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PERSPECTIVES
ON
NEGOTIATIONS
Two views
on the process

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and Franklin Sonn

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Both papers published in this Occasional Paper were by coincidence delivered by the contributors on the same day but at opposite ends of the country. Given the stature of both Mr. Sonn and Dr. Dhlomo, the subject matter of these talks, although brief, has considerable relevance at this delicate juncture in the development of the negotiation process. The Institute felt therefore that their views were worthy of wider dissemination.

Both papers were delivered on the 8 August 1990 at the Durban and Cape Town branches of the Institute respectively.

The views expressed in these papers are the responsibility of the authors and not of the Institute.

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Two views on the process

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**PERCEPTIONS AND VIEWS OF THE CURRENT SOUTH AFRICAN
SITUATION AND OF NATAL IN PARTICULAR**

by

Dr. Oscar Dumisani Dhlomo

INTRODUCTION

For the first time in the 42-year history of National Party rule, we have reached a stage in our country where we can all say, without fear of being wrong, that peace is within sight and that national reconciliation can now be realistically striven for. The historic Pretoria Minute (6 August 1990) between the South African Government and the African National Congress clears the way for discussions on the process of negotiation to begin in earnest, and it is now possible to predict that negotiations themselves might start at the beginning of 1991 - provided of course that both parties honour the undertakings made in the agreement.

We need to commend both the Government and the ANC for the statesmanship displayed during the discussions to remove obstacles impeding negotiations.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRETORIA MINUTE

Those who understand the dynamics of ANC liberatory strategies will readily realise that by agreeing to suspend the armed struggle the ANC has made a big concession. The three pillars of ANC strategy have always been the following:

- (i) Armed struggle, leading to a revolutionary seizure of power;
- (ii) international isolation and economic strangulation of South Africa; and
- (iii) a peoples' war aimed at making the country ungovernable and rendering governmental structures unworkable.

The armed struggle was arguably the most important pillar of the ANC's entire liberatory strategy and the fact that the ANC has now decided to suspend this aspect marks an important change in Government-ANC relations. The other important aspect of this development is of course the fact that armed struggle and peoples' war are symbiotically related. one cannot suspend the armed struggle and continue with a peoples' war. Our understanding of the Pretoria Minute is therefore that both armed struggle and peoples' war stand suspended at this point in time.

The last remaining pillar, which is the international isolation of South Africa, will most probably be progressively demolished by the ANC - beginning with the lifting of the cultural and

sports boycott. In fact one could advise the ANC that if it wanted to earn unprecedented goodwill from the conservative sectors of white South Africa, it should begin now and work for the lifting of the sports boycott.

On the part of the South African Government, concessions have also been made. Barely a year ago the Government was insisting that it would not talk, let alone negotiate, with the ANC unless it renounced violence. Those of us who tried to convince Government that it would not be possible for the ANC to review its position on the armed struggle without Government talking to them and telling them to do so, are grateful that common sense has at last prevailed.

For the Government the question of releasing political prisoners has always been a sensitive one, in view of white right wing attitudes to this question. That the Government has conceded to this demand shows unprecedented realism and statesmanship on the part of President de Klerk.

THE NEXT STAGE

The next hurdle is to begin discussing the negotiation process itself and this stage will naturally have to include other potential negotiating parties that have up to now stood on the sidelines. Since both the Government and the ANC have already committed themselves to multi-lateral as opposed to bi-lateral negotiations, this is not expected to be a problem. However, we must continue to hope that ANC cadres and supporters on the ground will heed the call to lay down arms and suspend hostilities. We also hope that the Government, churches and all peace-loving South Africans will support and encourage this campaign. It would be totally short-sighted and unpatriotic for all of us to simply declare that this is an ANC problem in which we are not expected to constructively participate and assist.

THE NATAL VIOLENCE

Both the Government and the ANC have also committed themselves to doing all in their power to address the violence in Natal. No details have been released on how they propose to do this. Nevertheless, this first ever joint commitment to bring peace to our region is to be commended.

