

VI CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The rising hope for political and social reform mentioned in last year's report was given life in September 1989 with the return of the National Party to power and the election of Mr. F.W. de Klerk to the State Presidency. From that watershed to the time of writing there has been a rush of events that South Africans of all races scarcely could have imagined a few months earlier. The release of Nelson Mandela; talks between representatives of the Government and the ANC; the promise to repeal the Separate Amenities Act; the commitment of the Manpower Minister, in consultation with the trade unions (COSATU and NACTU) and the employers' federation (SACCOLA), to amend the Labour Relations Act on an agreed basis; the independence of Namibia; and the virtual collapse of the Homelands policy, have started a process from which there can be no turning back without chaos or civil war which only extremists to the right and left of the political spectrum would welcome.

The initial "talks about talks" in May between the Government and the ANC set in motion efforts on both sides to remove the remaining obstacles to the substantive constitutional negotiations which will be necessary to dismantle apartheid and replace it with representative, democratic, non-racial government. Before negotiations can commence, the Government is demanding an end to the ANC's commitment to armed struggle, while the ANC requires the lifting of the state of emergency, the release of political detainees and the safe return of political exiles. The will to meet these pre-conditions to negotiations seems to exist in both camps but extraneous threats to their achievement are many.

Neither side is totally representative of the constituency for which it claims to speak. The White community is split into roughly two thirds in favour of reform and one third against it. The latter group ranges between those who would oppose reform by constitutional means to those who already are threatening the use of arms to maintain White control. On the non-White side, to the left of the ANC, are a number of organizations which are at odds in varying degrees with the ANC (PAC, AZAPO, BCM, Inkatha). The most radical of these, the PAC, opposes negotiation and simply demands a direct turnover of power from White to Black hands. This approach is increasingly attractive, especially to the young and impatient. The ANC is far from unanimous on the way ahead. Its leadership is not monolithic. There is rivalry between the exiled leaders and those who worked for the cause within South Africa for more than a quarter of a century (UDF, MDM, COSATU etc.). The graduates of Robben Island have yet to consolidate their positions within the ANC. The rank and file are restless, the young being particularly impatient and radical and ready to bolt if negotiations are slow in coming or excessively drawn out when they do begin. Then there are the Zulus, some six million strong, who themselves are divided