

*GERALD SHAW, associate editor of the Cape Times, looks beyond the Potchefstroom by-election result and President F W de Klerk's gamble on winning a whites-only referendum to the prospects of De Klerk and Mandela forming an interim government soon.*

# IT'S TIME TO DO A DEAL

**W**HAT ARE the chances of South Africa getting an interim government of national unity by the end of this year or in the first half of next year?

Will such a government be able to restore peace in the country, fostering a return of confidence and economic growth and setting the stage for multi-party democracy?

In short, can Codesa pull it off?

The prospects of Messrs De Klerk and Mandela getting together at the head of a broadly representative transitional

government in the next 18 months or so are reasonably good, it seems to me, for reasons which I will suggest, even though the forces pulling in the opposite direction are formidable.

Until this first critical step in the transition has been taken it will be rash to venture any forecast of the way things will go further down the track.

What are the factors which favour swift movement towards a stable coalition government to manage the transition?

First, there is the state of the economy, which is stagnating in the absence of confidence in the country's future. Unless an interim/transitional government is in place soon the deepening recession and the frightening levels of unemployment in all communities will create social conditions in which political advance will be an idle hope.

Ten years or so ago an ambassador of a foreign power in this country, perceptive and shrewd in judgment like so many of his kind, ventured a prediction in an after-dinner conversation. It seemed rather far-fetched at the time. "You will work out your political dilemmas in this country," he said. "Politics will not be the problem. The problem will be poverty — and crime. Whites will find their lifestyle increasingly cramped and restricted and those who can afford it will retreat behind high walls and electronic fences, relying on vicious dogs, burglar alarms and armed security guards."

He was right. Who has not their own horror story to tell of a mugging or worse in which the victims are among their own friends and family? For a long time this sort of thing has been the daily lot of people living in the townships and squatter camps around the big cities. Now the plague is spreading steadily into the more affluent areas. Already crimes of violence of a horrifying kind are almost everyday happenings in town and country alike, with rural Natal and the urban Witwatersrand probably the worst hit. But the story is the same everywhere.

The one growth industry in the country is security. With as much as 70% unemployment in some black communities, the crime rate is appalling. The continuing incidence of political violence intensifies the daily anxieties of rich and poor alike, scaring off local and international investors. It is a vicious circle. Poverty is the problem.

By now all this is obvious to almost everybody, not least the leadership of the National Party, the African National Congress and other significant groupings in the country.

Leaders such as Nelson Mandela and F W de Klerk know that they have no real choice in the matter. It is time to do a deal before the country goes right out of control. Economic recovery is imperative.

**T**HERE IS a second consideration impelling Messrs De Klerk and Mandela to do a deal.

Neither has any realistic alternative in view. Failure to get together reasonably soon will leave both men out on a limb. They need each other. The ANC cannot go back to the bush.

Although the armed struggle is only suspended, technically it is over for all practical purposes, and the logistics and international support are no longer there.

The same applies to sanctions and the diplomatic offensive which was the ANC's trump card in getting President De Klerk to the negotiating table.

De Klerk's position is likewise delicate. He has won his international victories by convincing the world community that reform is irreversible. He cannot draw back now.

Yet his 1989 pledge of a referendum to the white electorate, before proceeding to a transitional government and constitutional change, could prove troublesome.

Paradoxically, the chance of a referendum going against De Klerk could reinforce the pressures on Mandela to be as accommodating to whites as possible.

## in this issue . . .

Editorial: Make sure eyes have it . . . . . Page Two

It's time to do a deal by Gerald Shaw . . . . . Page Three

Land: Drastic change inevitable by Prof N.J. Olivier . . . . . Page Six

Land: Room for optimism by David Robbins . . . . . Page Eight

Land: 'Trekpass' says: Pack up and go by Ferial Haffajee and Josias Chabalala . . . . . Page Ten

Why do white gunmen attack blacks? by Mary de Haas . . . . . Page Ten

Killing spree by Saras Jagwanth . . . . . Page Thirteen

Mastering English by Prof Walter Saunders . . . . . Page Fifteen

Book review by Prof M.G. Whisson . . . . . Page Sixteen

Outlaw Press monopolies by Colin Legum . . . . . Page Seventeen

Viva! Viva! by David Basckin . . . . . Page Twenty

\*Cover picture by David Goldblatt



# POTCHEFSTROOM PARADOX

**P**ARADOXICALLY, the Potchefstroom result is likely to speed rather than retard the coming of an interim government, underlining as it does the destabilising effect of continuing uncertainty about the future.

It is plainer than ever that a broadly-representative transitional government of national unity is the only way ahead, restoring stability, confidence and political calm in this country.

Current levels of violence, criminal and political, are untenable. The fabric of civilised life in this country is stretched to breaking point, with murderous inter-racial shootings, robberies and assaults almost every day.

