



F.W. de Klerk

held, so ducking the question of his responsibility for what happened while he was President.

"With regard to Namibia," he said, "it was not my line function, but, yes, I was aware as a senior member of Cabinet that monies were expended there to assist parties to participate in the election, as Swapo has been assisted financially, and royally, from across the world.

"Apparently in international ethics there is nothing wrong with governments, if they support the principles of a party and if they think it is in the best interests of their own country, to support financially parties outside their borders."

President De Klerk went on to cite foreign aid paid to the ANC and American aid to various foreign parties, especially in Nicaragua — concluding that South Africa had the same right and there was nothing wrong "in principle" with its aid to the anti-Swapo parties.

What was grossly wrong, both "in principle" and in "international ethics", is that South Africa violated an international agreement in doing this.

What is more, this violation appears to have taken place under President De Klerk's stewardship.

It is true he was only a senior Cabinet Minister and not directly responsible for Namibia when the New York Agreement was signed. But he was Acting President and President when the violation occurred.

De Klerk became Acting President in August 1989. That was the month the Namibian election campaigning got fully under way. Sam Nujoma returned home on September 14. Polling was in November.

So for three months while De Klerk was no longer just a senior Cabinet Minister but the man in charge, carrying full responsibility, South Africa was aiding the anti-Swapo parties in violation of the international agreement it had signed 13 months before setting out the Principles for a Peaceful Settlement in Namibia.

These principles, together with Security Council Resolution 435 which the Government had also accepted, bound South Africa to work with the United Nations to ensure that "free and fair" pre-independence elections were held in Namibia and to "abstain from any action" which could prevent that from happening.

In other words South Africa undertook to be a joint referee with the United Nations of the Namibian independence process.

For President De Klerk to say now that he can see nothing wrong "in principle" with a referee providing secret aid to one side in the game he is supposed to be officiating, that it is all the same as American aid to Nicaragua, reveals a dismal understanding of a referee's role.

Which is why there has been such a collapse of confidence in his assurance that he wants to bring about "an equal political playing field" in the country.

When he was installed as State-President on September 20, 1989, Mr De Klerk singled out five critical areas for his attention — the first being to "bridge the gap of mistrust" obstructing peace negotiations.

Yet even as he uttered those words, De Klerk knew his government was violating the trust placed in it in the Namibian peace process — and that if found out it would widen the gap of mistrust catastrophically.

Why did he allow it?

Major Nico Basson, the whistle-blower on the Defence Force's anti-Swapo campaign during the Namibian election, claims the whole Namibian exercise, codenamed "Operation Agree", was a trial run for a similar but more elaborate campaign to destabilise the ANC and enable the National Party and its black ethnic allies (South Africa's DTA) to win the first post-apartheid elections here.

He claims a National Party study group went to Namibia after the elections to examine the effectiveness of the campaign, reported back favourably to the Cabinet's first *bosberaad*, and that this formed the strategic thinking behind President De Klerk's famous February 2, 1990, speech.

I am reluctant to believe this. The implications are too terrible. But the onus is on President De Klerk to re-establish confidence in the transition process, and the only way is to accept the demand for a visibly even-handed "interim government of national unity."

Let's hope all liberals can get off their fence and add to the pressure for that.

AFRICA TO ITS

COLIN LEGUM

sees present upheavals on continent as encouraging

NOT since the time of the culminating challenge to colonialism, from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, has the African continent experienced the destabilising turbulence which is sweeping it from Cape to Cairo, and from Madagascar to Algeria.

For a change, this turbulence is both healthy and welcome because it marks the beginning of a serious challenge to non-democratic political systems.

If the first African liberation was a struggle against alien rule by the colonial powers, the second African liberation is a struggle against indigenous rulers, mostly the first generation of post-independence leaders.

Their claims that single-party systems were the best way of averting damaging tribal conflicts and giving the newly-independent states a chance to secure political stability and economic development have, for the greater part, proved to be a failure, and in most cases, though not all, these failures have led to an incremental increase in denials of human rights and basic freedoms.

The cup of discontent has now flowed over into an irresistible tide of opposition which has already resulted this year in the overthrow of Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia, Moussa Traore in Mali, Matthieu Kerekou in Benin, Siad Barre in Somalia, Aristides Pereira in Cape Verde, Dr Manuel de Costa in Sao Tome and Principe, and Denis Sassou-Nguesso in the Congo.

