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A NEW GOVERNMENT

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The National Party (NP) is not and cannot be an effective vehicle for appropriate reform in South Africa. Moreover, it never has been such a vehicle. The NP cannot transform South Africa from its present state of stagnation, crisis, structural inequality, international isolation and apartheid into a country of prosperity, international respectability, fairness and good hope for all its peoples.

It is beyond the ability of the NP to dismantle apartheid or to share power effectively with blacks in an orderly way in a central parliament.

The reasons for the NP's inability to be the instrument of real reform are not of an incidental, personal or curable nature. They are fundamental and deeply rooted. They belong to the very substance or "being" of the NP as an Afrikaner-orientated party. Consequently, it is of no avail to try to "reform" or to "transform" the NP into such an instrument. All such attempts are doomed to total failure.

The implication of this is rather serious. It implies that only if the NP can disintegrate will the opportunity arise for a democratic take-over of the government by a truly reform-orientated party. Then the first but indispensable condition for the long overdue transformation of this "Cape of Storms" into a country of Good Hope will be satisfied.

So, is there any reason to believe that the NP will disintegrate in the near future? Is it at all conceivable that a truly reform-orientated party can emerge and mobilise enough support to become an alternative government? Is it realistic to talk about a democratic change in government after 39 years of NP government? Can we expect that the National Party and the bureaucratic State – two institutions which have

become so closely interwoven that they have actually become one – will easily relinquish their power given their high stakes in the maintenance of the *status quo*? The answer is unfortunately an unambiguous no. But if this does not happen we have reason for grave concern – even despair.

If we wish to remain hopeful about the future of this country, we have no choice but to think in terms of an alternative government. And if it is true that we still have a democratic system – at least in the white political arena – then we must accept the responsibility to strive for an alternative government. If we want a prosperous future and a common destiny for all the peoples of South Africa, we must be prepared to stand up and be counted for the replacement of this stagnant government by a truly reform orientated one. It is hopefully still the democratic right of every patriotic South African to campaign – not only for an effective opposition – but for a truly reformist government to replace an either defeated or disintegrated NP government. It has definitely become my intention to strive towards such a change in government, in spite of the astonishing fact that this intention will be regarded in many circles as unpatriotic and as *volksvreemd*. What a sad country South Africa has become.

The NP will in all probability obtain an overwhelming victory in the forthcoming election. It may capture 120 seats. But it is not the size of the victory that is at stake at this election. It is the quality of the victory that is important.

The main purpose of the Independent candidates and the academic revolt is to put the finger on a very sensitive nerve of the NP – its legitimacy as a

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Shortly after his resignation from the NP, he was relieved of his position as vice chairman of the SA Broadcasting Corporation.



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truly reformist party. Hopefully, the NP will be exposed for what it really is (and always has been): a captive of multiple captivities.

Because of all these captivities the NP is not – and could never be – an effective and legitimate vehicle of appropriate reform. Hopefully a growing number of people will realise during the campaign – and in the months immediately afterwards – that the NP does not deserve any legitimacy as a reformist party, and that a growing number of NP Members of Parliament will experience the victory as a hollow and empty one. Hopefully people will come to realise that the “mandate” the NP will obtain on May 6 will be a mandate for nothing more than the maintenance of the *status quo*, cosmetic reform and the co-option of Uncle Toms.

If the Independents and the academics can succeed in questioning the legitimacy of the NP effectively, the ideological “cement” that has kept the NP together for so long may start to give way and then – hopefully – the clumsy structure will begin to disintegrate. This will open the way for a regrouping of truly reform-orientated people to organize themselves in a new political structure or party. Given the serious crisis conditions, internally and externally, one can only hope that such a new party will already be an important factor – if not the alternative government – during the General Election 1989 or 1990. South Africa cannot afford to wait any longer for a truly reform-orientated government.

In some circles there is talk of a realignment of reform-orientated parties with the Progressive Federal Party as the core of such a realignment. Such an approach is for many obvious reasons not viable. The dramatic and even traumatic events of the last decade have outgrown the relevance of all the existing white political parties. We need a fresh start. This demands not only the disintegration of the NP but also the abolition of the PFP and the NRP.

