gave explanations to other people and other groups and we have not yet had that opportunity. All we know is what we have read in the newspapers, and to which we have reacted, also in the newspapers.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) Is it not correct that we had a very long discussion shortly after I became Prime Minister?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr)

That is correct, Mr Prime Minister, therefore we welcomed the first of February and I also said so to you that morning, and I said it to the press and I made in very clear in the TV interview "PG Gesels" on February 8. But on that occasion, Mr Prime Minister, you did not actually say to us the things you later saw as your initiative in connection with the future direction of South Africa. Not on that occasion.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) But if you saw it, the later initiatives I took, then you are up to date.

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) Yes, Mr Prime Minister, the fact is that you still, nevertheless, that we saw it in the newspapers, that you talked with other people and you have not yet talked to us, and you said at the youth congress that you have problems with us.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) When we talked to each other in January, is it not a fact that I said to you that I would nominate a joint select committee of Parliament and that I would take that initiative to make consultation possible through the opportunity of an all-party committee and that any proposals we might lay before that

"The CRC has never met the hopes and aspirations of the so-called coloured people." — Mr David Curry.

committee would be laid before the committee before second reading — in other words without the principle being accepted. Is this not the understanding on which we parted?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) No, no we understand, Mr Prime Minister, but my reaction was that you said and therefore my personal reaction, and our party reaction to our Minister, was that as the Prime Minister says he has a problem with the coloured leaders ...

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) No, but we are now talking first about something else, Rev Hendrickse. We cannot talk about two things at the same time. We are now talking about my initiatives. Is it not a fact that I gave you an opportunity to muse my initiatives by way of the joint select committee?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) Yes, Mr Prime Minister, but think you are also aware of the fact that we have a political structure and represent a party and that we then heard in writing from you, contacted you in writing and that we felt we must talk.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) Must I assume from that — must I deduce that your standpoint is, as a political structure, that you do not want to negotiate with that parliamentary select committee?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) Yes, we put it to you, Mr Prime Minister, in the form of a letter written to you in which we said we welcome the fact that you met our requests when we met on February 1. One: the question that legislation would not at this stage be introduced in Parliament. We asked that the Du Preez committee complete its work, we asked for a special session ...

PRIME MINISTER: That was granted.

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) ... we got that.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) In other words, I kept my word.

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) Yes, except ... two more things.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) Do you concede that what we agreed to, I did?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) Yes, except that there were still two things and you explained in your letter which you wrote to us in July that you planned to reconsider the question of the cabinet council and you asked that we keep this under wraps for a while and then the question of the position of Mrs Jansen as president of ...

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) No, no. Let us first finish one thing; we cannot talk about everything at the same time.

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) I put it, Mr Prime Minister, the fact that on February 1 we asked you for these things.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) Good. But the question is ...

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) And you have now met these three things and there were still two outstanding.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) Good, now I ask you, must I deduce that you are not prepared to give evidence before the joint select committee?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) We said so in a letter to you, Mr Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) You will not do so under any circumstances?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) Yes, we said so as a result of the meeting of our hopes and desires in connection with the Du Preez committee and the CRC session, we came to a decision. The CRC took a unanimous decision that the findings of the Du Preez committee be accepted as the basis for negotiation with the government.

PRIME MINISTER: Now are you prepared to deal with the

findings of the Du Preez committee before that select committee?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) It is here that we differed on principle, Mr Prime Minister. We talk, we say that when we talk of negotiation as far as constitutional development is concerned, then there is a difference between negotiation and giving evidence.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) Are you aware, Rev Hendrickse, that there is only one way in which any change in South Africa can be brought about and that is through parliamentary action?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) I am aware of that, Mr Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) Good, if that is the only way, what other means is available to the Prime Minister than parliamentary instruments?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) Mr Prime Minister, the position is that we now here have a

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) No, place yourself in my position, South Africa is governed by a sovereign independent parliament whether we like it or not. There are people who want changes in this country. The Prime Minister goes, he uses the parliamentary machine to establish a prescribed initiative through which people have the opportunity to bring their standpoint to the attention of that parliamentary machine. Not on a party-political basis, but in a select committee in which all parties sit. Now I ask you a simple question — I ask you, is it your standpoint that you will not appear before that committee?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) To give evidence ...

