

and clandestine military assistance from them. However, it is ultimately not dependent on such outside support.

The problem with South Africa is that no outside power has the leverage, short of military intervention, to force an intransigent regime into fundamental concessions. Even if comprehensive and mandatory sanctions were ever implemented – unlikely, given the global competition – Pretoria would still not collapse in the foreseeable future. Therefore, radical change in South Africa has to originate primarily from the inside.

How then does one explain the new pragmatism of the current Afrikaner oligarchy, compared with its ossified Eastern European equivalent? Above all, what accounts for the relative compliance of the South African population? Professed ideology is a poor guide to the reasons for such adaptability. According to the socialist canon of ascetic people's representation, the personal corruption of the leadership should be non-existent. Yet the revelations about exclusivist lifestyles and personal enrichment in the GDR or Romania still show a higher degree of elite remoteness and autocratic graft than the increasingly scandal-ridden Calvinist rule in Pretoria. Here an independent press and judiciary of a White democracy still hold the rulers accountable, despite emergency regulations and an insidious extension of executive power. To be sure, only a minority segment of the population in authoritarian South Africa, enjoys democratic participation. Nevertheless, even this makes an oligarchy more responsive than no democracy at all in Prague or Bucharest.

DISENFRANCHISED SOUTH AFRICANS HOLD NO illusions about their rulers. Racial rule clearly is for the benefit of the ruling race – a daily experience for Blacks that does not engender a feeling of betrayal. Many ordinary party members in Eastern Europe, on the other hand, felt cheated when the discrepancy between the ideology and reality was finally brought home. Hence, the temptation for revenge seems largely absent in the South African discourse. Resentment does simmer among the right, not the left. Does this force threaten the fragile attempts of reconciliation?

While the National Party is on the retreat ideologically, it firmly holds the reins of power, despite its decline to forty-eight percent of the White vote in the 1989 election. Its main challenge from the right (the Conservative Party with thirty percent) has been rebuffed. The ultra-right constitutes a grievance vote of a declining White lower stratum rather than an appealing new vision. Its Afrikaner nationalisms based on partition, promises not prosperity but further sacrifice in the name of Afrikaner purity. Ultra-right sentiments are strong in the lower echelons of the civil service and particularly in the police and security

establishment. Here nationalism and purity compensate for a low status that is further threatened by Black advancement.

The new government under de Klerk includes almost the same people as that of his predecessor. However, unlike P. W. Botha, who had a power base in the military, the new president did not belong to the so-called "securocrats." For the lawyer de Klerk, political and legal considerations so far carry more weight than repressive security arguments. In order to minimize his right-wing opposition in the police force he virtually scrapped the "National Security Management System" which had emerged as a parallel bureaucracy under police



Alain Piron

control. He also curbed the powers of the State Security Control and restored the responsibility of cabinet in all security matters.

CONSERVATIVES EXPECT THAT THE POLITICAL earthquakes in Eastern Europe will also prove infectious elsewhere or at least moderate the socialist demands for radical transformation in South Africa. However, the situation in China, Vietnam, or Cuba, and potentially South Africa, differs from Eastern Europe insofar as communism in these places is associated with larger historical accomplishments, literacy, and improved living standards. In Eastern Europe, Stalinism was imposed by a victorious army in the wake of a devastating war.

South Africa stands at the crossroads between Western-style democracy and an authoritarian "liberation." Many knowledgeable observers do not discount the possibility of reversed repression. American sociologist Pierre van den Berghe, on a visit after a thirty-year absence, speculated wryly: "South Africa, which has already spawned the world's last

official racists, may also see its last Stalinist." Given the gross inequality, and the huge development needs in housing and education in the context of an almost complete coincidence of race and class, it is indeed hard to envisage how a more egalitarian, just, and therefore content, society can come about without massive redistribution of wealth and state regulation of the economy. No preaching about a free market and the benefits of competition can convince deprived masses that salvation will come from the five conglomerates that dominate the South African economy.

Yet most of the signs point away from the Stalinist path in South Africa towards an, as yet, undefined mixed economy and a genuine democracy. The currently dominant ANC-led opposition conceives of itself not as a socialist alternative but a broad-based, non-racial, all-class movement to abolish *apartheid*.

THE ECONOMIC FAILURES OF DECOLONIZATION elsewhere in Africa have undoubtedly left their mark on the strategic thinking of the far more sophisticated *apartheid* opposition. Because of their restraint, ultra-left critics in British and Canadian universities already accuse the ANC of putting socialism on ice for the second phase after national liberation has been achieved. However, the more the nonracial opposition enters into negotiation politics, the more it becomes vulnerable to being out-radicalized. In this predicament, stringent rhetoric is meant to counter potential outbidding. ANC literature is full of slogans such as: "We are committed to a strategy of revolutionary armed struggle to achieve our goal – the seizure of political power..."

With the widely respected Mandela as a symbol of unity and pragmatism, South Africa in 1990 has arrived at a unique historical opportunity to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable. Normally state presidents do not meet their prisoners, unless induced by promising gains. As Chester Crocker has noted: The meeting between Mandela and de Klerk "was significant as a symbolic portrait of a prisoner and a president who may have recognized, in that moment, that they need each other." Yet the tantalizing speculation remains whether the one will ever succeed the other in South Africa.

It is surprising that the ANC opposition, in Walter Sisulu's words, does not mind whether the president is Black or White, as long as democracy is achieved. Since the South African struggle constitutes neither a communal conflict between two mutually exclusive nationalisms nor a religiously based civil war, political enfranchisement and equal privileges for all citizens are foremost on the agenda. National Party insistence on guaranteed groups rights and the ANC commitment to individual representation can be reconciled in various constitutional compromises only if the antagonists start negotiations in earnest. □