This is only the beginning. Already other rulers are engaged in fighting rearguard actions — Didier Ratsiraka in Madagascar, Sese Seko Mobutu in Zaire, Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia, Andre Kolibga in the Central African Republic, Paul Biya in Cameroon, Omar Bongo in Gabon, Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo, and even the redoubtable Felix

FACES SERIOUS CHALLENGE NON-DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS

Houphouet-Boigny in the Ivory Coast. Others, too, are under pressure though not yet under immediate threat — notably Daniel Moi in Kenya, Kamuzu Banda in Malawi, and the faction of military officers in Lesotho.

This upsurge of a democratic revolt is generally linked to developments in Eastern Europe which, it is suggested, triggered off the demand for change in Africa; while others, like Moi, insist that it has been fueled from outside the continent by 'the West'.

While there is a kernel of truth in both suggestions, they obscure the reality that the democratic protest movement reflects genuine, home-grown African demands and desires. The seeds of burgeoning discontent showed their first shoots several years before the collapse of East European Communism and at a time when virtually all Western governments were still staunchly supporting the authoritarian regimes in Africa.

Multi-party system is only one facet

The battlecry of the Second Liberation Movement is multi-partyism, reflecting a demand for political plurality which is identified as the cornerstone of democracy. But while a multi-party political system is an essential ingredient of democracy, it is only one facet of a democratic society. It is possible to have a multiplicity of parties and still to retain an undemocratic society.

There are two dangers in the present situation. The first is that in countries where regimes have conceded the right to opposition parties to exist, the immediate result has been to increase instability to the point where the *status quo* regimes are able to argue that by concentrating on multi-partyism they are being led into agreements with the old regimes that offer no guarantee of the birth of a viable democratic system.

It is important, therefore, that those engaged in the struggle for democracy should be clear about the criteria for the achievement of a democratic society. These are:

First and foremost, that a new democratic constitution should be freely

negotiated among the leading political forces in a country — as is envisaged in South Africa and has, so far, been achieved only in Benin and the Congo. It is vital that a new constitution should have legitimacy through its acceptance by a majority of citizens.

Second, that freedom of political association should be guaranteed through such provisions as free and fair elections based on a universal franchise.

Third, that political freedom should include not only political parties but all social organisations, including the often unpopular pressure groups representing particularist interests.

Fourth, that there should be a clear separation of powers between the Executive (the government), the Legislature (parliament), the Judiciary, and the Administration (the civil service).

Fifth, that access to the courts should be available to all; this includes the right of *habeas corpus*.

Sixth, that the army and other security forces should be free of political control and should be neutral.

Seventh, that freedom of Press should be enshrined, along with freedom of expression and of movement.

Eighth, that trade unions should be free and independent of government.

Ninth, that academic freedom should be guaranteed to universities and other institutions of higher education.

Tenth, that a Charter of Human Rights should be an entrenched part of the constitution, and, preferably, be justiciable by the right of appeals against abuses of human rights to a Supreme Court.

It is only when these ten criteria are fully met in a constitution that there can be any guarantee of the minimum conditions of a fully-fledged democratic society.

There is also the need — not achievable through legislation — for the growth of a democratic tradition whereby citizens will *feel* that they are properly governed, will freely submit to laws, and respond to actions perceived as infringing on democratic practices. This is the very basis of a democratic ethic; but this takes time to develop. In the words of Julius Nyerere, "democracy is a habit", and habits are not formed overnight.

Finally, there is the overarching question whether democracy can take proper root under conditions of poverty and the absence of economic growth. Poverty and serious economic disadvantage breed frustration, and frustration encourages irresponsible behaviour and extremism.

Since the present condition of much of Africa is poverty and a serious lack of economic growth, it could be argued that democratic ideas fall on stony ground. Yet this is not necessarily true.

Democracy essential for escape from poverty trap

It has been acknowledged by the Organisation of African Unity that the absence of democracy has been a major cause of the failure to promote economic development and of the misuse of resources. Democracy, therefore, is an essential condition for economic growth. But such growth is no guarantee of contentment. What is required is growth and a more equitable distribution of available economic resources.

Recent research shows growth in industrialised countries to be a function of the degree of equality — not inequality — of incomes. Japan's economy has grown most consistently fast in the past 25 years, and it has the lowest ratio between top and bottom incomes. The same is true in Scandinavian countries.

Ordinary common sense dictates that an economy cannot develop when a large or growing proportion of its people cannot afford health care, education, decent shelter and everything else that makes for a productive population.

Widening the gap between top and bottom incomes is a recipe for stagnation; reducing the gap promotes growth in a market economy. Equity and growth go together; this can be assured only in a country where governments are properly accountable to a majority of the electorate.

It is only when Africans are democratically governed that there is a reasonable prospect of their escaping from the poverty trap.