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) You are not prepared?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) No.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) Under no circumstances?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr) No, Mr Prime Minister. We stand on principle there, that

"I don't advise anyone to try violence. The newspapers say I am ruthless. I have extended my hands a long way for friendship, but people must not underestimate this as weakness." Mr P W Botha.

there is a difference between giving evidence to a parliamentary commission and negotiating with ...

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr) You do not think that, if you go before that select committee, you will be able to sit around that table and argue with those people?

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MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr)
Sir, this is where we have a difference — we said to our own Minister . . .

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
What other proposal do you have then?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr)
That this committee must do its work; report to you as Prime Minister . . .

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
What committee?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr)
The Schlebusch Commission . . .

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
Yes.

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr)
... report to the Prime Minister and that the Prime Minister then says, well, here is my parliamentary report, let us look at your report and let us hear what what you have to say.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
In other words, we must again establish a committee of which I am now chairman.

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr)
No, Mr Prime Minister, like we are talking now, to talk again.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
And when do we get done, do you think?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr)
It depends on your initiative, and then, as far as the time factor is concerned . . .

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
No, Mr Hendrickse. I am responsible to Parliament. I am kept in my position by that Parliament — and you are a leader and now I am creating an opportunity prescribed by the law of the land to appear before that Select Committee; not only to give evidence before them, but also to put your viewpoints to them very clearly so that they can draw up a report. Many people are using it — we have issued an open invitation to the whole country. Now I ask you finally, must I accept, speaking on behalf of your party, that you are not prepared to make use of that procedure?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr)
Yes, that is correct.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
Must I accept it like that?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr)
Not evidence . . .

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
Then we must leave it there.

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr)
... not to give evidence to the Schlebusch Commission . . .

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
You are not prepared to give evidence to the Schlebusch Commission. Good, now what right do you have to blame me if I say openly that I am not

receiving your co-operation? Then I was right — then I was right?

MR HENDRICKSE: (Afr)
Mr Prime Minister, the time in which we live . . .

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
No, leave the time in which we live. Here I am creating an opportunity for people to put their viewpoint to Parliament — not only to one party in parliament — but to all the parties in parliament — before the public and that report will be made public. And you say no, I am not prepared to appear before him. Must I assume that finally . . .

MR HENDRICKSE: Yes.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
Good. Then we can leave it there. Now I just want to tell you something in this connection. And I think it necessary that I tell you at this stage. The government and parliament will be asked to consult people as far as possible over their viewpoints so that the best for the country can be obtained from those deliberations of a committee of which several ministers are members, and on which there are prominent members of parliament from all parties.

That is the only way in which change can be brought about in South Africa — through parliamentary action. But I think the second thing I must also tell you now is very necessary and that is — anyone who tries to do it outside parliament will be sorry he ever nurtured such a thought.

MR HENDRICKSE: I must take exception to the threat, Mr Prime Minister. I as leader and we as a party have said this openly that we will not look for extra-parliamentary, extra-constitutional . . . or violence.

PRIME MINISTER: All right, accepted. Accepted. (Afr) I accept your word that you are not for violence.

MR HENDRICKSE: Of course not.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
Do you reject violence?

MR HENDRICKSE: Certainly!

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
Good. We are together now on one basis. Now I tell you there is only one way prescribed by the laws of the land in which I can hear what people have to say to the State — and that is to create the broadest form of consultation, namely a joint select committee.

(Afr) You tell me you are not prepared to make use of it. In other words you do not want violence and I accept your word for that. And now I also accept your word that you are not prepared to appear before this select committee, in other words you are not prepared to do something.

MR HENDRICKSE: I am prepared to talk, Mr Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: (Afr)
But we are talking this morning. Now I ask you to use the instrument I am creating for you, and you do not do it.

MR HENDRICKSE: But this is where you are prescribing for us, Mr Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: No. I'm not going to stand in instead of this select committee. I'm the Prime Minister of the country.

(Afr) I cannot sit here for hours and conduct my own investigations while parliament has prescribed in a certain way. I am sorry — we can't do it. Now, on this issue I just want to give you a further reply — let us get absolute clarity on this. We must have no doubt about our direction this morning.

(Afr) I again invite you cordially, as a party to participate in the process of consultation as prescribed by the parliamentary institution. That committee has not yet completed its work. It is still available to you. I invite you again this morning, as Prime Minister of the country, to make your representation to that committee, and I hope you will convey it to your party.

(Afr) We are not bound by the report — we are under no circumstances bound to it, but the point is, it is the constitutional decent way which has been created by parliamentary institution. And history is full of that. I invite you to make use of it.