

**POLITICAL LIBERALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE 1980s  
AND THE FORMATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a case study of the crisis in political liberalism in South Africa during the 1980's and the formation and performance of the Democratic Party in the 1989 general election in particular. The political dynamics giving rise to the founding of the Democratic Party are examined in detail, as is the early contestation over the ideological and strategic identity and focus of the party. A detailed account of the Democratic Party's 1989 general election campaign is provided and an attempt is made to account for the improved performance of the white liberal opposition in the 1989 election compared to that of 1987. The crisis in political liberalism is located within the context of the broad organic crisis unfolding in South Africa during the 1980's. It is contended that State and popular responses to the organic crisis had the dual effect of both dislocating traditional liberal institutional relations and corroding the identity, appeal and effectiveness of white liberal political opposition. A further unintended consequence of the crisis was the fracturing of elements of the enlightened wing of the ruling bloc, which manifest itself in the emergence of the 'Independent Movement' in 1987, and which later amalgamated with the Progressive Federal Party in establishing the Democratic Party. The dissertation concludes that a changing correlation of forces including a crisis within the National Party and the successful reconstruction of the white liberal opposition as a party of pragmatic liberalism accounts for the party's improved performance over the serious reversals of the 1987 general election.

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I should like to dedicate this dissertation to all South African liberals. There is much work to be done.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAC	Anglo American Corporation
AB	Afrikaner Broederbond
ASSOCOM	Association of Chambers of Commerce of South Africa
AWB	Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BSIC	Black Students' Interim Committee
CCB	Civil Co-operation Bureau
CP	Conservative Party
DP	Democratic Party
ECC	End Conscription Campaign
ELP	English Language Press
EPM	Extra-Parliamentary Movement
FFF	Five Freedoms Forum
GAA	Group Areas Act
GST	General Sales Tax
HNP	Herstigte Nasionale Party
HoA	House of Assembly
HoD	House of Delegates
HoR	House of Representatives
IDASA	Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa
IM	Independent Movement
IP	Independent Party
JODAC	Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee
LP	Labour Party
MP	Member of Parliament
MPC	Member of the Provincial Council
NDM	National Democratic Movement
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NP	National Party

NRP	New Republic Party
NSMS	National Security Management System
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PFP	Progressive Federal Party
PP	Progressive Party
PRP	Progressive Reform Party
RAU	Rand Afrikaans University
RDM	Rand Daily Mail
SAAN	South African Allied Newspapers
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SASPU	South African Students' Press Union
SPRO-CAS	Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society
SRC	Students' Representative Council
SSC	State Security Council
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TIC	Transvaal Indian Congress
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UMAC	Unrest Monitoring and Action Committee
UP	United Party
USSR	Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics
WCC	World Council of Churches

## INTRODUCTION

Just two years before Francis Fukuyama published his provocative essay “The End of History?”,<sup>1</sup> effectively proclaiming a global victory for the principles of liberal democracy, South African liberalism was foundering in the depths of its deepest crisis. However, within six months of the publication of Fukuyama’s paper, on February 2 1990, South Africa, too, made a dramatic turn towards liberalisation and democratisation. South Africa, of all cases of societies in transition, presents as an uncertain candidate for democracy, and, indeed, predictions of success must remain tentative. However, one of the major distinguishing features of the South African state over its Latin American counterparts is the presence of long and discrete liberal tradition.

It is of particular significance for liberals that the major protagonists in the continuing South African conflict have for the past four years sought to resolve the political gridlock by means of a negotiated settlement. Remarkably the threat of withdrawal from negotiations rather than the threat to return to violent conflict has become the major tool used in leveraging the process to finality. If the form of the political settlement has given liberals cause for satisfaction, the constitutional content that has emerged from the negotiations may be regarded as vindication of the liberal struggle in acutely hostile terrain. All the major parties to the negotiating forum ostensibly embraced liberal democratic principles within their constitutional proposals. Indeed the central areas of agreement among the overwhelming majority of parties to the negotiation process were those that have been espoused by liberals for over forty years. Agreement has been reached on the principle of representative democracy, political pluralism, a constitutional state with an entrenched and justiciable Bill of Rights, an independent judiciary and the desirability of a mixed economy. To promote policies at variance with these liberal democratic principles now appears reactionary, antediluvian, or radical.

Yet the irony obtains that the political standard bearer of liberal democracy in South Africa the Democratic Party is currently fighting for its political survival, and deeply

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1 . Francis Fukuyama, ‘The End of History?’, in The National Interest, Summer, 1989.

apprehensive of its chances of reaching the minimum electoral threshold to win a cabinet seat in the Government of National Unity after the April 1994 founding election of the South African democracy.

The Democratic Party, in some respects, mirrors the paradoxical position of the declining British Liberal Party in the first decade of the twentieth century. The condition currently obtains whereby the Democratic Party's major historical Nationalist and radical protagonists now espouse broadly liberal democratic policies and collectively enjoy according to survey data, up to 90% popular national support in doing so, whilst the DP attracts less than 5%.

Thus whilst the prospects of a liberal democratic outcome for South Africa have arguably never been better, the immediate outlook for the Democratic Party is at best opaque.

#### Aim of the study

The central aim of the study is to provide an explanation for the formation of the Democratic Party in 1989. Two secondary aims of the study are to explain the political and ideological identity of the party, and to account for its performance in the September 1989 general election.

The central hypothesis of the study is that the organic crisis in South Africa during the period of the 1980's produced a deep and related crisis within liberalism, bringing the institutional repository of political liberalism in the form of the Progressive Federal Party into decline, thereby necessitating its reconstruction in the form of the Democratic Party in 1989. As the founding of the Democratic Party came as a result of the amalgamation of the three white anti-apartheid political formations opposing the National Party, the forces giving rise to the emergence of two of these formations in the form of the Independent Party and the National Democratic Movement are also investigated.

The importance of the study lies in the fact that, whilst a number of scholarly attempts have been recently made to understand political liberalism in South Africa, none has dealt

in any detail with the particularities of the Democratic Party. This study seeks to fill this intellectual gap in our understanding.

It will be contended in the dissertation that the formation of the Democratic Party can only be understood against the background of the acute structural crisis during the 1980's which, in turn, generated a deep and profound crisis within the liberal establishment of South Africa. It will further be argued that the dichotomous State and popular responses to the organic crisis had a profoundly negative impact on the performance and identity of the Progressive Federal Party during the 1980's, thus necessitating its reconstruction in the form of the Democratic Party.

In addressing the core focus of the dissertation a number of pivotal questions are asked: What were the forces giving rise to the unification of the fragmented opposition in 1989? Why did the Democratic Party adopt a pragmatic liberal ideological position? Which features distinguished the Democratic Party from the Progressive Federal Party? And finally, how do we account for the marked improvement of the Democratic Party's 1989 electoral performance as compared to the major political reversal experienced by the Progressive Federal Party 1987?

Whilst the historical antecedents of the Democratic Party and the socio-political context of its origins are accounted for, the dissertation focuses intensively on the period 1987 to 1989. The proximal historical delimitation of the study is the general election of September 1989.

### Theory and Methodology

Two theoretical frameworks are utilised within the study to explain different phenomena at different levels of abstraction. In terms of the metatheoretical and historical section of the dissertation, the Gramscian theory of organic crisis is adopted and is discussed in detail in chapter three. For an understanding of the specific form of liberalism later hegemonic within the Democratic Party, a theoretical discussion of pragmatic liberalism is examined in chapter seven.

The general method of the study combines historical descriptive and analytical investigation. In design the dissertation is constructed around a case study format defined as:

(The type of study), in which the background, development, current conditions, and environmental interactions of one or more individuals, groups, communities, businesses, or institutions is observed, recorded, and analyzed for stages or patterns in relation to internal or external influences.<sup>2</sup>

#### Assumptions of the study

In attempting to locate the formation of the Democratic Party and its performance in the 1989 general election in terms of the response of political liberalism to a broad matrix of structural and contingent conditions, the central conceptual assumption made by the study is that whilst acknowledging the organic nature or relatedness of these forces and responses, there exists a degree of relative political autonomy within which political parties may select the appropriate strategy, discourse and programmatic identity suitable to particular extant conditions. The popular success or failure of these selected programmes and policies is a function not only of the structural constraints within which they are forced to operate, but also the political, organisational and tactical skill with which these programmes are applied. Finally, the assumption is made within the study that individual agency cannot be reduced to that of instrumental behaviour determined by class, ethnicity, or the secular interests of fractions of capital. As Marx noted:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

However, Marx elsewhere adds:

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself.<sup>3</sup>

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- 2 . Jack W Birch and James E Mauch, Guide to the Successful Thesis and Dissertation, Marcel Dekker, 1983, p.72.
  - 3 . As quoted in David McLellan, The Thought of Karl Marx, Macmillan, pp.137-141.

In summary, the overarching assumption made within the study is that made by Nolutshungu:

To assert that politics has a practical and important distinctness and relative autonomy is to say that it is not simply determined by other aspects of social life (or levels of social structure); that it has an internal character and dynamic that cannot be deduced or predicted from a description of economic relations, however complete ...<sup>4</sup>

### Definition of terms

A discussion of the history, conceptualisation and theorisation of political liberalism is offered in chapter one of the study. At this point, however, it is necessary to define the usage of the term ideology within the study. The term has been one of the most overused and abused in South Africa and as such has lost conceptual integrity. The term was first used by French philosopher Destutt de Tracy to denote the 'science of ideas', which would reveal to humankind the source of their biases and prejudices.<sup>5</sup> For Plamenatz the term denotes a 'family of concepts'. Whilst the Marxian interpretation holds that ideology may be viewed as the justification which serves to mask some specific set of interests. Mannheim viewed ideology sociologically as 'different styles of thought'. At its broadest and least useful level, ideology is understood as *Weltanschauung* or "World-view". For purposes of this study however, a more defined and heuristic conception of political ideology is required and thus adopts that provided by Hall:

(Political ideology) provides a distinct framework for defining, explaining and calculating about political and social matters which is organised around a number of core concepts ... The term ideology is used to mean a clear cut political doctrine or creed, whose concepts are logically linked to form a 'system' which has achieved internal consistency and been subject to rigorous philosophical elaboration.<sup>6</sup>

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4 . Sam C Nolutshungu, Changing South Africa, David Philip, 1983, pp.36-37.