To understand why the NP cannot be an effective and legitimate vehicle for appropriate reform, it is necessary to focus the attention on all the different kinds of captivities of which the NP always has been, or has become, a victim. Six different captivities that can be identified have been, or have become, a part of the “inner” nature or substance of the NP to such an extent that attempts to “free” the party from them, will in effect destroy the NP.

Firstly, the NP has become a captive of its old age as a governing party.

The NP government has been in office for 39 successive years. It has become like an old and outdated oil tanker filled with too much ballast after 39 annual “trips”. It is no wonder that the old tanker cannot change its course. If it dares to take the stormy seas of real reform, it is doomed to sink under the dead weight of its own ballast and mistakes compounded over 39 years of rather unsuccessful government.

Democracy is a system with important merits but also with many demerits. Churchill called it the best of all bad systems. One of the important merits

of democracy – as it is experienced in the Western world – is that governments can lose an election. Every time this happens, the people that were extremely busy governing the country, suddenly become “unemployed”. They are then forced to take stock and to rethink their position. They are forced to formulate a new programme and a new strategy. This new programme and strategy can only be successful if it is based on a proper analysis of the country’s problems.

The National Party has – for these 39 years – been deprived of the “privilege” of a compulsory rethink. Because the NP has, since 1948, never really been forced to re-examine its whole approach, it has to a large extent, lost the ability to appraise and identify the real causes of South Africa’s problem.

The NP has become the victim of all kinds of frozen perceptions. It is not possible to convince the leaders of the NP that they are mistaken in both their identification of the nature of the country’s problem, or in the approach required to solve it. Conceptual blockages have developed in their thought-processes which make meaningful renovations impossible.

What the true nature of the South African problem is, has become the problem. To get a grip on the problem, is beyond the reach of the NP. Because it cannot identify the problem, it also cannot develop strategies to solve it.

Tragically enough, the NP’s outdated thought processes, its frozen perceptions and its conceptual blockages have become a considerable part of the problem. The NP has become a worn-out party which has to be removed in order to save South Africa from disaster.

Secondly, the NP is still the captive of Verwoerdian ideology.

The NP achieved its heyday in the early Sixties. At that stage it had almost accomplished its original social programme – the socio-economic upliftment of the poor white Afrikaners. Then Dr Verwoerd supplied the NP – as an Afrikaner-orientated party – with a new task and calling: to be the permanent government of at least white South Africa.

With his idea of grand apartheid, Dr Verwoerd succeeded with an ideological *coup d’état* for perpetuating white (but actually Afrikaner) dominance in South Africa. The real strength of the Verwoerdian dream was its simplicity and its straightforwardness. His dream was to divide South Africa into separate homelands to supply each ethnic group with its own “independence”. But it was a swindle. The real purpose was to give the Afrikaners – the only white tribe of Africa – a means of continued political dominance.

The Verwoerdian dream collapsed because it never had an economic base. When this became evident in the Seventies the NP made all kinds of pragmatic adaptations in a desperate attempt to reconcile economic reality with ideological fairytale. But this kind of patchwork by John Vorster made Verwoerdianism look ridiculous.

We need a fresh start. This demands not only the disintegration of the NP but also the abolition of the PFP and the NRP.



The thought processes of the NP have the typical characteristics of the adolescent.

When power-sharing with coloureds and Indians was accepted by the Botha government in February 1982 (to get rid of the right wing in the NP), the NP had no choice but to discard Verwoerdianism officially. But at that stage the Verwoerdian ideology had already become an integral part of the bloodstream of Afrikanerdom. Unofficially it remains the current orthodoxy.

Attempts to "de-Stalinize" Verwoerdianism have also failed. Verwoerdianism will only disappear if Afrikaners can be re-educated in terms of a viable new ideology – an apartheid-free ideology. But this is also beyond the reach of P W Botha and his senior ministers.

The NP is at long last prepared to share power with blacks but in such a way that no single ethnic group will dominate another. This is nothing but sophisticated Verwoerdianism.

After it became clear that it is not economically feasible to divide South Africa into separate homelands, the only remaining option was to divide "political power" between the statutorily defined ethnic groups to give each his "own affairs" in his own "group areas" and to give each group its own "political power" in such a "mythical equilibrium" that no group would dominate another.