While the Potchefstroom result is no doubt a blow to President De Klerk's pride, and a reflection on his political judgment, he cannot even think of drawing back. His only possible response is to press ahead more resolutely than ever—and Mr De Klerk is doing exactly that, as his referendum announcement indicates.

The longer political uncertainty prevails, the greater the erosion of his traditional support base among Afrikaner Nationalists. Yet the statistical experts say that he would still win a referendum among whites, even on the current swing to the Conservative Party, but the margin is narrowing by the day.

On balance, Potchefstroom is more helpful than otherwise. As Lawrence Schlemmer noted in his clear-headed analysis of the result, things could become easier for Mr De Klerk in a number of ways. For one thing, the international community's sympathetic understanding of his difficulties in keeping the

white constituency in line will be heightened.

Further helpful gestures from abroad can be expected at regular intervals, it seems to me, encouraging the Codesa process and steadily reducing this country's political, financial and sporting isolation.

At home, the common interest of both the NP and the ANC in pushing ahead to the next phase as quickly as possible has been brought home more forcefully than ever.

The ANC leadership, which is already moving into middle-of-the-road positions on issues such as nationalisation and the powers of regional government, is under considerable moral pressure not to make life more difficult for President De Klerk in handling his white constituency.

This is a two-way process, of course. One hand must wash the other, as President Kruger once said to Edmund Carrett, who was Editor of the Cape Times in the years before the Anglo-Boer War.

If Mr Nelson Mandela does well to consider Mr De Klerk's constituency problems, Mr De Klerk needs to reciprocate in full measure in assisting Mr Mandela to take his huge and increasingly restive constituency along with him in the Codesa negotiations.

What is needed from President De Klerk, inter alia, is to pay close attention to the interim reports of the Goldstone Commission. He should do more to demonstrate that control of the security forces is tightening as the Botha era recedes. ●

## From Page Three

The fact that De Klerk is committed to resign if he fails to win a majority among the whites must give the ANC pause. It gives De Klerk a handy lever for wringing concessions from the ANC to soothe white fears.

The ANC believes they can do business with De Klerk, in spite of their conviction that he has hardly played fair in the dirty tricks and Inkathagate department. But could they do business with any successor?

For Nelson Mandela the thought that De Klerk could fade from the scene after losing a referendum must be too ghastly to contemplate.

Is it a credible threat? On balance, it probably is. Neither the ANC nor the NP could live very comfortably for long in a situation in which the whites continued to exercise a right of veto, constantly sending De Klerk and Mandela back to the constitutional drawing board.

But the pledge remains, and if things go wrong for De Klerk his political dilemma could become acute.

If all groups except whites vote favourably at a referendum, a decision to go ahead with the proposed changes anyway could give the underground resistance

movement on the right the excuse they are looking for to cut loose with a vengeance. A decision to go ahead anyway on a very low poll might likewise lend a spurious legitimacy to a rightwing campaign of terror.

A referendum has no binding character in our constitutional system. It is merely a state-run opinion poll. An unfavourable outcome for De Klerk but he has indicated ahead of the poll that he will face the political risks, resign and call a general election.

**T**HE ANC has no doubt considered all these possibilities, and their current public statements, notably those of Mr Mandela himself, seem expressly designed to reassure whites and build confidence in an interim government of national unity.

If the NP and the ANC are strongly committed to getting an interim/transitional government in place with a minimum of delay, what about the other interested parties? This will need to be a coalition government and representative of the whole population, after all.

As this was being written, an interesting convergence of strategies seemed to be taking place between Dr. M.G. Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party, Dr

A.P. Treurnicht's Conservative party and Lucas Mangope's Bophuthatswana government, all of whom seemed concerned to emphasise a right of "self-determination" of peoples who see themselves as separate nations in the broader South African community.

Of the three, only the Conservative Party remains outside the Codesa process. In undertaking to put "self-determination" on the Codesa agenda when he opened Parliament, President de Klerk seemed intent on drawing in the CP, or at least splitting the party and bringing the pro-negotiation Van der Merwe faction of the CP into the process.

Whether or not De Klerk succeeds in this ploy, the emergence of a grouping in Codesa emphasising regional and ethnic interests could be a useful counterweight to the big battalions, and could help promote a genuinely democratic culture, we may hope, demanding the entrenchment of a significant measure of decentralization and minority safeguards in a non-racial constitution.

Yet there are obvious dangers. Playing the Zulu nationalist card rather too brazenly could isolate Dr Buthelezi and underline his status as a regional rather than a national leader.





## *PAC a marginal force bent on self-destruction*

Is Inkatha bent on emulating the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, and seeking to mobilize Zulus in terms of their proud history and traditions?