5 . All the 'simple' definitions of the term ideology discussed here are taken from, Bullock, Stallybrass and Trombley (Eds), The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, Fontana, 1981/1988, pp.404-405.

6 . Stuart Hall, 'Variants of Liberalism' in Donald and Hall (Eds), Politics and Ideology, Open University Press, 1986, pp.35-36.

However Hall warns:

No ideology is ever wholly logical or consistent. All the great organic ideologies bring together discordant elements and have to struggle to make contradictory ideas fit the scheme. There are always loose ends, breaks in the logic, gaps between theory and practice, and internal contradictions in any current of thought.<sup>7</sup>

The salience of this assertion will be demonstrated throughout this study of political liberalism in South Africa.

### Sources of material

Three major sources of research material are utilised in the writing of the dissertation. Firstly, the extensive secondary literature detailing the political economy of South Africa during the period under review is utilised largely in formulating the historical and contemporary context of the study. A range of secondary sources are used to provide specific detail concerning questions of political and constitutional reform and liberal social institutions. A number of published biographical and autobiographical accounts have also provided a richness of texture sometimes lacking in scholarly accounts.

The second major source of material is primary documentation. This is largely archival and includes a thorough investigation of the Progressive Party archives housed at the University of the Witwatersrand, and the Independent Party archive in Cape Town. Extensive use was made of the Democratic Party press clipping archive housed at the National Head Office in Cape Town. Access to early DP National Board and National Executive Minutes, as well as the minutes of unity negotiation meetings in 1988 and 1989 was also granted. A number of individually retained archives were also utilised.

The third major source of data was derived of a range of interviews conducted with most of the members of the Democratic Party caucus as well as those persons centrally involved in the DP formation negotiations. The particular value of these interviews was that they provided an insight into the inner dynamics of the liberal opposition parties

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7. Hall, p.36.

before, during and after the formation of the Democratic Party. Given the peculiar dynamics of both the decline of the PFP and the amalgamation of the DP the wide range of interviews conducted allowed the writer to “cross reference” both written and oral data.

Finally, given the contemporary nature of the study, the writer was able to attend a number of important Democratic Party meetings and congresses whilst research was in progress.

### Literature review

The first sustained and integrated exposition of liberalism in South Africa was that of RFA Hoernlé in delivering the Phelps- Stokes lectures at the University of Cape Town in 1939. The central theme of the lectures was to address the seemingly intractable contradictions of a liberal ethos and policies in a racially divided social order. Hoernlé’s was also the first attempt at the construction of a pragmatic liberal solution to this conundrum which called for the lateral re-definition of the conception of liberty to include that of national groups.

Hereafter liberal scholarship entered a period of hiatus and little integrated scholarship focusing on the specifics of political liberalism is to be found until the publication in 1960 of the Molteno Commission Report, which *inter alia*, called for the establishment of a constitutionally-entrenched Bill of Rights, a reformed Senate, incorporating a system of checks and balances against racial domination, and an education and/or property-based qualified franchise.

1973 saw the *Report of the Political Commission of the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society* (SPRO-CAS) published, which enshrined the most comprehensive recommendations for the achievement of a liberal constitutional order in South Africa. Whilst accepting fully the force and credence of western liberal democratic prescripts in principle, the Commissioners questioned the “practical feasibility” of such constitutional architecture in a “divided and plural society”. This led the commissioners to proffer

alternatives to the conventional Westminster model, and most notably that of consociationalism.<sup>8</sup>

In 1979, Pierre L. van den Berghe edited a volume entitled *The Liberal Dilemma in South Africa*, in which the “impossibility” of a liberal solution to the South African conflict was posited. Van den Berghe based his arguments essentially on the absence of socially organising or “bonding” properties of within the liberal ethos. For van den Berghe this crucial defect was of particular significance in the racially and ethnically defined context of the South African social and political order, as it left liberalism unable to make an appeal against, and compete with the corporatist attractions of Afrikaner and African Nationalism.<sup>9</sup>

In the same year as van den Berghe’s contribution, David Welsh and Frederick van zyl Slabbert developed the theme of the applicability of a neo-consociational constitutional framework for South Africa, in their study, *South Africa’s Options - Strategies for Sharing Power*. The major recommendations of the study were incorporated by the Slabbert Commission into the constitutional policy of the Progressive Federal Party. In summary, Slabbert and Welsh take seriously the poor record of simple majoritarianism in deeply divided societies leading them to suggest the need for a constitutional framework which would include the “checks and balance” principles of power-sharing, electoral proportional representation, minority veto, consociationalism, and federalism.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of liberal democratic themes an extensive and related literature has recently appeared examining the question of the constitutional and political opportunities and problems facing South Africa in transition to democracy, but which falls outside the

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8 . Peter Randall (Ed), South Africa’s Political Alternatives, SPRO-CAS, 1973, pp.127-123.

9 . Pierre van den Berghe, ‘The Impossibility of a Liberal Solution in South Africa’, in Pierre van den Berghe (Ed), The Liberal Dilemma in South Africa, Croom Helm, 1979, pp.56-67.

10 . F van zyl Slabbert and David Welsh, South Africa’s Options - Strategies for Sharing Power, David Philip, 1979.

ambit of this study.<sup>11</sup> With regard to scholarship with a specific focus on liberal parties in South Africa there exists a less comprehensive literature. In 1971 Janet Robertson produced a valuable political historical account of liberalism from the period of the ascendancy of the National Party in 1948 to 1963, which included an analysis of the Liberal Party in its first ten years of existence. The study also provides invaluable insights into the National Party's critique of liberals and the strategies adopted by it to discredit those white liberal politicians opposing its policies.<sup>12</sup>

In 1979, Paul Rich completed a doctoral dissertation on the problem of racial segregation and South African liberalism, later published as *White Power and the Liberal Conscience*, which deals specifically with the period 1921 to 1960. The book adopts a revisionist paradigm and documents the limitations and failures of the liberal ethos during the cementing of the South African racial order.<sup>13</sup>

But it was only in 1984 that the first fully comprehensive study of the Progressive Party was produced by Brian Hackland. Hackland's work traces the formation of the Progressive Party in 1959 through to its performance in the 1981 general election and is a major contribution to the field. Hackland adopts a structural approach to understanding the Progressive Party and seeks to explain its ideological identity and political trajectory in terms of both broad structural changes in the South African political economy and in terms of the party's class determinants. Hackland's work has two major weaknesses, however, one conceptual and the other more contingent. In attempting to move beyond the level of generalities, Hackland attempts to make sense of the Progressive Party in terms of structural and class dynamics, but in so doing develops a degree of conceptual myopia. Whilst Hackland recognises the *prima facie* contradiction of a white political party opposing racial domination in the South Africa of the 1960's and 1970's, in reducing the identity of the Progressive Party to that of its class determinants the Party is

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11 . The most comprehensive of these studies is that of Donald L. Horowitz, A Democratic South Africa? - Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society, Oxford, 1991.

12 . Janet Robertson, Liberalism in South Africa, 1948 - 1963, Oxford, 1971.

13 . Paul Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience - Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism, Ravan, 1984.

treated as an epiphenomenon of broader and deeper forces. Hackland extends the conceptual error to the point of ultimately reducing the policies adopted by the Progressive Party to those of an instrument of mining capital and in particular the personal fief of Harry Oppenheimer. The second weakness of Hackland's work is the conclusion he draws concerning the relatedness of the South African political economy and the fortunes of the Progressive Party:

The electoral fortunes of the Progressive Party tended to improve during these periods (of black political uprising against the state) and declined at times of political quiescence and economic boom.<sup>14</sup>

This dissertation will argue that during the period of crisis in South Africa in the 1980's in, fact, the obverse condition obtained, thus challenging the generalizability of Hackland's conclusion.

The most recent academic contribution to the field was that of David Shandler in 1991, who sought to provide an account of the Progressive Federal Party from 1981 to 1989. Shandler's work is modelled on that of Hackland and extends a number of its central themes. Shandler analyses in detail the PFP's response to its internal class determinants and to black political protest. Whilst parts of Shandler's thesis have been useful in the preparation of this dissertation, the foci of the dissertations differ. Shandler focuses exclusively on the tumult within the Progressive Federal Party during the 1980's, whereas this dissertation is concerned with explaining the variegated forces giving rise to the formation of the Democratic Party and its political identity through to the 1989 general election.

### Outline of the dissertation

The structure of the dissertation falls into three parts. The first section locates the historical, conceptual, theoretical and contextual background to the study. The second, details a number of the many damaging effects the organic crisis had on liberalism in

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14 . Brian Hackland, 'The Progressive Party of South Africa, 1959 - 1981: Political Response to Structural Change and Class Struggle', D.Phil. thesis, Balliol College, Oxford. March 1984., p.473.

South Africa during the 1980's as they played themselves out at the institutional level. The third section examines the efforts to re-construct political liberalism in South Africa through the establishment of the Democratic Party and its performance in the September 1989 general election.

Chapter one examines the historical, philosophical and conceptual underpinnings of the liberal tradition both classically and in its South African variant. Chapter two provides a broad historical sweep of political liberalism in its party construct and looks specifically at the formation of the Liberal Party in 1953 until its decision to disband in 1968. Thereafter an investigation of the genealogy of the Progressive Party from its founding in 1959 until its electoral high point in 1981 is undertaken. The third chapter sets the theoretical and contextual framework for the major socio-political dynamic of the period under review namely that of organic crisis.

Chapter four, which is the first of section two, details the impact of the organic crisis at the level of institutions and looks specifically at the impact of the crisis on the rule of law, the English-language press, the English Churches, and the English Universities. In the second part of chapter four the response of a number of liberal intellectuals and activist to the crisis is also discussed. Chapter five looks specifically at the decline of the Progressive Federal Party, and locates this decline both in terms of external forces unleashed by the crisis, but also its internal ideological and strategic tensions and contradictions. Chapter six investigates the emergence of the "Independent" phenomenon in 1987, which was to had a marked impact both on the demise of the PFP and the genesis of the new Democratic Party. Chapter seven details the period of acute introspection within the PFP in the wake of the series of major setbacks during the 1980's and which led to, firstly, a restructuring of party leadership, but which also saw the emergence of a major new pragmatic liberal thrust within the Progressive Federal Party which both facilitated the unification process, but which also became hegemonic within the Democratic Party.