From a logical point of view this version of Verwoerdianism is greatly inferior to the original one. The kind of "power equilibrium" between different ethnic groups envisaged by the NP proposals, is in fact an equilibrium that can only exist theoretically in a carefully constructed mathematical model. To present it as a solution for the extremely difficult conflict-situation of South Africa, is pure nonsense.

The thought processes of the NP – and of the majority of Afrikaners – have the typical characteristics of an adolescent.

Government spokesmen are inclined to blame almost all South Africa's problems on the actions and attitudes of foreign countries. They originate allegedly in one or other foreign capital: Moscow ("the total onslaught"), London ("we cannot trust the English"), Washington ("the Americans are hypocrites and not mature enough to be leaders of the West"), or in Lusaka ("the frontline countries want the wealth of South Africa"), etc. The elements of truth in these accusations are chronically blown out of all proportion.

If it is true that the Americans have still not outgrown the splendid isolation of the Monroe Doctrine, what about the laager mentality of the majority of Afrikaners? They have been the "victims" of all kinds of "splendid isolation" for no less than 330 years – some imposed by others, some imposed by themselves.

During the Dutch period the colonists were neglected by the nearly bankrupt Dutch East Indian Company. In the 19th century all kinds of misunderstandings developed between the Afrikaners and the colonial authorities in Cape Town. Some Afrikaners even chose the "isolation" of the Great Trek.

The isolationism of the Afrikaners in this century

is directly and indirectly connected with the Anglo-Boer War. The folklore about this "unjust" war was cleverly used to keep the animosity between many Afrikaners and English-speakers alive and to maintain the hostility of the majority of the Afrikaners towards the ("not to be trusted") outside world.

It will be difficult to end this adolescence-complex after 330 years of isolationism. It has become a vicious circle. The Rubicon speech is, on the one hand, a typical result of this isolationism and, on the other, an important reason for the new kinds of isolationism now imposed on South Africa by a rather unsympathetic Western world.

When the NP came to power in 1948 the poor white problem was still unsolved. Job opportunities in the bureaucracy and in the parastatals proved to be a very important vehicle for the upliftment of the Afrikaners. Over the years the public sector has almost become an Afrikaner monopoly.

During the Sixties and Seventies several departments in the public sector became right wing strongholds. When P W Botha was elected Prime Minister in 1978, the right wing orientation of the bureaucracy created a major problem. P W Botha's first reaction towards this situation was to announce his intention to rationalize and streamline the bureaucracy. Interestingly enough, the rationalization programme, in a mysterious way, changed into a programme that not only put the bureaucracy in an extremely privileged position, but also produced an unprecedented expansion of the bureaucracy at the cost of taxpayers. P W Botha succeeded in obtaining the allegiance of the bureaucracy, but only by "co-opting" the upper layers of it.

This was done in two ways: firstly, by means of highly improved employment conditions (through implementation of the controversial system of occupational differentiation and by supplying them with all kinds of tax-free perks), and, secondly, by allowing senior officials to become an even greater part of the decision-making and executive elite.

Because of this, many senior officials – especially in departments connected with security and the flow of information – have become alarmingly powerful. To consolidate his position, President Botha was obliged to "co-opt" the bureaucracy, but in due course he and the NP became their captives.

The overgrown and rather inefficient bureaucracy can prove to be one of the most difficult stumbling blocks in the way of necessary reform, even if a new reform-orientated government can take over from the NP. It has become so large, so powerful, so influential and so privileged – and so intimately part of the NP – that their interest in the maintenance of the *status quo* has become an all-absorbing purpose and even an obsession.

It is rather important to note that neither the National Party nor the bureaucratic State has a clear conception of the obvious truth that real reform and real power-sharing will have important implications for the redistribution of income. Both the NP and

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the bureaucracy maintain the naïve conviction that redistribution is a bad and socialistic word, while ignoring the redistribution from the (mainly English-speaking) private sector to the pockets of the (mainly Afrikaans-speaking) civil servants and farmers. What we need is a "redirection" of the redistribution: from the Johannesburgs to the Sowetos instead of to the Pretorias and the Lichtenburgs.