Ethnicity is rather too potent a factor in human affairs to be trifled with in any way at all. Its potential for stirring up mayhem is frightening, as the Natal violence so frequently appears to demonstrate. In South Africa, today the determined exploitation of ethnic sentiment for the sake of gaining or keeping political power is calculated to unleash the furies.

If Ulster is not a sufficiently chastening example of pathological nationalism, consider also the insane shooting sprees and other outbursts of irrational aggression in South Africa itself in which fearful and insecure whites reared in a nationalist tradition have set about killing or beating up blacks at random.

**T**HERE IS also the perspective of the impoverished black masses to consider and the so-called lost generation of semi-educated, unemployed youth.

Among the groups seeking to exploit this huge constituency, the Pan Africanist Congress increasingly looks like a marginal force bent on self-destruction. Yet the wilder elements in its ranks might make a strong play for support in the townships, preaching a populist creed of black chauvinism and invoking a common history of oppression rather as Afrikaner nationalists exploited their own sad history of suffering at the hands of British imperialists.

In these circumstances, the ANC will need great self-discipline to sustain its non-racialism.

Can these conflicting interests and pressures be reconciled to secure agreement on transitional arrangements which can command the confidence of the mass of South Africans? Assuming the political will to do an interim deal can be sustained on all sides, I believe that such arrangements can indeed be hammered out, and the sooner the better.

No one should underestimate the role of the Democratic Party as a catalyst and mediator in the whole process. Dr Zach de Beer's deft and tactful chairmanship of steering committees did a great deal at

the start to get the Codesa structures functioning efficiently. And this is the kind of intellectually-demanding exercise in which a man like Colin Eglin can put his negotiating and drafting skills to optimum use.

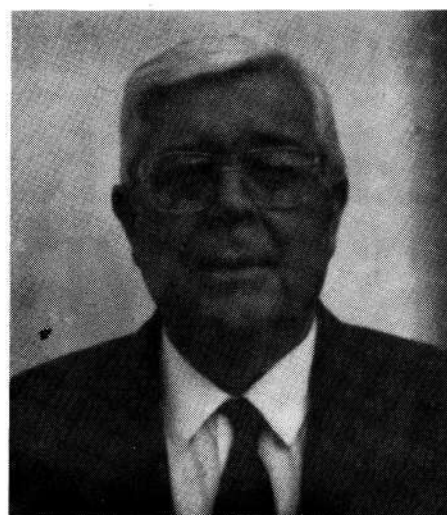
Given the good relations which the DP enjoys with NP, ANC and Inkatha alike, and given the convergence of mainstream opinion around constitutional policies which the DP-PFP-PP have been advocating for 30 years, they are better placed to influence the outcome than many may believe.

Dr De Beer speaks with enthusiasm of a developing Codesa spirit, which he contrasts with the adversarial atmosphere of Parliament. Delegates to Codesa are not there to score points or win victories, he said in Cape Town recently, and it is inspiring to see a gradual building of friendship and trust among people who until not so long ago were deadly enemies.

### **Framing a new constitution could see hard bargaining every inch of the way**

So rapidly is the whole process moving ahead that detailed discussion of the competing proposals for an interim government — and the shape of a likely compromise — might well be overtaken by the time that this issue of *Reality* is published. Suffice it to say that President De Klerk seems likely to insist on the correct forms being followed at all stages to maintain legality and continuity in constitutional arrangements, which might well mean the retention of the current tricameral parliament throughout the transition, perhaps sitting as a single upper chamber, and augmented to become more representative of the population as a whole. Its final task would be to enact a new constitution, once the transition has run its course.

**I**F THE transition goes relatively smoothly, and the economy begins reviving, the next phase in the process,



Gerald Shaw

the enactment of a new constitution, might yet be a protracted affair, with hard bargaining every inch of the way.

This may not be a bad thing, given the importance of getting it right, as long as the interim arrangements have come on stream quickly and are functioning as they should.

### **Are the security forces up to the job of keeping the peace in a delicate transition?**

There is a darker side to all this, obviously, and an element of unpredictability.

Are the security forces up to the job of keeping the peace in a delicate transition? Apprehension among whites at the prospect of political change is becoming acute, creating a climate which is ripe for exploitation by the right. Continuing violence, compromising the De Klerk-Mandela partnership, could compound such fears and corrode the mutual confidence which is building up at Codesa and, in unfavourable circumstances, could yet stop the whole process in its tracks.

The most hopeful force working to counter such a trend is the Goldstone Commission into violence and intimidation. The Commission clearly means business. Let us hope that such considerations will inhibit the shadowy forces behind the violence, whoever they may be.

There is no way of knowing whether the anti-negotiation forces have the resources and the will to sustain a wrecking operation. For the moment the peacemakers of Codesa have seized the initiative.

Let us hope they can keep it. ●