The eighth chapter details the range of sometimes contradictory proximate forces giving rise to the unification of the fragmented liberal opposition and the compromises

necessitated by the unification process in terms of the identity and strategic programme of the new party. Chapter nine discusses the challenges and opportunities that confronted the Democratic Party at its founding, and investigates the internal struggle for organisational, ideological and policy control. The final two chapters examine the Democratic Party's planning, conceptualisation and performance in the September 1989 general election and conclude with an audited evaluation.

## CHAPTER ONE

This chapter has a three-fold purpose. Firstly, to introduce some of the central themes of classical liberalism that have had a significant impact on the South African variant. Secondly, to sketch and define some of the important contours of the liberal tradition in South Africa. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of three of the major critiques of South African liberalism. The discussion is not exhaustive, but rather serves principally to locate the South African liberal tradition within a broad historical and philosophical context.

### The Liberal Tradition

Although the philosophical antecedents of liberalism are traceable to classical Greece and Rome, liberalism is *par excellence* the ideology of modernity. The term was first used as an epithet by the party of *Liberales* in Spain in 1810.<sup>1</sup> In its original usage, liberal connoted a condition of human virtue characterised by elements of humanity, generosity, and an open mind.<sup>2</sup>

The protean nature of liberalism defies a monochromatic definition, and indeed can only be understood with reference to the social, economic, and political context of the odyssey of modern history. As its purview became global and began to penetrate traditional, and later, colonial societies, so too did liberalism, within the particular social and historical context, take on an identity in part peculiar to (but nevertheless no less liberal) that national culture. Thus features of French and German liberalism differ from one another and both the English and American variants. This protean quality of liberalism is an important factor in understanding the South African liberal tradition.

To describe liberalism as protean in nature is not, however, to reduce the ideology to an amorphous phenomenon. The liberal tradition enshrines within it a distinctive set of characteristics which differentiate it from both its antecedents and modern challengers.

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- 1 . Giovanni Sartori, 'The Relevance of Liberalism in Retrospect' in, Zbigniew Brzezinski (Ed), The Relevance of Liberalism, Praeger, 1978, p.2.
  - 2 . John Gray, Liberalism, Open University Press, 1986, p.lx.

The cardinal defining principle of liberalism is the moral primacy it attaches to political freedom, which rests on a belief in the sovereignty of the individual in all social arrangements. The central political value of liberalism is that of the maximal liberty of the individual consistent with the same liberty for others.

Gray holds that at a metatheoretical level, there reside within the liberal tradition four central tenets regarding conceptions of humankind and society.<sup>3</sup>

Firstly, the *individualist* dimension to the tradition holds that in all social arrangements the individual bears moral primacy to claims against those of any collectivity. For the liberal, individuals are ethically and logically prior. Individuals are ends in themselves and are not to be treated as means to an end.

Secondly, and concomitantly with the individualist tradition within liberalism, there runs an *egalitarianism* which holds that all individuals possess, by virtue of their humanity, equal moral worth, regardless of political and social status or statute.

Thirdly, the liberal outlook is *universalist* in that it holds that all individuals are principally united by their shared humanity above the claims of specific cultural and historical affiliations.

Finally, the liberal tradition is marked by a belief in the possibility of the melioration of human society and its institutions, whilst it rejects historicism and a teleological approach to understanding progress. As a tradition it is corrigible and open.

Despite being quintessentially the ideology of modernity, the pre-history of liberalism is scattered with examples of the assertion of the liberty and rights of the individual. The Sophists of ancient Greece drew particular attention to the notion of the 'universal equality of men'. The Greek rhetorician Alcidamas claimed, "The Gods made all men

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3 . Gray, p.X.

free; nature made none a slave". In his famous Funeral Oration, Pericles declared of Athenian democracy:

The laws afford equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, but we do not ignore the claims of excellence ... The freedom we enjoy extends also to ordinary life; we are not suspicious of one another, and we do not nag our neighbour if he chooses to go his own way ... But this freedom does not make us lawless. We are taught to respect the magistrates and the laws, and never to forget that we must protect the injured ... We are free to live exactly as we please, and yet, we are always ready to face any danger.<sup>4</sup>

The thread of this ancient proto-liberalism is retrieved in ancient Rome through the principles enshrined in the Laws of the Twelve Tables. The first of the public laws warrants that:

No privileges or statutes shall be enacted in favour of private persons, to the injury of others contrary to the law common to all citizens and which individuals, no matter of what rank, have a right to make us of.<sup>5</sup>

This strong emphasis placed on the rule of law, and the egalitarian treatment of the individual before the law, was later acutely circumscribed, but through this ancient spirit, as enshrined in the writings of Cicero, we find, in Hayek's view, 'the main authority for modern liberalism'.<sup>6</sup>

Although the fundamental principles of a liberal ethos can be extracted from the dust of ancient civilisation in disparate forms, the trajectory of the liberal tradition is often occluded and convoluted and finds little expression under the weight of medieval orthodoxy. Intellectually, the seeds of liberalism's cultural cradle, the Enlightenment, were sewn during the Reformation by the establishment of the principle of the inviolability of the conscience, nurtured by Luther, who had "set the demon of individualism loose".<sup>7</sup> However, the first expression of the individualist principle central

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4 . Cited in Gray, pp.2-3.

5 . Cited in Gray, p.5.

6 . Cited in Gray, p.5.

7 . J.G. Merquior, Liberalism Old and New, Twayne 1991, p.16.

to political liberalism is to be found in the writings of the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). Hobbes's philosophy is of cardinal importance at a number of levels. In his rejection of the notion of *summum bonum*, or that of ultimate ends, Hobbes paved the way for the schism which marked the rupturing of the intellectually closed stolidness of the medieval period with the emergence of the intellectual cradle of liberalism, the Enlightenment and Renaissance.

Less well reported of Hobbes is his affinity with notions of human egalitarianism and liberty. There are for Hobbes no absolute duties, only an absolute and inalienable right to self-preservation. Derivative of this absolute, is the notion that the state is warranted in its authority solely to protect and preserve the fundamental right of all individuals, namely the right to life or self-preservation.

Pursuant to Hobbes, a stronger and more robust assertion of the liberal ethic is found in the writing of continental thinker Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677) for whom the essence of the human condition is the striving for and toward personal freedom and empowerment, through which the individual may assert his or her unique individuality.

For Gray, however, neither Hobbes nor Spinoza meets the basic minimum requirement to warrant the designation 'liberal', in that neither enshrines within their writings or beliefs the meliorist perspective that the human condition is essentially improvable and open.<sup>8</sup> It is only within English philosopher John Locke's *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, written in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, that the first systematically integrated exposition of liberal philosophy and government is found. Locke's conceptual advances have continued to pervade liberal thinking to the present.

The *fons et origo* of Locke's philosophy was the assertion of the existence of inalienable natural rights derived of natural law. This natural law was itself a product of divine nature, but discernable by reason. Locke held that the state of nature was one of "peace, goodwill, mutual assistance and preservation".<sup>9</sup> Indeed, for Locke, the state of nature was

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8 Gray, p.10.

9. George Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, Harrap, 1966, p.526.

the antithesis of that conceived of by his English predecessor Hobbes, who had warned that the state of nature was characterised by humans living in a condition which was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”.<sup>10</sup>

Both Hobbes and Locke developed and shared a commitment to contractarianism. For Hobbes the social contract was essentially between individuals and the State for the sole purpose of protecting the liberty of the former. For Locke the contract was two-fold. Firstly, civil society contracted between its constituent individuals to give up or attenuate certain rights for the protection of the general good. Secondly, civil society contracted with the state in return for guarantees of protection of the individual.

Locke made two cardinal contributions to the development of the liberal tradition. The first was his insistence on the principle of (originally religious) tolerance expressed in his *Second Treatise*. This call left an indelible impression on the moral dimension of the liberal ethos which endures to the present. Locke’s second major contribution to English liberalism was the assertion that natural rights were vacuous in the absence of claims to private property. These claims serve principally to protect natural rights from the encroachment of other people and the state. For Locke:

Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a “property” in his own “person”. This nobody has any right to but himself. The “labour” of his body and the “work” of his hands, we may say are properly his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property.<sup>11</sup>

This conception of the doctrine of natural property rights has served not only to buttress the material dimension of individual liberty, but has, above all other claims, given rise to

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10 . Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Dent, 1965, p.65.

11 . John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Dent, 1978, p.130.

the persistent conflict between liberals and their radical challengers concerning questions of liberty, equality and justice.<sup>12</sup>

Thus for both Hobbes and Locke the conception of liberty enshrines a negative dimension, as being freedom from interference of both other individuals and the state. The egalitarian dimension to the Hobbesian and Lockean construct stems from the equality of rights endowed of the individual at birth by virtue of his or her humanity. This formal equality serves to locate all as equal before the law, and the law itself derives its force and utility as the social and institutional mechanism which binds freely-contracting individuals. The role of the state for Locke, in contrast to the Leviathan Hobbesian state, is thus minimalist. The state is granted its legitimacy solely by virtue of its warrant to protect the natural rights of the freely-contracting individual.

Locke in particular gave credence to the principles of natural law, the doctrine of human rights and consequentially through the advocacy of contractarianism, sewed the political seeds of constitutionalism. Although it was not until Montesquieu's publication in 1748 of the *Spirit of the Laws*, however, that a full-fledged theory of constitutionalism was developed.<sup>13</sup> But the critical political consequence of the writing of Locke was the conceptual liberal justification for the emergence of representative government.

