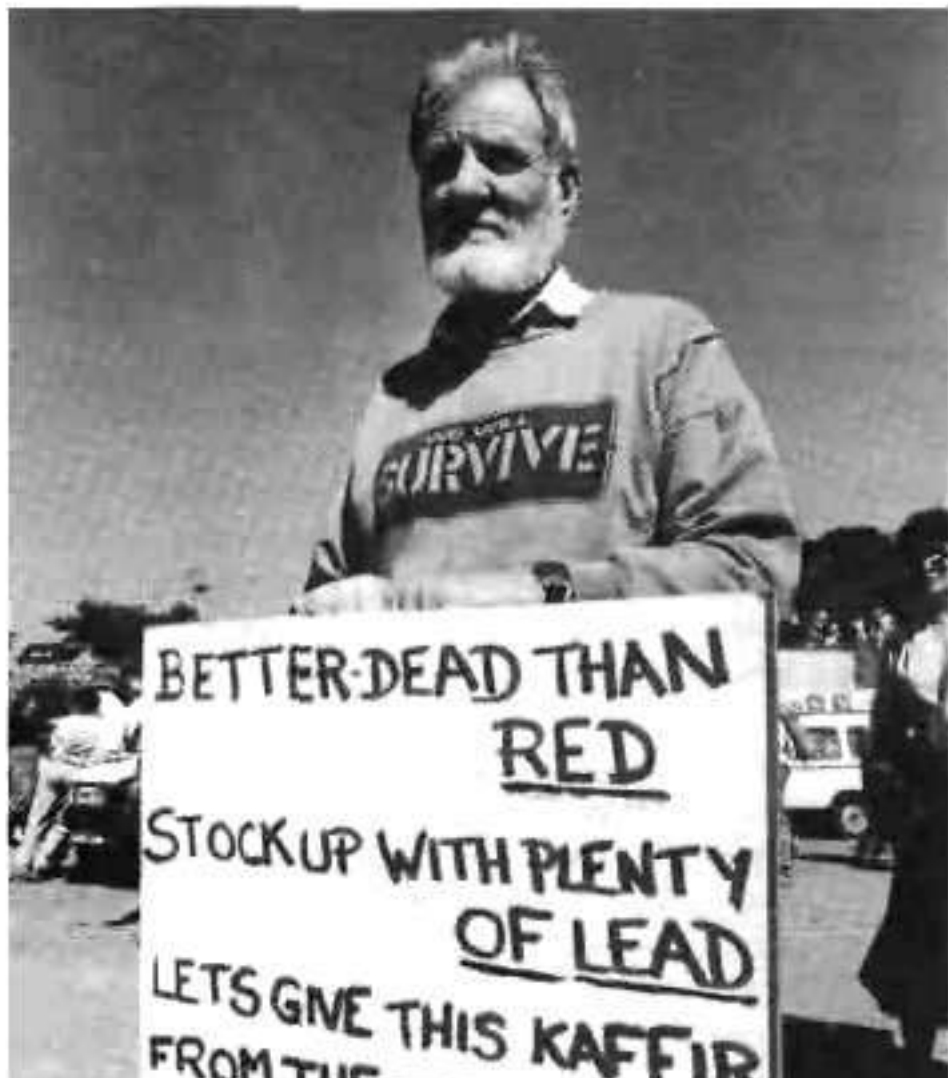


No trifling with 'chosen people'

The war talk of the right wing is making many South Africans nervous about the future. How does one pull the sting from its tail? Stellenbosch academic SAMPIE TERREBLANCHE ventures some suggestions.



THE foundations would have been laid for a relatively peaceful election on 27 April had the Freedom Alliance (FA) been party to the remarkable agreement on the transitional constitution. But FA non-participation and hostility towards important parts of the transitional constitution raise the question: has the FA the inclination and the capacity to disrupt and even to prevent the election? If so, what preventative measures can be taken?

The FA is fortunately not a closely knit alliance. The four constituent parties are in fact very strange bed-fellows. Their only common denominator is their demand for a kind of confederalism that will allow them the individual option of secession.

The leaders of Bophuthatswana and Ciskei cannot claim meaningful grassroots support. It will therefore not be too difficult for the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) to call their bluff, although Bophuthatswana has a measure of financial "independence" which may make it a somewhat harder nut to crack.

'Can we allow 2,5 million voters to hold the country to ransom?'

The two really problematic right-wing parties in the FA are the Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). As far as electoral support is concerned, it is unlikely that the AVF will get a million votes, while the IFP can at best get 1,5 million.

'Chosen people'

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without taking the rather problematic nature of white Afrikanerdom into account. This has its roots in the idea – cultivated and propagated rather judiciously by Afrikaner leaders after the defeat of the Boer republics by Great Britain in a rather immoral colonial war – that Afrikaners were the victims of an "eeu van onreg" (century of injustice).

These leaders used the idea of a people or "volk" deprived of their right to govern themselves in their own land, to project the idea that the Afrikaner volk were a chosen people with a God-given destiny, like the Old Testament people of Israel. After exploiting this "volk" idea for decades as part of its ideological justification for apartheid, the NP had to drop it once its membership was opened to other population groups.

The AVF is presently the sole carrier of the "volk" idea. Given the strategic role this idea has played in the NP ideological approach for almost a century, one should not be surprised that the right-wing half of Afrikanerdom still clings to it in a desperate attempt to regain lost ground. At the same time one should emphasise the responsibility the NP has to counter the AVF's ideological propaganda.

President F W de Klerk never tires of claiming that the NP had already decided in 1986 that the Verwoerdian policies of separate development could not work. But one would like to ask what he and his party have done during the last six years to demystify the legend of the chosen people. Time for

becomes clear that it is of little avail to negotiate with it about the partial accommodation of its volkstaat aspirations. It will not be possible to satisfy the right wing as long as it remains obsessed with the ideological idea that Afrikaners are a chosen people with a God-given destiny.

The only way to pull the sting from the tail of the right wing is to deprive it of its alleged religious, moral and ideological justification for a volkstaat. The only institutions that can challenge the right wing's moral, religious and ideological claims are the NP and Afrikaner churches and cultural organisations.

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Sampie Terreblanche

Why do reform-orientated Afrikaners balk at rejecting their own past and the ideological stand of the AVF? Why are they not prepared to do it? Can it be that while the NP's "mind" is in the negotiated settlement, its "heart" is not? It is a rather sobering thought that the NP is still too orientated towards the right wing to risk challenging its ideological stand.

Apart from ideology, there are also economic considerations to be taken into account when attempting to explain the stubbornness of the right wing, and these

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