One hopes that whatever is envisaged by the Government and the ANC in this regard will not exclude the President of the Inkatha Freedom party, Dr. Mangosuthu Buthelezi. I say this simply because my experience in working with this problem tells me that the two vital components to peace in Natal are Mandela and Buthelezi working together as a team. I see de Klerk's role either as a catalyst or as an insurance that whatever Mandela and Buthelezi agree upon will be given State endorsement in the

form of adequate and impartial police and security force activity.

I must seriously warn against the strategy that seeks to isolate and sideline Dr. Buthelezi on this question of violence. Some people may believe that he has lost or is losing support. However, a situation that needs to be faced right now is that he still has some support and he has the potential to destabilise the region of Natal right into the era of a new South Africa. People should also be awake to the growing tendency on the part of Inkatha and its leadership to interpret the violence as an ethnic, as opposed to an ideological, conflict. Increased isolation and resultant desperation on Inkatha's part could only lead to more and not less violence. This is a scenario I hope we are all trying to avoid.

Even at this late hour I am moved to appeal to both UDF-ANC-COSATU and Inkatha leaders to swallow their pride and subject themselves to a process of reconciliation and co-operation to end the violence in Natal. If they cannot do this for their own sake, then let them at least do it for the sake of thousands of innocent people who have lost their lives in this conflict.

Whichever side thinks it is winning the political and ideological struggle in Natal, let it be magnanimous in victory and smoke the pipe of peace at this time. That is the attitude that society and the world will respect and that is the attitude that will give us genuine peace as opposed to the peace of the grave.

THE BASIS OF NEGOTIATIONS

F.A. Sonn

BALANCE OF POWER:

A balance of power developed in South Africa between the institutions of state and the major anti-government forces, the one side dominated by the Nationalist government and the other by the ANC. The NP government derives its power from the normal structures of power, eg. legislation, the defence force and the SA Police; the ANC obtains its strength from its proven ability to mobilise the masses and to disrupt normal economic activity, buttressed by international sympathy and active support.

The government tried to ignore this balance of power and invoked a state of emergency in an attempt to proclaim or emphasise its ascendancy. The result was merely a bolstering of the counter-power without clearly definable gains to itself. There comes a time in any revolutionary climate when the people become immune to the worst the forces of repression can do. Such a time has now been reached in our country.

The significance of 2 February 1990 is that, faced with the choice of either unleashing the full and formidable power of the state to attempt to crush the rise of popular power or to come to terms with it, the government under F.W. de Klerk clearly chose the latter. Instead of preserving apartheid by further repression and force, the government stated its intention to dismantle apartheid and to engage the counter-forces in the process. This gave rise to the current negotiations at high level. For negotiations to be meaningful, they must be much more than what government previously saw as negotiations, viz. consultation.

THE MEANING OF NEGOTIATIONS:

For negotiations to be real there must be a recognition on both sides of each other's power and the ability of either side to make life for either group untenable.

There must also be a willingness to accept one another's bona fides and equality: to state so publicly and back such statements up with actions. These actions must be of such a nature that they effectively diminish the power displays, which in turn will visibly demonstrate trust in the process. Examples are the dissolution of the CCB by the government as well as the withdrawal of the state of emergency. The ANC compromised on its commitment to the armed struggle by accepting a ceasefire.

This sets the scene for genuine negotiations to occur on the matter of political power. This is the bringing together of minds on the basis of the old Roman adage 'Quot homines tot sententiae' popularised in Afrikaans to mean, 'Soveel hoofde, soveel sinne' - more heads bring greater wisdom.

COMMON CAUSE:

There is accordingly a sense that the two negotiating sides will not only be emphasizing differences and conflicting points of view, but will seek common cause. The common denominator being the interest of both sides in finding a reasonably peaceful settlement as well as the common future of both parties. The negotiation process is ideal when all heads on both sides of the table attempt to find not what is best for either side, but what is the highest good for all.

It stands to the credit of Mr. Nelson Mandela and the ANC that they could emerge from decades of abject suffering with an overriding willingness to find peace rather than revenge: to put the interests of South Africa above their own and to swap recrimination for reconciliation.

