

The release of political prisoners and its aftermath

The Chief Minister of KwaZulu and President of Inkatha, Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, says he is "delighted" about the release of eight political prisoners. It was a "good thing" for South Africa and he congratulated the State President, Mr F W de Klerk, for his "step forward". "It is clear we are dealing with a different kind of leader than previous leaders of the National Party," he said.

The Secretary-General of Inkatha, Dr Oscar Dhlomo, said he also "rejoiced" in the freedom of the prominent political prisoners but he was not surprised by the release having participated with the Government, as an envoy of Dr Buthelezi, on "long drawn discussions on the subject."

"By the time we concluded our discussions the Government had already accepted our submission that no negotiations were possible without the release of Dr Nelson Mandela and other Rivonia trialists," he said.

"The Government had already given us an assurance that these leaders would soon be released and I would like to commend Mr de Klerk and his Government for having kept their promise to us . . .

"I say this quite deliberately because as a negotiator, I want to emphasise that the release represents a win-win situation for both parties. The African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress have been reunited with their top leaderships after many years, while the South African Government has contributed substantially to the creation of a positive climate for negotiation."

Dr Dhlomo said the KwaZulu negotiating team were not party to the negotiations pertaining to the delayed release of Dr Mandela.

"As far as we are concerned, and in terms of our submission, we expected him to be released with his other colleagues and not later," he said. "We did gather from Government sources, however, that this arrangement had Dr Mandela's blessing. We are unable to test the authenticity of this allegation since we are not in contact with Dr Mandela. Therefore, for us, Dr Mandela's continued imprisonment still remains an obstacle to negotiations."

The public response to the release had been "equally encouraging" and the mature and stabilising influence of the released leaders had undoubtedly played an important role in this regard.

"We hope that this encouraging public response will endure so that the releases we have just welcomed will soon be followed by the release of Dr Mandela."

Dr Dhlomo said he was now sure that the Government had begun to implement the terms of the joint report on obstacles impeding negotiations submitted to President de Klerk and Dr Buthelezi.

"It would appear that the Government has, in its wisdom, decided to implement the terms of this report in instalments. If peace and stability persist over the next

sixty to ninety days after the recent release, we expect the Government to lift the State of Emergency (either simultaneously or gradually according to districts), release Dr Mandela, allow exiles to return and unban the ANC and other banned organisations.

"It is possible that the unbanning of organisations will be the last step, coming after initial discussions on this issue between Dr Mandela and his colleagues on the one hand, and the Government on the other hand. We think the Government will require certain assurances from the ANC and PAC leaders before unbanning their organisations. Once the above obstacles have been removed the Government will then conduct discussions across the political spectrum focussing on the negotiation process.

"The discussions will cover three main aspects of the process, namely, the means for selecting participants in negotiations, the ground rules during negotiations and the mechanism for implementing proposals emanating from negotiations.

"The responsibility for ensuring that all the above steps are completed timeously rests with both the Government and black political leaders in our country. As President de Klerk has rightly stated, all leaders must now contribute in creating the right climate for negotiations to begin .

"It is no longer realistic to expect that only the Government is responsible for the creation of this climate. Black leaders and their organisations must now make it impossible for the Government to justify the maintenance of the State of Emergency, keeping troops in the townships, debarring exiles from returning and keeping Dr Mandela in jail.

"Leaders must issue clear and unambiguous directives to their followers to pursue their political ideals in a peaceful and disciplined manner. In this regard, the disciplined and statesmanlike leadership so far displayed by Mr Walter Sisulu and some of his released colleagues needs to be commended and emulated unreservedly. We hope that ANC and PAC supporters will take heed.

"I am not privy to the future political plans of Dr Mandela and his recently released colleagues. My personal wish, however, is that these leaders should waste no time in contacting Dr Buthelezi to discuss possibilities for a common approach to our political problems especially during negotiations. A mutually agreed upon negotiating strategy amongst all black leaders and organisations is a dire necessity at this point in time.

"Attempts by any one political grouping to impose its negotiating strategy on others is a recipe for disaster.

"Prospects for negotiations are now brighter than they have ever been before. I believe the Government of President de Klerk as well as our black leaders are now ready to create a climate conducive to the start of such negotiations."

buying power of blacks. This buying power now exceeds that of whites, especially if Indians and Coloureds are included. South African business houses are

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They are taking place because the victims of apartheid have been empowered and not emasculated. More importantly, these changes are taking place because the victims of apartheid have decided to kill apartheid in a manner that ensures that they survive after its death. Those international businesses that support this strategy therefore need to be commended . . .”

beginning to treat the so-called “black market” with the respect it deserves and so-called “black market” specialists and consultants are having quite a field day in our economy. Advertisements on South African television screens are beginning to direct themselves to this market, and advertising revenue in the black press has increased.

Blacks who have been regarded for decades as mere job-seekers are now quietly transforming themselves into job-creators through the informal business sector. The taxi business leads the field in this regard, with growth estimated at about one billion dollars over the last five years. In the city of Durban where I come from, black taxi owners have

recently offered to buy out the entire metropolitan bus transportation system from the Durban City Council.

Residential segregation, commonly referred to as the Group Areas Act is under threat as Africans, Indians and Coloureds move into residential areas hitherto reserved for whites. The South African Government has reacted with a scheme to create so-called Free Settlement Areas or Grey Areas where multi-racial communities will settle and send their children to multi-racial schools. Although the concept of Free Settlement Areas is still unacceptable to us because we demand the total scrapping of the Group Areas Act, it nevertheless eloquently demonstrates the actions of a government under pressure from the quiet revolution.

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

International business has played an important role in supporting and encouraging this quiet black revolution.

International business is actively involved in the promotion of the informal business sector in South Africa as is evidenced by the support the Black taxi industry receives from some oil companies doing business in South Africa. International business also struggles side by side with black people in the assault against the Group Areas Act. Many international businesses have consistently provided housing for their senior black executives in residential areas normally reserved for whites. Some international businesses have promoted and funded housing projects such as District Six in Cape Town whose aim is to break down residential apartheid barriers. Yet other international businesses have funded private schools that admit pupils of all races in South Africa. That is what we mean when we say that foreign businesses that have remained involved in South Africa in spite of pressures to withdraw or disinvest are our comrades in the struggle to dismantle apartheid.

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THE KWA-ZULU NATAL INDABA

In conclusion, I wish to refer briefly to the KwaZulu-Natal Indaba as one of the factors that have promoted change in South Africa. If there is any single event inside South Africa that can be said to have legitimised negotiation politics and enhanced the prospects for peaceful change, that event is the KwaZulu-Natal Indaba.

Before the meeting of the Indaba in 1986, negotiation in South Africa was very much a matter of theory and not practice. No one ever expected that South Africans of diverse social and political backgrounds could meet continuously for eight months, discuss constitutional problems facing their country and come up with solutions supported by 82% of the participants. The publicity that this exercise received in South Africa no doubt helped to convince many political doubting Thomases that negotiation and not revolution was the key to a new democratic South Africa.

Although the KwaZulu-Indaba was a regional constitutional initiative, there is no doubt in my mind that its spirit will be present when national negotiations begin in South Africa. No serious-minded negotiator in South Africa would totally disregard the wealth of experience that was gathered during eight months of serious negotiations in the Indaba. Similarly no lasting constitutional solution can be found in South Africa without addressing the very same constitutional complexities that the Indaba had to address.