The NP is an Afrikaner-orientated and an Afrikaner-dominated party. Its whole origin and purpose is to promote Afrikaner nationalism. I prefer to call it Afrikaner sectionalism.

The NP came to power on the votes of those who backed the "underdog", and with a dual purpose: to protect the poor white Afrikaners by discriminatory laws from competition with non-whites from "below"; and to bring about the upliftment of the poor whites by means of a welfare state financed by taxes raised from the relatively rich English-speakers from "above". The apartheid society that was extended and legalized after 1948 thus has a "lower side" (the discriminatory laws) and an "upper side" (the welfare state to enhance the socio-economic position of the Afrikaners). The purpose of both sides of apartheid was to advance Afrikaner sectionalism.

Given the real and the alleged injustices that were inflicted on the Afrikaners by the British and English establishment in the first half of this century, some of the apartheid measures may have been justified. But by the middle Sixties, the poor white problem was solved and almost all Afrikaners had reached middle class status. At that stage a radical change in policy to broaden democracy and the welfare state to include coloureds and blacks ought to have taken place. It unfortunately did not happen and apartheid – both its "lower" and "upper" sides – was maintained and institutionalised in a completely unjustifiable manner for the simple reason that Afrikaner sectionalism remained the all-embracing purpose.

While the NP at first used its power to rectify some wrongdoings towards Afrikaners in the past, it has misused it since the middle Sixties unduly to privilege whites, and especially Afrikaners. This not only brought about too quick an embourgeoisment of the Afrikaners but also conditions that were conducive to the growth of an extremely materialistic attitude in both English and Afrikaans-speaking white circles.

One of the most effective progaganda gimmicks of the NP is its claim that the NP is the only party that can solve the country's problems, that the NP is the only party that can maintain order, that it is the only party that can avert the *swart gevaar*, that it is the only party that can keep the ANC at bay, that it is the only party that can withstand foreign pressure and that it is the only party that can beat off the Total Onslaught.

The "only party" syndrome has developed into a very dangerous kind of religious belief that reminds one of the position of the monolithic Church in the

Middle Ages. It was then commonly preached and believed that the Church was the only institution that could be instrumental in the salvation of sinful human beings.

Many whites indeed believe – explicitly or implicitly – that the NP is the only institution that can be instrumental in their earthly "salvation". From this misguided belief it is only a very small step towards the conviction – no, the belief – that anything that does harm to the NP is playing into the hands of all kinds of enemies and must be regarded as a *volksgevaar*. And if this is not regarded as serious enough, some people – especially those unduly privileged by the spoils of government, like many bureaucrats and party politicians – are even inclined to regard anyone who dares to criticise or harm the NP as a *staatsgevaar*. Such people are regarded as people who want to create a vacuum that will give an ideal opportunity to people who want to create chaos.

The NP has become such a complete captive of its own propaganda that the NP is the only party offering earthly "salvation", that South Africa is in all probability already further along the road towards a one-party state than many NP supporters realize.

For many of the supporters of the NP it is totally inconceivable that the NP can be disintegrated or fragmented to such an extent that a democratic takeover by another party can take place. They cannot conceive such a possibility, due partly to their perceived short-term interest in a NP government, but mainly due to their deep-rooted belief that such a change in government will create a vacuum that can easily be exploited to create chaos. But this is not true. As soon as it becomes evident that a truly reform-orientated party can take over government, it will not create a confidence crises. On the contrary, it will give rise to a revival of internal and external confidence. It will not create a vacuum, it will remove the existing vacuum of trust. A new government will in all probability be very meaningful for the ending of both the internal and external crisis situations.

It has become extremely important to convince a majority of the white electorate that the NP is not the only party that can rescue this country. Indeed, it is the one party that cannot restore normality. It is the one party that cannot create signs of hope. It is the one party that cannot restore internal and external confidence and trust. It is the one party that cannot create conditions conducive to meaningful negotiations between black and white. It is the one party that cannot abolish apartheid to create a more just system.

The NP has become the main obstacle to be removed if we are interested in a shared and common destiny for all the peoples of South Africa. The sooner it happens, the better.