#### The emergence of laissez-faire economics

The spirit which had given rise to the currency of political individualism and the association of liberty with property rights also found vital expression with the emergence of economic liberalism. As its political and social liberal counterpart had done in rejecting aristocratic political control, so too did the force of economic liberalism serve to burst asunder restrictive governmental and protected trade practices. The intellectual founding father of this spirit was Adam Smith (1732-90), who contended that, although individuals engaged in economic activity from motivations of self-interest, the private

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12 . See the critiques of CB Macpherson, in his works, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke, Oxford, 1968; The Rise and Fall of Economic Justice, Oxford, 1985; and The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy, Oxford, 1987.

13 . Bramstead and Melhuish (Eds), Western Liberalism - A History from Locke to Croce, Longman, 1978, pp.29-31.

enterprise of the individual had the associated effect of promoting general prosperity and was the most rational organising principle for the achievement of an equitable distribution of wealth. Smith's theorisation was revolutionary in its impact, for it "grasped the inherent dynamism of an economy organised around market exchange".<sup>14</sup> For Smith the only efficient and equitable system of economic organisation was that which was as independent of state interference or regulation as possible. The market was self-regulating, and thus the role of the state was reduced to the maintenance of the laws protecting the free operation of property rights and exchange. Smith's work distilled into a comprehensive theory of *laissez-faire*, and remained the single most powerful statement of economic liberalism until the twentieth century. Notably Smith's theorisation also served to lend credence to the minimalist liberal conception of the good state.

### Classical liberalism

The key elements of proto-liberalism, namely the concepts of individual rights, the rule of law and constitutionalism, all found varying degrees of expression in the writing and discourse of the central classical liberal era which extended late into the 19th century. The classical liberal thinkers made two seminal contributions to the development of liberalism. Firstly, they formalised the elements of a secular liberal polity which had been materialising over the previous century. Secondly, they grafted into the liberal ethos the fundamental themes of democracy and libertarianism.<sup>15</sup>

One of the central "historic tasks" of liberalism was the extension of access to political participation to a broader class of individuals.<sup>16</sup> The central liberal political construct for the protection of natural rights became the institution of representative government. The two crucial historical instruments which converted liberal theorisation into a developed political programme were the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 and Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, heralding the emergence of the Federalist republicans. The central theses of liberal democratic government are to be found in the

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14 . Stuart Hall, 'Variants of Liberalism', in Donald and Hall (Eds), Politics and Ideology, Open University, 1986, p.53.

15 . Merquior, p.37.

16 . Hall, pp.34-70.

Declaration of Independence, and the subsequent *Federalist Papers* of Hamilton, Madison and Jay. The former proclaims *inter alia*:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that amongst these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted amongst Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.<sup>17</sup>

The classical liberal statement of the necessary limitations on representative government was later penned by Madison and reads:

(T)he accumulation of all power, legislative, executive, and judiciary in the hands, whether of one, or few, or many and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.<sup>18</sup>

The case for political reform was thereafter most strongly articulated by Thomas Paine in his *The Rights of Man* (1791-92), which called for the abolition of slavery, the rights of women, freedom of speech, and religious freedom. Paine added weight to the meliorist thrust of liberalism by arguing that once it was freed of the tethers of aristocratic constraint and orthodoxy, the human condition would improve immutably. Politically Paine added weight to the demands for minimal, limited and representative government.

However early in the 19th century the social and economic forces unleashed by the *laissez-faire* economic revolution saw an increase in industrialisation and concomitant urbanisation, particularly within Britain. The need for government to reinforce the order and administrative framework advocated by the burgeoning middle classes, necessitated an increased elaboration of statutory regulation in such areas as public health, education, poor relief and workplace conditions. It was a new breed of liberals, the utilitarians, who provided the inspiration for such administrative reform.<sup>19</sup>

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17. Cited in R. Eccleshall, V. Geoghan, R. Jay and R Wilford (Eds), *Political Ideologies*, Hutchinson, 1984, p.41.

18. Cited in D.J. Manning, *Liberalism*, St Martin's Press, 1976, p.69.

19. Eccleshall, p.55.

The utilitarians were dismissive of the natural rights-based liberal principles of social order and argued that the guiding principle of human endeavour was the maximisation of self-interest. The function of government, according to the leading light of the utilitarian school Jeremy Bentham, was to provide the necessary regulatory framework for the achievement of the condition of utility; which reduced to its essence, was that state which provided the greatest happiness for the greatest number. In this sense the utilitarians not only made an important break with the classical rights-based liberals, but also challenged the minimalist state positions held by their predecessors.

The consequence of these social and economic forces and a burgeoning British middle class forced a stronger democratic content and focus into liberal theorisation during the 19th century. Towards the end of their lives, both the leading utilitarians Bentham and James Mill accepted the principle of adult male suffrage, and in 1832 the Whig government led by Lords Grey and Melbourne passed the First Reform Bill heralding the era of liberal *democratic* reform.

The incipient liberal democratic ethos of the early 19th century was, however, still heavily permeated by meritocratic principles. Democratic reform was understood by its proponents to be the “gateway to the liberal ideal of a community of self-governing citizens”.<sup>20</sup> At the time liberal democratic reasoning was predicated on two principles; one moral and the second prudential. The moral principle held that a (liberal) democracy would provide for the achievement of an open, tolerant and progressive society. In contrast, the prudential reasoning simply argued that the granting of the franchise to the poor and underclasses would serve to elevate these classes and thus defuse the potential for class conflict.

The moral argument finds its greatest expression in the writings of John Stuart Mill, who took issue with both his father James Mill and Bentham for their conception of humankind as merely self-serving and pleasure-seeking. For the younger Mill, the

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20 . Eccleshall, p.59.

credibility of democracy was measured not as an end in itself, but rather by whether it held the capacity to maximise individual self-realisation and human development. Mill of all liberal thinkers, however, embraced a number of the core conceptual and philosophical tensions which have marked political liberalism from the late 19th century to the present and which, it will be argued, have pervaded South African liberalism.

Mill gave political and philosophical impetus to the extension of the franchise and was a strong proponent of female suffrage.<sup>21</sup> The centrality of individual liberty for Mill, however, led him to be equally concerned with the potential for a 'tyranny of the majority' inherent in unbridled majoritarianism and thus became the strongest liberal defender of minority protection.<sup>22</sup> Yet this concern did not square with the anxiety he evinced in later life for the amelioration of the excesses and injustices produced by the Britain's industrial revolution, leading him to the brink of embracing social democracy. Despite these tensions, the guiding core to Mill's philosophy is the belief in the fundamental need for the protection and extension of individual rights and civil liberties. For Mill the best means for achieving and protecting these ideals was the institution of representative government, but also importantly, by the guaranteeing of freedom of speech and opinion.

The tensions within the older John Stuart Mill find greater expression in the seminal shifts in liberal thinking that emerged from the writings of Thomas Greene (1836-82). It was Greene who questioned the Hobbesian-based negative conception of liberty as freedom from interference that was embraced by Mill, and indeed, challenged the views of both Bentham and Mill on their atomised view of individuals in society. For Greene the concept of individual freedom was as central as it was to JS Mill, but was to be defined as something inherently positive: essentially the power or capacity to act. Greene also took issue with the minimalist conception of the "good state". Developing the ideas of Humboldt, Greene believed the state should be concerned to remove the obstacles impeding the full realisation of human development. The minimalist conception of the

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21 . J.S. Mill, Utilitarianism, On Liberty, and Considerations on Representative Government, Dent, 1980, pp. 276-292.

22 . Mill, pp. 67-68.

state was increasingly anachronistic to Greene, as the law penetrated deeper in social structures of the late 19th century. For him it was no longer adequate for the state to stand as an independent arbiter protecting the rights of the individual; these rights had to be fostered, nurtured and enhanced. The role of the state was to remove the obstacles to the achievement of individual empowerment. The great contribution to liberalism made by Greene was the coupling of the enhancement of individual rights with the provision of greater equality of opportunity. In Greene we witness a movement within the liberal tradition from a basic negative conception of liberty<sup>23</sup> to a positive conception and the birth of welfare liberalism.

The themes of welfare liberalism or new liberalism were taken up and developed by Hobson and Hobhouse at the turn of the century. Both adopted a critical stance towards the unfettered accumulation of private wealth and the consequent effect on the poor. At this time the inequities of the “free-market” became targets for liberal critique and the search for appropriate ameliorative state strategies taken up in earnest. The inevitable outcome of this thrust was the greater involvement of the state in social and economic activity thus heralding the end of the golden age of classical liberalism. In Britain, at that time the major figure of left liberalism was not a philosopher but rather the economist, John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946). The central philosophical underpinning of Keynesian political economy was his claim that:

The political problem of mankind is to combine three things: economic efficiency, social justice, and individual liberty.<sup>24</sup>

Keynesianism finally led Britain away from its liberist tradition. Thus there was, in the post-second world war period, a degree of convergence between liberal and social democratic thinking, which gave rise to policies advocating a mixed economy, and perhaps the greatest testimony to this convergence, the welfare state in Britain, whose principle architect was the liberal William Beveridge.

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23. Isaiah Berlin, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, in, Michael Sandel (Ed), Liberalism and Its Critics, Basil Blackwell, 1984, pp.15-37.

24. Merquior, p.115.

Despite this convergence at the policy and governmental level, the challenge to individual liberty of a burgeoning totalitarianism, in particular, provoked a liberist response in the form of Friedrich von Hayek's 1944 work *The Road to Serfdom*. For von Hayek, the "planned" nature of the welfare state held great dangers for individual liberty, and which he feared may have foreshadowed a new form of tyranny. Von Hayek developed his concerns in his 1960 book *The Constitution of Liberty*, the essence of which was a rejection of "constructivism" and argued against the incompatibility of governmental economic planning with efficiency and individual endeavour.<sup>25</sup> In the 1970's von Hayek fortified these views with the publication of his trilogy, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, in which he contended that the only two functions of legitimate government were in the provision of a legal and institutional framework for the market, and the provision of services the market is unable to provide. The most significant and influential contribution of the later Hayekian work however, was the thesis of the indivisibility of liberty, which holds that economic liberty is indivisible from that of civil liberties and, consequently, that the loss of one is a mortal threat to all. This thesis was given form and content by von Hayek's erstwhile Chicago contemporary Milton Friedman in his major work *Capitalism and Freedom*. The cardinal message to emerge from the Chicago School was that whilst economic freedom or liberism may not be a sufficient condition, it is a necessary condition for the achievement universal liberty.<sup>26</sup> The liberist revival also had a marked impact on the thinking of the public choice theorist James Buchanan and liberal scholars such as sociologist Peter Berger, the latter of whom posits a direct and necessary correlation between the operation of capitalism in a particular society and the presence of democracy.<sup>27</sup>

The 1970's saw a recrudescence of liberal contractarianism in the form of John Rawls's 1972 magnum opus *A Theory of Justice*, and Robert Nozick's contribution to the debate, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. Rawls's work was a rejection of liberal utilitarianism and sought to establish the ground rules freely consenting and rational individuals would be

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25 . Merquior, p.127.

