

1992?

THE END OF ISOLATION PROMISES A NEW DAWN
FOR SOUTH AFRICA

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The International Olympic Committee officially decided the day before yesterday to welcome South Africa back in its ranks after 30 years of isolation. Yesterday the United States announced the lifting of the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act after it had satisfied itself that South Africa had met the five requirements laid out in the legislation.

Although the two decisions do not bring about a final end to South Africa's long and painful night of international isolation, they are both of such high-profile symbolic importance that they promise a new dawn for South Africa.

It is expected that the I.O.C. will send an invitation to next year's Olympic Games before the end of the month. Unfortunately some sanctions contained in separate legislation of the U.S. Congress will still remain in place. These include an important prohibition on Export-Import Bank loans and guarantees and a ban on International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.) loans. The lifting of the 1986 CAAA will probably not bring about the influx of foreign capital highly needed to ease the Balance of Payment position. But it will undoubtedly give a strong boost to South Africa's international standing. Given the important role of trust in matters economic, it can still spell an economic revival for South Africa.

It is probably necessary to see the decisions in Lausanne and Washington in conjunction with the important ANC conference that was held in Durban last week. The lifting of sanctions put the government in a much stronger negotiating position. But at the same time the symbolic unity and direction attained by the ANC during its very successful conference, undoubtedly also strengthened its negotiating position. We have therefore reason to suspect that the negotiation process will not only be back on track within the next month or two, but that both the senior partners will enter the resumed negotiations with renewed confidence and strength.

As was proven by similar negotiations in other countries, confidence in the ranks of both the senior partners about the strength of its own bargaining position and optimism about each one's chances to be the ultimate winner, can be regarded as a convenient precondition for serious negotiations.

From an historic point of view the rather dramatic developments in Durban, Lausanne and Washington at the beginning of June 1991 can prove to be the beginning of the fourth phase in the process to liberalise and to democratise South Africa's political scene.

The process commenced with Pres. De Klerk's speech on 2 February 1990. The second and third phases started with the announcements of the Grootte Schuur and Pretoria Minute in May and August last year. Both these Minute were major accomplishments and would have been unattainable if it was not for the remarkable relationship of mutual trust that developed between Pres. de Klerk and Mr. Mandela.

Unfortunately the 11 months since the Pretoria Minute, gave reason for real concern about the negotiation process. While Pres. De Klerk looks like a model statesman concerned with the long term interests of all 40 million South Africans until August last year, since then he was far too much obsessed with the short term vested interests of his own (mainly White) constituency. Although the abolishment of the so-called legal pillars of apartheid was a major accomplishment, it happened in a legalistic manner without any commitment to address the ugly legacies of the apartheid system.

The December consultative conference of the ANC in Durban was, from the point of the leadership, a rather dismal failure. It limited Mr Mandela's maneouvering space quite considerably.

The most distressing events during the last 11 months were the seemingly endemic violence between supporters of the ANC and Inkata and the apparent inability of the government to put an end to it. This unsavoury situation was made even worse by the on-going accusations by the relevant groups against each other about who was the real villian.

The rumours that the relationship of mutual trust between Pres. De Klerk and Mr. Mandela gave way to growing animosity and was

also a reason for great concern.

After 11 months of drifting, the time for a moral boost from both Pres. De Klerk and Mr. Mandela was long overdue. Hopefully they will have as soon as possible - perhaps during the weekend - a private tête-a-tête to patch up their tarnished relationship.

Mr. Mandela received a strong mandate for negotiations and greater flexibility on the sanctions issue from the Durban Congress. He will show true leadership if he now can revise his ultimatum that has served its purpose.

Pres. De Klerk received a strong endorsement from the international community that it highly appreciated his reform initiatives. With a lot of success in the international arena in his pocket, he will be well-advised to now turn his attention towards internal matters. He should take effective steps to end the violence, and he should clear up the still unresolved questions concerning the security establishment. But if he wants the ending of international isolation to be conducive to economic growth, he should complement the lifting of sanctions with a comprehensive programme of social upliftment and poverty relief.

At least 15 million blacks are living in abject poverty. They can be regarded as the main victims of apartheid. Pres. De Klerk should realise that without compassion for the harsh fate of the poverty-stricken victims of apartheid, he will not succeed to create the atmosphere of mutual trust and social stability needed for both economic revival and successful constitutional negotiations.