Mr. de Klerk equally confirmed himself as a formidable statesman rather than a small-minded oppressor. His willingness to do the unthinkable viz. to dismantle his apartheid power-base in the hope of creating an all inclusive basis which at the same time is more compatible with his and his people's professed Christian values is equally impressive. All of a sudden the light at the end of the tunnel cast by the oncoming train was transformed into the first glimmer of light heralding the new South Africa after an arduous and dark travail.

CLIMATE FOR NEGOTIATION:

There is a second level of concern, namely that the success of the process is heavily predicated on the existence of a climate for negotiation. The constituencies of both groups must desire the process and secondly must be willing to give it their active support. That support must find expression in a preparedness to temper anger and emotionalism on the one hand and fear on the other. It must also be steeped in an ability to sacrifice and to give the process of peace a fair chance. It must be based on the knowledge that talking out one's differences always is less spectacular than fighting. It does not seem proper for the leaders to pursue one course of action while the various constituent parts which make up both sides follow different or previous strategies.

The government cannot condemn the pronouncements and actions of MK (Umkhonto we Sizwe) while its police continue with the mode of conduct for which it has become infamous or (while the CCB still existed) to hunt down government opponents. At the same time a moratorium must be placed on the defiance campaign and other popular actions until and when the leadership calls for its resumption.

NEGOTIATIONS AT ALL LEVELS:

It is furthermore necessary that every sector of the community should inter-face with parallel institutions in genuine negotiations and to prepare people for the inevitability of change.

Student groups must talk to student groups; businessmen should talk to labour; the churches must continue to define the moral parameters of the new South Africa; sportsmen should talk to sportsmen and all professional organizations should be engaged in fundamental discussion on how to remodel themselves, as well as the South Africa of the future.

These talks should no longer merely be sessions where the oppressed bemoan their suffering under apartheid or where the real intended motives of apartheid are explained from the other side.

They must start from the premise that apartheid is on its way out. There must be no compromise on that. It should be the meeting of minds for the establishment of a South African nationhood. After all, a nation is not created in a laboratory or in a factory, neither can a nation be built around a negotiating table. A nation consists of people and the people must build the new society. The negotiators will set the framework, but the real work must be done at all levels between people. Understanding, acceptance of one another, reconciliation, willingness to share and a restatement of values, as well as the institution of actions which will be consistent with our values must be built by all of us.

In the process we as leaders of the lower echelons must take courage to embark on actions that will gain the confidence of our people, will ameliorate their anger and satisfy short term needs. These actions must always have the greater objective in mind, viz. to work for minds and hearts to meet. The negotiating leaders must, as it were, be able to look through their conference windows and see their constituencies equalling their negotiating efforts. That, more than anything else, will make the process of change irreversible.

The international demand is that it wants signs that the process of change cannot be reversed. We, the people, must ensure that the process is not reversed. Whites and blacks must be so consumed by the process and hope of reconciliation and change that a return to apartheid will be unthinkable for both sides. Again, Mandela and de Klerk showed us the way, but they rely on us, the people, to carry the process through.

Decision-making from the ground up must be the hallmark of the new South Africa and is the very touchstone of democracy. Democracy, when all is said and done is not a goal, it is a process. It is a way of life and is predicated on the values we all profess, but sadly forget to live.

THE PAST: TAKING INTO ACCOUNT SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITIES:

Talking about the future without referring to the past will also not work. If we are serious about peace we need to take into our purview the extent to which apartheid has created two worlds in our country - a world of haves and a world of have nots.

We must acknowledge the existence of a highly visible first world juxtaposed with an alienated and forgotten Third world. We must face up to it that to be white means to be privileged and to be black, in most cases, means deprivation, rejection and denial.

We must also recognise the extent to which this is so, although for a different reason other than castigation. We must do so to ensure that we can enact the necessary medial action where it matters and where it is effective.

