

DE KLERK: CON-MAN OR LIBERAL?

Those who know De Klerk better than we do are not very encouraging. The writer Andre Brink, who knew him from his university days, dismisses him as a 'con-man'.

(*Newsweek*, 23rd October, 1989)

Wynand Malan, a co-leader of the Democratic Party, knows him and his track record in parliament. Malan is convinced that De Klerk 'believes in the apartheid framework and the racial confinements of politics'. He dismisses the idea that De Klerk is a liberal and says that he should not even 'be seen ... on the way to becoming one. (He) would try to manage the status quo although he would change some things in order to survive'.

(*Star* 26th October, 1989).

In one of his first statements as State President, De Klerk said that the door is open and we don't have to break it down. We all know what kind of country we still see when we look on the other side of this door. We see a country in which political power is the complete monopoly of the minority with white skins; a country ruled by emergencies, dotted with group areas, bantustans, with ninety eight percent of its resources and riches owned and controlled by a minority based on skin colour. Organisations remain banned, the media gagged and there is an unending assault on the trade union movement.

This is the door through which he wants us to walk. And we say to him loudly and clearly: 'No thank you'.

To buy time in the crisis-ridden situation in which he finds himself he has asked to be given five years. Whatever may have changed, it seems that the speech-writers of the racist leaders remain the same. In 1976 Vorster asked to be given six months. We waited in vain and what

we were given after the six months was greater terror and greater repression. In 1986 Botha promised to cross the Rubicon. This was followed by an even more intense phase of rule by the gun.

So we have heard it all before. And it has not taken long for De Klerk to spell out what we can expect at the end of his five years.

He has said more than once that **there will never be majority rule in our country.**



He has, over and over again, tied his flag to **group rights** which will give his small minority a permanent right to veto all fundamental change. And even at the end of his five-year period, all he is prepared to promise is that he will 'make progress on the scrapping of discrimination' (Speech at the OFS National Party Congress reported in the *Star* 23/10/89). He must really have contempt for the intelligence of our people if he believes that we will get excited by such 'generosity'.

At his Party's Transvaal Congress in the same week, he made another astonishing offer. He said that as long as the ANC committed itself to peaceful negotiation and **refrained**

from threatening a return to violence if talks broke down, it could participate in negotiation. He wants us to come to a table having abandoned one of the very weapons which forces him to talk of negotiations at all. And he expects us to permanently forswear the use of force even if we walk away from the table because he has offered nothing worth accepting. We can only dismiss this naive effrontery with laughter.

It seems crystal-clear that the Brinks and Malans who knew De Klerk, really knew him well. It seems too that so far he has not changed all that much. Perhaps a few more wounding blows from internal struggle and increased external isolation may force him to make a few more gestures in the direction of reform within the framework of apartheid. But equally he could bare his teeth in the same way as we witnessed with Vorster and Botha.

It seems very unlikely that De Klerk will really see sense unless the people make him see it as a result of a mounting offensive in all areas of struggle.