26 . Merquior, p.128.

27 . Peter Berger, *The Capitalist Revolution - Fifty Propositions About Prosperity, Equality and Liberty*, Basic Books, 1986, p.81.

likely to choose from a hypothetical original position in the design of a just social order. Rawls's intervention will be discussed with reference to South Africa later in the study

Nozick's contribution was radically libertarian, however, and questioned the utility of the state in toto. Ultimately Nozick concludes that although the existence of the state is accepted, this should only be a minimal and defensive state and would not, for example, under his ideal-type have the right to tax as this would be a form of "forced labour" and therefore contradictory to the principles of political legitimacy which enshrine an absolute demand for voluntary consent in all social arrangements.<sup>28</sup>

The impact during the 1980's of the neoliberists and in particular Von Hayek and Friedman on political thinking and economic policy in the governments of western democracies cannot be overstated. The critique and prescripts of the liberists underpinned the economic policies adopted by both the Reagan and Thatcher administrations. It will be argued during the course of this study that the model example of, in particular, Thatcherism, had a marked impact on the thinking, discourse and prescriptions of leading liberal politicians in South Africa during the period under review.

Finally, the entire nature and tenor of the paradigmatic debate around liberalism has been altered by the collapse of communism in practice. That the wave of democratisation which has swept Eastern Europe and much of the 'Third World' has adopted a broadly liberal form, has animated leading liberal theorists to posit that liberal democracy has finally and conclusively triumphed over its ideological rivals and is set to continue to be the model for all progressive societies in the future.<sup>29</sup> The clearest and most developed exposition of this view is offered by Francis Fukuyama. Fukuyama's central thesis is that the historical process rests on the twin pillars of rational human desire and rational human recognition and that modern liberal democracy is that system which best satisfies those desires in a balanced way. Fukuyama's conclusions as to whether or not the recent wave

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28 . Merquior, p.140.

29 . See Peter Collins, Ideology After the Fall of Communism, Boyars/Bowerdean, 1992.

of liberal democratisation may be understood as the Hegelian “End of History”, remain “provisionally inconclusive”, but he notes:

It is possible that if events continue to unfold as they have done over the past few decades, that the idea of a universal and directional history leading up to liberal democracy may become more plausible to people, and that the relativist impasse of modern thought will in a sense resolve itself.<sup>30</sup>

Having sketched some of the major historical, conceptual and philosophical threads of the liberal tradition, we are now better placed to make sense of the South African liberal genre, and it is a brief examination of this tradition that is now undertaken.

### South African liberalism

The debate over the usage, utility and conceptual and social underpinnings of liberalism in South Africa has a considerable genealogy. For purposes of this analysis Suzman’s four conceptual typologies of liberalism are instructive. Accordingly, liberalism may be understood at any one of four levels:

1. An organised political party.
2. People who adhere to political ideals, but who do not band together for the purposes of 1.
3. A direct or first order political theory which tells us in detail what kind of state and laws to have.
4. A second order theory or a meta theory, which tells us how to evaluate theories in general from a liberal viewpoint.<sup>31</sup>

For purposes of this study political liberalism is understood as embracing typologies one, two, and three; but it will be held throughout the dissertation that all four are organically related.

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30 . Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man, Hamish Hamilton, 1992, p.338.

31 . Jonathan Suzman, ‘Liberalism and the Middle Ground’, in, Liberalism and the Middle Ground, SAIRR, 1986, p.31.

To attempt to reduce political liberalism to a parsimonious essence is to deny the complexity of the genre and does little to inform the peculiarities of a highly contested tradition. Thus this overview will sketch some of the major historical traditions of South African liberalism and then attempt to identify a number of its cardinal canon.

Like those of its classical forebears, the parameters of South African liberalism do not lend themselves to definition with theodolite precision. The South African variant embraces the manifold dimensions of both utilitarian and rights-based theory and discourse, but has overlaid within it the dynamics of a colonial and post-colonial legacy with which it continues to struggle and come to grips to the present. South African liberalism exhibits the complexities and nuances of traditional, classical and new liberalism, but does so within context of an ethnically and racially divided society.

### The Cape Liberal Tradition

The peculiar form and trajectory of liberalism in South Africa cannot be fully understood without cognisance being taken of the Cape liberal tradition and thus it is necessary to briefly sketch the identifiable contours of this tradition in order to ground our understanding of later developments leading to the central theme of the dissertation, namely contemporary political liberalism and the formation of the Democratic Party. Any discussion of the Cape liberal tradition is potentially problematical as its historiography remains highly contested, as a site of vigorous scholarly debate between materialist and liberal scholars. The debate *per se* falls beyond this discussion, but in essence, in terms the materialist analysis, Cape liberalism is understood as socio-political epiphenomenon, which in its design and effect, served to disrupt traditional social relations and relations of production, facilitating both the proletarianisation of indigenous people, whilst at the same time constructing an administrative and legal infrastructure functional to the development of early capitalist production.<sup>32</sup> Similarly

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32. See in particular, Stanley Trapido, 'The Friends of the Natives', in Marks and Atmore (Eds), Economy and Society, Longman, 1980, pp.247-274; Colin Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, London, 1979; and Martin Legassick, 'The Rise of Modern Liberalism in South Africa: Its assumptions and Social Base', African Studies Seminar, University of Sussex, 9 March 1973.

East India Company, but with the ascendancy of British rule and the subsequent abolition of slavery, the ground was set for legal reform in the Cape.

A further vital seed of the liberal tradition, that of the notion of freedom of expression, thought, and access to information was also sewn and nurtured during the difficult years of the nineteenth century in the Cape. The struggle for press freedom in the Cape paralleled similar battles fought by publishers in Britain and Europe to forge an independent course and to fulfil the role of the fourth estate. By 1881 some 125 assorted journals were filed with the Colonial Office in Cape Town. The proliferation and flourishing of a free press led Anthony Delius to comment of the period:

The bush positively bristled with guardians of the rights, liberties and morals of the citizens.<sup>40</sup>

A further feature of Cape liberalism was that in contradistinction to the typical trajectory of liberalism in Europe, the Churches in South Africa were not seen as ideological rivals, but rather informed much of the philanthropic thrust of Cape, and, indeed, later South African liberalism.

Despite these early features Cape liberalism operated in hostile and contested political and cultural terrain in 19th century South Africa and was never the dominant social or political ethos amongst 19th century European settlers. The potency of the liberal message was derived principally from the skill in articulation of its small kernel of adherents and their individual vigilance in its application. The closest approximation of a liberal party was a grouping of ten or eleven opposition members in the House of 1893 during the interregnum of the break up of the first Rhodes Ministry in 1893 and the Jameson Raid at the end of 1895.<sup>41</sup>

Publishers and other liberal philanthropists were regarded with hostility, not only by governing authorities, but, perhaps more importantly, by settlers hardened by the

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40 . W.A. Hachten and C.A. Giffard, Total Onslaught - The South African Press Under Attack, Macmillan, Braamfontein, 1984, p.24.

41 . Lewsen, p.42.

experience of the often acute conflict plaguing the frontier. Indeed the local liberal tradition was riven by contradictions.<sup>42</sup> The Cape's formal enlightened legal infrastructure was not matched by a commensurate degree of liberal tolerance, forbearance and improvement in the lives of the underclasses in the colony.<sup>43</sup> As Davenport notes:

Circumstances seem often to have been stronger than legal principle when it came to enforcing equal justice ... The Cape had emerged from the Company period as a society structured upon unequal status groups, and the inequalities lived on in the minds of the dominant and the dominated because they were reinforced in other directions, such as unequal access to land and education.<sup>44</sup>

The struggle for press freedom in the Cape during the 19th century also took place against the backdrop of a complex web of political and mercantile conflict which played itself out between the authoritarian, despotic practices of Governors-General and the libertarian entrepreneurial impulses of a handful of publishers. The most celebrated victory of press over state resulted from the conflict between the Governor of the Cape, Lord Charles Somerset, and Thomas Pringle, publisher of the *South African Journal*. In May 1822 Somerset issued a declaration prohibiting meetings "for the discussion of public measures and political subjects", without prior permission.

In language prophetic of the future struggle between the apartheid state and the liberal press, the proclamation added:

It is my firm determination to put down, by all the means with which the law has entrusted me, such attempts as have recently been made to disturb the public peace, whether by inflammatory or libellous writings, or by any other means.<sup>45</sup>

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42 . Phyllis Lewsen, 'Cape Liberalism in its Terminal Phase', in Working Papers in Southern African Studies Volume III, Ravan, 1983, p.35.

43 . Davenport, pp.22-23.

44 . Davenport, p.23.

45 . Hachten and Giffard, p.25.

Under instructions from the colonial office, Somerset was, however, subsequently forced to permit the continued publication of the *South African Journal*. Whilst the enlightened views of newspapermen such as Fairbairn and Pringle (the latter of whom became the secretary of the London Anti-Slavery Society) accorded with those of their counterparts in Britain, their sentiments and the incendiary effect on indigenous Africans of a visit by Fairbairn to the frontier provoked scathing verbal attacks by white settlers. Not only were the liberal and philanthropic views of the early English press perceived as inimical to frontier settler security interests, but were also met with intense opposition on cultural, religious, and political grounds by the Dutch colonial community some of whom were imbued with a Calvinistic orthodoxy deeply suspicious of and hostile to the “heathen humanism of antiquity”<sup>46</sup>.