Negotiations can only succeed and there can only be an optimum outcome to the process if the impoverished and struggling and denied masses of people see and experience the changes in their daily lives. The end of apartheid must signify the breaking of the vicious circle of poverty and suffering. The people must see that life has become one of hope, optimism and recognition.

The system must also show clear signs of accommodating positively the inevitabilities of the South Africa of the future and indicate that it has finally turned its back on all efforts either to deny or suppress its appointment with destiny.

What are these factors?

There are approximately 6 black South Africans for every 1 white and by the year 2010 the ratio will be 10:1. The age group spread is the real concern - 50% of whites are older than 35 years of age. White schools are accordingly running empty while a school a day must be built to keep abreast with the growing black school-going population. An estimated 50% of blacks are under 16 years of age. Today whites constitute about 14% of the population but by 2020 only 8% of the South African population will be white.

This burgeoning population will have to be fed and administered by trained managers and the infra-structure run by well educated technologists.

The highly trained people today are white. For South Africa to survive as a peaceful and developing country, demographics dictate that high level manpower will have to be dominated by blacks.

By the year 2010 the ratio between black and white matriculants will be 6:1. Today only 1000 black students pass matric with adequate mathematics and science background to receive a technical education.

The manager-worker ratio in South Africa today is 1:50 and is projected to be 1:72 by 1995 and 1:110 by 2000. Given South Africa's economic mix, the ratio in South Africa should be 1:25 and declining. In the USA the ratio is 1:6 and in Japan 1:10.

There will be 210000 empty managerial spaces in South Africa by 2000, with only 42000 whites available for these vacancies. It is furthermore estimated that there will be a shortage of approximately 200000 technically skilled people by 2000 and there are only 23000 artisans in training as against 700000 in West Germany. South Africa should have had at least 100000 in training. The situation for engineers is even worse and unless dynamic decisions are taken to support technikons and the technical faculties of universities, South Africa will simply not be able to meet the expectations of real change to the life of South Africans currently looking to a better future through a negotiated settlement.

It is estimated that in Natal 80% of blacks between ages 18 and 24 who want to work cannot find work.

The gap in the income-spread between black and white is among the largest in the world, giving rise to the fact that between one-fifth and one-quarter of black children under age 6 are underfed.

On the other hand whites possess more than half of the national income while 90% of the wealth of the land vests in white hands.

THE FUTURE:

These economic and demographic statistics are mind-boggling. How a new government is going to meet these disparities is hard to say. If we think that answers are going to flow from the negotiating table only we are mistaken.

For business to adopt a knee-jerk reaction to the call for nationalization is equally short-sighted. We must not merely attack white capitalism or nationalism. That will surely be counter-productive. We must rather seek to address the real problem viz. the redressal of historical inequities or the gross statistical fact of South Africa being a country where the spread of wealth is flagrantly unequal, as just demonstrated.

The question of the redistribution of wealth, skills and opportunity must be the concern of business, labour and academics. This is the agenda item of their own negotiating sessions. As much as big business demands of government to change or to put it differently, to give up on notions and positions they have held fast for so long, business too must face a few imponderables.

THE MEETING OF TWO WORLDS:

The coming together of Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk also signifies the convergence of the Afrocentric and Eurocentric worlds in Africa. Although many South African whites quite regularly claim to be Africans they must be led into an understanding of what it truly means to be African. For blacks to do so we must rediscover our own Africanness and rekindle the pride that the European in Africa has largely destroyed.

These attempts will be hampered by racism on the one hand and internalised oppression on the other.

Racism informed the relationship between Europeans and people from other continents. Ethnic differences were cast as traits of inferiority, against the enforced and aggressive European norm. The assumption of superiority of Europeans whether in Europe or in other parts of the world where they settled is the touchstone of racism and was used as justification for exploitation, enslavement and like in South Africa and Australia and in the USA, for the extermination of people. Racism can be defined as prejudice plus power.

Apart from racism on personal, inter-personal and institution levels, the area in which it has been most insidious is on the cultural level.