The nadir of liberal legal practice, which in effect marked the decline of the early liberal period, came as result of the imposition of martial law during the Anglo-Boer war, 1899-1902. Detentions without trial and summary executions, together with the disenfranchisement of Afrikaner rebels in the Cape colony, were amongst the notable attacks on liberal legal principle. The epilogue of Cape liberalism is to be found in the formation of Union and the betrayal of its principles by Cape delegates to the 1909 National Convention.<sup>47</sup>

#### The institutionalisation of liberalism

In its origins the South African liberal establishment was concerned more with the exercise of moral influence rather than with the exercise of political power. From the 1920's the major efforts of liberals focussed on attempts to institutionalise co-operation and contact between racial and ethnic groups. The most significant institutional expression of this focus was the Joint Council Movement. The Joint Councils absorbed and superseded the all white Native Welafre Societies and were distinguished by their

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46 . Richard Elphick, 'Mission Christianity and Interwar Liberalism, in Butler, Elphick and Welsh (Eds), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa its History and Prospect, Cape Town, David Philip, 1987.

47 . Lewsen, p.43.

materialist scholars hold that the emergence of the Cape liberal tradition was, in fact, functional to heightened racial ordering of South African society. For the materialist, the central features of the Cape liberal tradition may be regarded as bourgeois legalism and reformism. The salient point for this study, however, is the historical existence of these liberal features, which, to a degree, marked the Cape off from other parts of South Africa and which also served to found a tradition.

Prior to the establishment of the Cape liberal tradition in its formal and legal constructs, the impact of missionaries in the 19th century Cape had already been felt. The London Missionary Society had begun its work in South Africa in 1799, and by 1803 had established its first permanent settlement on the Eastern Frontier. Originally much of the focus of mission protest was levelled at the government policy towards the Khoikhoi and the Xhosa.<sup>33</sup> Later this protest spread to a criticism of unpaid *corvée*, military labour and the enforcement of contractual obligations under duress. The strongest opposition was to slavery, however, and the master-servant system in general and was given fuller development through the endeavours of John Philip. The spirit of Cape liberalism was also clearly influenced by the demands of missionaries for religious freedom and philanthropy.

In its social and institutional construction, Cape liberalism was characterised by the presence in truncated form of four of the principal tenets of classical liberalism derived of their European antecedents namely: access to justice in the broadest sense of the term, to freedom of speech, economic freedom, and political rights.<sup>34</sup>

The political element to the Cape liberal tradition is principally identified by the inclusion of a formally non-racial qualified franchise in the 1853 Cape Colonial constitution. This was in marked contrast to the strong colour bars in Trekker Republics and later in

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33 . William M Freund, 'The Cape Under the Transitional Governments, 1795-1814', in Elphick and Giliomee, The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1820, Longman, 1979, p.225.

34 . Rodney Davenport, 'The Cape Liberal Tradition to 1910', in Butler, Elphick and Welsh (Eds), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa - its History and Prospect, David Philip, Cape Town, 1987, pp.21-22.

Natal.<sup>35</sup> But despite its relatively low qualifying threshold (£50 per annum income or occupancy of a site and structure to the value of £25),<sup>36</sup> the franchise operated to the exclusion of the majority of indigenous people. The elitist and paternalistic nature of the Cape franchise policy notwithstanding, it was the belief of former Cape premier John X. Merriman, that the Cape franchise would osmotically lead to the liberalisation of the Union Parliament.<sup>37</sup> The historical events of the South African war, which was opposed by most Cape liberals, and the subsequent constitutional trade-off in 1909 turned this thesis on its head. Economically, despite acutely discriminatory land reservation legislation and practice, “native” land holdings in the Cape were more adequate than other regions, wages were higher and there existed far less squatting on private land.<sup>38</sup> Educational opportunities were also far greater in the Cape, particularly through the medium of “mixed” mission schools.

The most earnest attempts to structure greater equality before the law were brought about by the abolition of the courts of *landdrost* and *heemraden* (rural courts in effect controlled by white landlords) via the Charters of Justice in 1827 and 1832. The emancipation of the Khoikhoi in terms of the provisions of Ordinance 50 of 1828 (promoted principally by Dr John Philip of the London Missionary Society) and the emancipation of slaves through imperial legislation between 1833 and 1840 are critical events in the structuring of the legal foundations of the Cape liberal tradition.

Whilst the deepest of the liberal traditions, namely the rule of law, found expression in the early Cape after the institution of British rule in 1795, the principle of equality before the law is a more difficult precept to establish, particularly in societies riven with historical divisions derived of slavery, as was the case in the Cape of the 17th and 18th century.<sup>39</sup> The principle of equality before the law was absent from the rule of the Dutch

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35 . Phylis Lewsen, The Cape Liberal Tradition - Myth or Reality?, ISMA paper No.26, University of the Witwatersrand, 26 November 1969, p.2. For a fuller account of the question of the origins of segregation see David Welsh, The Roots of Segregation: Native Policy in Colonial Natal (1845-1910), Oxford, 1971.

36 . Rodney Davenport, South Africa - A Modern History, Macmillan, 1987, p.101.

37 . Lewsen, p.6

38 . Lewsen, p.13.

39 . Davenport, p.21.

emphasis on *Joint* co-operation.<sup>48</sup> Fundamentally, the Joint Councils were an attempt to prove that co-operation under the benign guidance of like-minded liberals could be successful in both eroding barriers of racial prejudice and in providing an institutional forum for the expression of black leadership opinion with a view to the amelioration of social injustice. For Leo Marquard the formation of the Joint Councils was a manifestation of the liberal belief in human reason and rationality:

Whatever our constitutional economic or social structure may be ... all must be built on the principle that every person is a person, a child of God, not a means to an end but an end in itself. Every person is a human being first, a South African second and only thirdly - if at all - a European, an Indian, a Coloured man, or an African.<sup>49</sup>

The cardinal problem with the Joint Councils, however, was that they either steered clear of making political interventions for ideological reasons,<sup>50</sup> or were forced to avoid political intervention for reasons of funding difficulties.<sup>51</sup> This politically non-interventionist position adopted by the Joint Councils is also partially accounted for by the underlying assumption that the United Party government would continue to steer a slow but steady course towards limited and eventually full integration. The misguided nature of this belief was demonstrated by the 1936 decision of the United Party to abolish the rights of Africans qualifying for franchise, to vote on a common voters roll. As early as 1921 some 20,8% of Cape voters were black and qualified by virtue of the property and educational criteria.<sup>52</sup> Attempts by central government to neutralise the Cape

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48 . J.W. Horton, 'South Africa's Joint Councils: Black and White Co-operation between the two World Wars', in South African Historical Journal, No. 4 November 1972, p.30.

49 . Quoted in R. Erkens, 'The Liberal Tradition', in, South Africa - A Chance for Liberalism?, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, 1985, p.7.

50 . The ideological critique of the Joint Councils is developed by E. F. Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, University of Wisconsin Press 1964; and H.J and R.E. Simons, Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950, Penguin Books, 1969. The more recent critique is that offered by Paul B. Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience, Ravan, 1984.

51 . Funding constraints are dealt with in detail by Horton, pp. 29-34.

52 . Erkens, p.5.

franchise produced the liberal response that:

(T)he Cape franchise as it exists embodies a vital principle, namely that the interests of all sections of the community should be regarded as identical, and that the more these interests are related, the better for the state.<sup>53</sup>

As Elphick notes, up until the delivery of Hoernlé's lectures in 1939, liberals had failed to develop a clear, integrated and sustained critique of the South African social order, nor indeed had they engaged in political self-analysis. Their activities thus remained bogged down in the solving of specific, day-to-day issues thrown up by an unjust socio-political order. The assault on the provisions of the Cape African franchise had a direct bearing on altering in this position however. Protests against the legislation were held by the Joint Councils and the South African Institute of Race Relations, but to no avail. This failure to effectively resist the encroachment of government racial policy led liberals to think along more party political lines in order to give substance to questions of principle. Thus liberals in the mould of Donald Molteno, Margaret Ballinger and Rheinallt Jones attempted to further the liberal political cause by serving in the United Party as Native Representatives. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the later electoral defeat of United Party eventually forced a number of liberals to resign and to form the Liberal Party.

#### Principles of South African liberalism<sup>54</sup>

As has been noted the origins of the South African liberal tradition are directly traceable to the historical importation of the humanist and enlightenment influences of the 18th and 19th centuries, both of which strongly permeated and defined early South African liberalism. Increasingly, however, political liberalism developed a contextual identity which was principally defined by its opposition to the pervasive racial ordering of contemporary South Africa.

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53 . Quoted in Erkens, p.5.

54 . Many of the insights of this section have been influenced by the succinct chapter, 'Race, Power and Ideology in South Africa' in, J. Leatt, T Kneifel and K Nürnberger (Eds), Contending Ideologies in South Africa, David Philip, 1986.

In keeping with Gray's first defining principle of liberalism (and in sharp contrast with the strong corporatist ethic characterising both Afrikaner and Black Nationalism as well as the classist approach to social analysis advanced within South African Marxism), the philosophical thread of continuity weaving through the whole of the liberal tradition in South Africa, is its emphasis on the social and political value of the individual in all social arrangements and institutions. An adherence to the equal liberty principle has distilled into a belief that that each individual has the same dignity and ought to be granted the same basic human rights without regard to race, culture, sex, or creed. For liberals, individual freedom is also linked to the emancipation of disadvantaged groups in society. Thus a defining characteristic of South African liberalism has been a rejection of racially discriminatory policy and practice.

Stemming principally from the influence of JS Mill, South African liberalism is also characterised by a belief that personal liberty is possible only in an environment in which there is freedom of thought, conscience, expression, movement and association. Consequently, the existence of the antithesis of these conditions in contemporary South Africa has often brought liberals into a position of acute hostility with the South African state.

Thirdly, South African liberalism is strongly undergirded by a belief in the principle of the rule of law. The South African liberal conception of the rule of law adheres closely in its genesis to that expounded in A.V. Dicey's *Law of the Constitution*.<sup>55</sup> The Rule of Law is understood as necessary to protect both the individual and minorities, and can be safeguarded by a rigid constitution which includes a Bill of Rights and an independent judiciary. The belief that civil liberty is best guarded by the rule of law has issued *inter alia* in an insistence by South African liberals that no government official is above the law and that all individuals ought to be free from arbitrary arrest and undue interference in their personal lives.

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55 . See for example, Edgar H. Brookes and J.B. Macauley, Civil Liberty in South Africa, Greenwood, 1973, pp. 12-28.

In keeping with Gray's fourth defining conception of liberalism, the South African variant is also marked by a pragmatic and developmental position which allows the lessons of history to adjust its programmes and outlook.

South African liberalism also shares the archetypal liberal concerns about the inherent dangers to individual liberty of the centralisation of power. It cleaves hold to the classical constitutionalist beliefs that advocate the division of state power between the legislature, executive, and an independent judiciary. Furthermore, liberals aver that in politics, the power of reason, tolerance and compassion should prevail over irrational attitudes and practices. Within contemporary South African liberalism there has been a strong and continuing belief that arbitrary and authoritarian government can best be prevented by a multi-party democracy, in which every adult enjoys full political rights in either a unitary or in a federal state. But majority rule is no guarantee of liberty.

A further common, yet not universal, characteristic of the South African liberal ethos is a belief in the rational working of the market and the desirability of a market economy as a foundation for a rational and liberal political order. This belief found theoretical expression within the modernisation school articulated by amongst others, Michael O'Dowd and Norman Bromberger.<sup>56</sup> On this view the industrial economy (in contrast with the South African political order) is based on rational principles. Its dynamics are governed by the rational allocation of resources in terms of the market logic of supply and demand and the profit imperative. As such, the industrial economy automatically tends to set its own wage levels, skills and training needs. The freeing of the economy from artificial and excessive governmental interference would, according to liberal belief, have the effect of eroding and de-racializing the South African polity. Conversely the imposition of apartheid measures is viewed as inimical to the rational operation of the economy in that such policies create politically-imposed rigidities which lead to distortions of wages, resource-allocation, and the distribution of goods and services.

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56 . See Norman Bromberger, 'Economic Growth and Political Change in South Africa' and Michael O'Dowd, 'South Africa in the Light of Stages of Economic Growth', in Adrian Leftwich (Ed), South Africa: Economic Growth and Political Change, Allison and Busby, 1974.

Should the economy be freed of these politically imposed artificialities (as indeed it must almost inevitably be), the result would be greater wealth-creation, resulting in greater prosperity for all, including black people, thereby laying the foundation of both a just society and one in which the long-term interests of the economy and country were assured. On this understanding, political reform is driven by inexorable forces of economic development.

A further major defining characteristic of South African liberalism and one that was linked not only to its philosophical roots, but also to its material base, is its approach to political change. The means adopted by liberals for the furtherance of their principles has been one of incrementalist change and the eschewing of violence and which brought liberals increasingly into conflict with South African liberation movements during the period under review. An early illustration of this rejection of the strategy of political violence was given by Alan Paton after the 1964 bomb attack of the African Resistance Movement when he warned:

Above all any person who calls himself a liberal and who plans violence against persons is not really a liberal at all. He may burn against injustices to others and burn to see them right. He may be a Zealot - but he is not a liberal.<sup>57</sup>

Political liberalism in South Africa has also operated within a definable matrix of institutional support and discourse. It has, in the recent past, benefited from the ideological and discursive support of the Liberal International, but historically, it has relied on the broad social institutional support of the English language Press, the English language Universities, elements within the English Churches, prominent individual members of the English and Jewish business community, professionals within the legal fraternity, and (non-institutionally) authors, playwrights and lyricists. Historically this small liberal fraternity was characterised by a close harmony and community of interests. Its collective efforts to address issues such as the abrogation of human rights had the effect of nurturing an interlocking personnel and institutional association characterised by

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57 . Rainer Erkens, 'Limits and Prospects for a Liberal Policy in a Plural Society' in, South Africa - A Chance for Liberalism?, Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, 1985, p.9.

symbiotic support. From the 1950's the core of the 'liberal establishment' comprised the Liberal Party and later the Progressive Party, the South African Institute of Race Relations, the Black Sash, the Civil Rights League and NUSAS.<sup>58</sup> The closeness of these ties does not deny the differences of emphasis and function amongst the distinct institutional organs of South African liberalism, however. As Michelman notes:

(T)here are matters of conscience that the Black Sash can deal with better than a political party can. These are the moral and ethical issues which are defended not by a show of numerical strength, but by steadfastness of principle. If politics is the art of the possible, then the Progressive Party must work with political possibilities, whereas the Black Sash is not so constrained.<sup>59</sup>

Although describing a group of liberals during the inter-war period, the following narrative still provides a texture to the spirit and ethos historically informing South African liberal practice and discourse:

Against this background (liberals') endemic caution can be better understood. Few were natural politicians: they had few demagogic skills, and little taste for conflict. They were organisers, administrators, publicists, fund-raisers - closer in spirit to Rotarians than to revolutionaries. They formed committees, corresponded with like-minded people, wrote letters to newspapers, studied problems, held conferences, issued policy statements and made discreet representations to congenial persons in power. The detached benign tone of their discourse was not due to the handful of academics in their midst but to the traditions of the benevolent empire, whose very existence depended on the maintenance of precisely that tone.<sup>60</sup>

But the most emotive, yet penetrating perspective on the liberal tradition in South Africa was penned by Alan Paton:

By liberalism I don't mean the creed of any party or any century. I mean a generosity of spirit, a tolerance of others, an attempt to comprehend otherness, a commitment to the rule of law, a high ideal of the worth of

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58 . Cherry Michelman, The Black Sash of South Africa, Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1975.

59 . Michelman, p.159.

60 . Richard Elphick, 'Mission Christianity and Interwar Liberalism', in Butler et al, p.72.

the dignity of man, a repugnance for authoritarianism and a love of freedom<sup>61</sup> ... Liberalism is more than politics. It is humanity, tolerance and love of justice.

Finally, mention needs to be made of the three major critiques levelled against liberalism in South Africa, namely the sociological critique, the radical critique and that of Black Consciousness.

The sociological critique has not per se, been hostile to liberal tenets, and indeed many of those proffering it may be regarded as broadly liberal.<sup>62</sup> The sociological critique has sought to explain the failure of liberalism in South Africa to “convert” its position into one of hegemony at the level of ideas and political practice. At the most general level, sociologists have noted the lack of “fit” between the universalist and individualist appeal and claims of liberalism within the context of the South African formation, which is viewed as being organised centrally around bonds of communalism (nationalist, ethnic, racial or sectarian). At this level liberalism fails to or is conceptually ill-equipped to take account of the potency of historical, cultural, religious and kinship ties animating both rational and irrational political behaviour. In a social order in which group identity has been commensurate with life chances and material reward, the individualist and higher-order appeal of liberalism in South Africa is simply “uncompetitive” as a mobilising ethos. Also at this level, liberals’ optimistic belief in the improvability of the human condition, has been demonstrated in the South African case as palpably non-universalisable. This reasoning also lies at the root of the traditional critique levelled at liberals by the ruling National Party, in which liberalism stands accused of failing to take cognisance of the porported political dangers inherent in the demographic dominance of black over white.

The second feature of the sociological critique contends that, due to the polarising nature of the South African socio-political conflict, liberalism’s position in occupying or seeking

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61 . Alan Paton, ‘What Does Liberalism Mean for Me?’, in Papers presented at the Liberal Party Workshop, Grahamstown, July 1985, ISER, Rhodes University.

62 . The formulations offered here are derived principally from Pierre L. van den Berghe, 1979, and Heribert Adam, ‘The Failure of Political Liberalism’ in Adam and Giliomee, The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power, David Philip, 1983, 258-285.

to occupy the political and ideological middle ground, has become increasingly untenable. A further dimension of this critique holds that liberals have failed to grasp and engage with the conflictual power dynamic, seeking rather to focus their attention on moral intervention in principled opposition to injustice in South Africa.

Leading from the first two problematics, the final, broadly socio-political, critique is one that has perplexed liberals themselves more than any other, that is the failure of its adherents to provide an adequate and appropriate political framework for the achievement of a just, equitable and progressive social order in South Africa. The fundamental nature of the problem was recognised by South African liberalism's intellectual father RFA Hoernlé some fifty years ago when observing:

For this world is full of awkward human problems, of which the classical apostles and theorists of Liberalism had no personal experience and of which, therefore, they took no account. This I believe to be the root cause of the decline of Liberalism ... What none has done is to re-examine, in the light of the experience of a multi-racial society, like South Africa, what liberty means and how, *if at all*, (emphasis added) it can be realised in that sort of society.<sup>63</sup>

Hoernlé later concluded:

(A) multi-racial society offers the greatest obstacles to the liberal spirit, when in such a society one race is dominant over the others and determined to maintain that dominance at all costs. To protest in words against domination is ineffective: domination is too firmly entrenched to be shaken by merely verbal assaults. There is some relief for one's feelings in vigorous denunciation: but any liberal who thinks that by doing this, and nothing but this, he is striking a blow for liberty is fooling himself.<sup>64</sup>

The radical and Marxist critique of South African liberalism whilst historically shadowing that levelled at liberalism in general by the socialist international distilled into a developed and formal critique during the 1970's and has operated at both the political

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63 . R.F.A. Hoernlé, South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1945, p.106. ..