The extent to which one culture defines what is right and beautiful is an indication of cultural racism. When the standards of appropriate action, thought and expression of a particular group are perceived as 'less than', then cultural racism has occurred. Our three piece suits and heavy meals on hot Sunday afternoons are examples of this level of racism.

In working with people it is helpful to distinguish on which level the oppression exists otherwise it may be difficult to discuss systematic oppression clearly. For example, an executive of a company that discriminates against black people, may not be personally racist and may associate with members of various ethnic groups, but may still be supporting racism on an institutional and cultural level.

It has been the experience in the United States that as the laws changed during the 1960s, most notably the Civil Rights Act of 1965, that the nature of racism changed to a more covert, and subtle form. These forms of modern racism are characterized by attributing non-race-related reasons for behaviour that continues to deny equal access of opportunity to black people and other targets of systematic oppression (Batts, 1989). Although the intent of modern racism is often not malicious, the results can often be the same regardless of the content. I suspect that we will see more of this modern form of racism as the various laws change in South Africa. Examples of modern racism are dysfunctional rescuing, blaming the victim, avoidance of contact, denial of difference and denial of the political

significance of differences between the targets and the non-targets of oppression.

I also want to talk about internalized oppression, or the manner in which those of us who belong to target groups have internalized the negative messages about ourselves. Archbishop Tutu addressed this issue in a speech at John Hopkins, in 1986, when he said:

You who have been victims of injustice and oppression know only too well just how debilitating, how demoralizing, how conditioning oppression can be. You end up interiorizing your oppression and exploitation. You are brainwashed into an acquiescence in your oppression and exploitation. You come to believe what others have determined about you, filling you with self-disgust, self-contempt and self-hatred, accepting a negative self-image.

I have said on another occasion that the most awful thing about apartheid is not the untold anguish and suffering that it causes so unnecessarily, great as this undoubtedly is. No, that is not the most awful thing. What is more horrendous about this truly blasphemous thing is that it can cause a child of God to doubt that he or she is a child of God. And you need a lot of grace to have that demon of self-hatred exorcised, when you accept that only white races really matter and you allow the white person to set your standards and provide your role models.

It is difficult not to buy into some of the misinformation to which we have been, and are still, subject. The patterns of behaviour have their origin in strategies that were developed to enable the user to survive and under some circumstances they may still serve that function. They have been functional during the long 338 years of European racial oppression that includes the approximately 180 years of slavery in the Cape. Many of these behaviours can be traced back to the time of slavery (Akbar, 1984). Unfortunately its psychological legacy is still very much with us.

This sense of personal inferiority is reflected in some of the works of our poets: 'Wat maak dit saak soes die Engelsman sê, It cuts no ice. Die Here het gaskommel en die dice het verkeerd gaval vi' ons daal's maar al' (Adam Small, 1971). En my oud-skoolhoof S.V. Petersen (1944) se bytende: 'Laat dit dan wees, O Heer, dat ek 'n duisend jaar geleë teen God en mens gesondig het...dan weet ek tog dis u beesluit die vloekstraf van 'n donker huid.'

We need to assert our Africanness, and whites need to recognize our African way of doing things and our African emphasis, for

example, on talking problems through as a manifestation of communalism which is the bedrock of what Africans see as democracy not as 'slow thinking' or 'slow progress' but as a recognition of the fact that there is an African and European way.

If we are going to be successful in our pursuit for solutions in South Africa we not only need to blend two economic visions, various educational and religious systems, but we will have to blend a Eurocentric world which sees the beginning of civilization in Athens with an Afrocentric world which was founded long before Athens, in Egypt and in Asia.

To do so successfully will demand patience and above all, humility and openness.

CONCLUSION:

This confirms my view that the constitutional model being knocked out around the table can at best merely form the parameters within which will occur the melting together of the people and their cultures into one South African nation which will respect one another as equals in every way.

Unlike the respect that apartheid talks of, this respect must be based on oneness of the South African nation rather than the emphasis on diversity which, to be truthful, was a mere subterfuge for oppression and exploitation and a rationalization to exert the Eurocentric sense of racial superiority through racism as it was formally structured in the policy of apartheid.