64 . Hoernlé. p.153.

and intellectual level. Essentially the Marxist, neo-Marxist, materialist, or revisionist critique embraces some of the classical radical challenges to liberalism and others peculiar to liberalism in its South African variant. Fundamentally, the Marxist critique challenges the liberal “individualist” conceptual point of departure and rather locates class and later the state as central to its social and political analysis. The Marxist critique holds that the class identity of liberals *de facto* locates them as constituent fractions of the ruling bloc; consequently liberal praxis in South Africa is objectively determined and, by definition, operates to further buttress the interests of the hegemonic elite. On this view, political liberalism attempts to ameliorate and mediate the dominant social relations and relations of production in order to protect the long-term interests of the capitalist class. Accordingly, liberalism in South Africa has operated as the ideological, and to some degree executive, wing (in its party political construct) of mining and financial monopoly capital. This relationship neither substitutes for, nor challenges, but rather complements the propinquity of relations enjoyed by mining and financial capital and the State in South Africa.<sup>65</sup>

Intellectually the revisionist school also challenged the ‘modernisation’ thesis and the underpinnings of significant strands of liberal theory and practice. At the theoretical level the revisionists claimed that the liberal modernisation school led its exponents to draw counterfactual conclusions about the incompatibility of racial policy and economic growth. More important, however, is the revisionist claim that the liberal modernisation thesis has induced liberal political complacency and inertia, as Wolpe has argued:

While the belief that ‘left to itself’ the economy will dissolve those features of white domination which impede capitalist economic development, implies at least, a limited opposition to apartheid, it also provides a recipe for non-intervention in the struggle against it.<sup>66</sup>

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65 . See in particular, David Yudelman, The Emergence of Modern South Africa, David Philip, 1984; and Stanley Greenberg, Race and State in Capitalist Development - South Africa in Comparative Perspective, Ravan, 1980.

66 . Harold Wolpe, Race, Class and the Apartheid State, UNESCO, 1988, p.27.

Leading from the revisionist critique and the liberal response thereto, a degree of conceptual and historiographical convergence is discernable with due recognition of both paradigmatic protagonists being granted.<sup>67</sup>

The final critique considered, is that levelled at liberals by the proponents of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in the late 1960' and early 1970's. The most penetrative critique of liberals was proffered by the Black Consciousness Movement's leader Steve Biko who accused liberals of possessing 'black souls in white skins'.<sup>68</sup> Substantively Biko's charge held that, despite their opposition to apartheid policies, white liberals, as *de facto* beneficiaries of apartheid, are objectively and subjectively unable to understand or empathise with black oppression. This led Biko to conclude that liberal identification with the oppressed must remain both superficial and artificial. On this view, the programmatic dangers for blacks historically in their dealings with liberals have been that, whereas liberals have sought to locate themselves at the social and political interface of cleavages between black and white in South Africa, they have done so from a position of "paternal guidance", which has had the consequence of entrenching the "inferior" status of black culture and self-identity. White liberals stood accused by the Black Consciousness Movement of engaging with blacks only on their own (inequitable) terms. Thus the cause of black liberation was one that only blacks could prosecute; white liberal participation or assistance in this programme, in fact, served to thwart its goals. For the BCM the appropriate role of white liberals lay not in speaking for the disenfranchised, but rather in the political education and socialisation of other whites. The resultant sense of displacement amongst liberals is captured by Stanley Uys:

The essence of liberalism in South Africa has been to stress an evolutionary approach to the race problem, a programme of gradualism. The ideal it has pursued has been of Whites working together with Blacks,

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67 . See for example, David Welsh, 'South Africa: Power, Process, and Prospect', Inaugural Lecture to the University of Cape Town, 1982; Welsh, 'Democratic Liberalism and Theories of Stratification' in Butler, Elphick and Welsh (Eds), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa - Its History and Prospect, David Philip, 1987, pp.185-202.; Kenneth Hughes and Norman Bromberger, 'Capitalism and Underdevelopment in South Africa' in Butler et al, pp.203-223.; and Merle Lipton, Capitalism and Apartheid - South Africa, 1910-1986, Wildwood House, 1985.

68 . Steve Biko, I Write What I Like, The Bowerdean Press, 1978, pp.19-26.

Coloureds and Indians to create an equal, multiracial society ... Just as liberalism relied essentially on co-operation, so Black Consciousness rejects really the whole foundation on which liberalism is constructed; that any white South African can identify himself sufficiently with Blacks in order to share not only their aims, but also their methods ... Black Consciousness believes that ... liberal intervention in the black struggle is only a hindrance, not a help.<sup>69</sup>

The rest of this dissertation will document the forces and events leading to the deepest crisis in contemporary South African political liberalism and the party political response of liberals to this crisis.

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69 . Quoted in Michelman, p.172.

## CHAPTER TWO

This chapter sketches the origins of party political liberalism in South Africa from the formation of the Liberal Party through to the performance of the Progressive Federal Party in the 1981 general election. As such it is an overview painted in broad brush strokes and is not intended as a comprehensive account, but rather attempts to serve as a backdrop for our understanding of the foundations of the Democratic Party.

Although the origins of the Democratic Party lie in the formation of the Progressive Party in 1959, the Progressives were themselves preceded by two explicitly non-racial parties. The South African Communist Party, formed in 1921 and organised on a strictly non-racial and class-based programme, was banned in 1950<sup>1</sup> and continued to operate underground until its unbanning forty years later. More importantly for purposes of this study, however, was the formation of the first non-socialist, non-racial political party in South Africa, namely the Liberal Party, founded in 1953.

During the 1940's, despite arguments in favour of the establishment of a Liberal Party, the weight of concerned opinion held that the liberal cause could best be served by working from within the United Party.<sup>2</sup> Hopes for the liberalisation of United Party policy were largely pinned on Deputy Prime Minister and Smuts's heir apparent, Jan Hofmeyr. Prior to the formation of the Liberal Party three separate attempts between 1938 and 1948 had been made to launch a Liberal Party, and had failed due to Hofmeyr's reluctance to lead such a party. One of the central reasons for this reluctance was that, despite the success of the United Party in winning the 1943 general election, the official opposition *Herenigde Nasionale Party* had increased its Parliamentary representation and the prospect of a close-fought contest in the following general election loomed. Given this reality and the poor prospects of a Liberal Party in fighting an election, the

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1. Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini (Eds), The struggle for South Africa, Zed, London, 1988. pp.292-293.
  2. David Scher, Donald Molteno - "Dilizintaba - He-Who-Removes-Mountains", The South African Institute of Race Relations and the Donald Molteno Memorial Committee, Johannesburg, 1979, p. 72.

immediate concern for many liberals was the prevention of a Nationalist victory at the next election. This strategic and pragmatic imperative failed to halt the tide of Afrikaner nationalist sentiment, however, and the resultant National Party triumph in the 1948 election and Hofmeyr's premature death in the same year accorded an "irreparable blow to the dwindling forces of liberalism".<sup>3</sup> Hofmeyr's death also resulted in the plans to establish a Liberal Party being temporarily shelved.<sup>4</sup> However, the National Party electoral victory and the challenge its policies presented, demanded a political response from liberals. Thus in 1952 Oscar Wollheim and six others formed a Liberal Group in Cape Town. The formation of the group was a result both of the deep concerns felt by liberals at the political direction the country was taking after the 1948 election, but equally alarming for them, was the resulting backlash of black militancy the Nationalist victory had produced, as characterised by the 1952 Defiance Campaign.<sup>5</sup> The Liberal Group committed itself to the elimination of the colour bar, the extension of political rights to blacks, and a "civilised standard" as the qualification for the vote.<sup>6</sup> The founding of the Liberal Group prompted the establishment of others in the main urban areas across the country, and in January 1953 these crystallised into formation Liberal Association in Cape Town. The Liberal Association adopted a set of aims drawn up by Donald Molteno that stated, *inter alia*:

The Liberal Association stands for equal rights to the Parliamentary Franchise ... for all who are able to conform to civilised standards irrespective of race or colour. ... It is recognised that the Europeans, as a community have been conditioned to, and have adopted, a civilised way of life. Suitable standards of education should be laid down, conformity to which shall entitle Africans and other Non-Europeans to the franchise and other citizen rights.<sup>7</sup>

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3. Eric Walker, 'A History of Southern Africa', London, 1957, as quoted in Scher, p.73.
  4. Peter Brown, 'The Liberal Party of South Africa: A Chronology with Comment', Paper presented at the Liberal Party Workshop, Grahamstown, July 1985. p.1
  5. Janet Robertson, Liberalism in South Africa, 1948 - 1963, Oxford, 1971.
  6. Brown, p.2
  7. As quoted in Scher, pp.134-135.

The Association also committed itself to the employment of democratic and constitutional means for the achievement of its objectives, and specifically rejected all forms of totalitarianism, including fascism and communism.<sup>8</sup>

Frustrated by the failure of the United Party to make any progress in the April 1953 general election, the approximately 1 000 members of the Liberal Association resolved to form the Liberal Party of South Africa, which was founded in May 1953 and held its first Congress in July of that year.<sup>9</sup> The Liberal Party adopted intact the principles of the Liberal Association. The philosophical, moral and political essence of the Liberal Party was enshrined in its policy of seeking to protect and extend full civil rights to all South Africans, regardless of race.

The Party was established on four cardinal principles. First and foremost, it was a party of conscience that sought to expose the increasing institutionalised injustices of the South African racial order. As its former leader Alan Paton noted:

We didn't found the Liberal Party because we thought it would come to power. We founded it because we thought it was our duty. We were living in times where there was little evidence in high places of generosity of spirit or of tolerance of others. The rule of law was being eroded, and the worth and dignity of man was regarded as something of no account.<sup>10</sup>

The Party's second founding principle was one of non-racialism. This was more than a rarefied principle and was carried through to the Party's internal conduct and membership, which embraced all the heterodox elements of race, class, religion and

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8 . Brown, p.4.

9 . Much of this discussion is taken from Douglas Irvine, 'The Liberal Party, 1953-1968', in Butler, Elphick and Welsh (Eds), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa - Its History and Prospect, Cape Town, David Philip, 1987. General information about the party and its problems was provided via interviews with Peter Brown in August 1990, David Welsh, and Jill Wentzel in July 1993. As Irvine himself notes, this is an under-researched period in Liberal history and a volume by Irvine is forthcoming. A Masters dissertation, 'The National Committee for Liberation (ARM) 1960-1964: Sabotage and the Question of the Ideological Subject', by Andries du Toit at the University of Cape Town, was completed in June 1991.

10 . Alan Paton, 'What Does Liberalism Mean for Me?', Paper presented at the Liberal Party Workshop, Grahamstown July 1985, p.7.

culture in South Africa. Mathews observes that the Party represented a “microcosm of the cross-cutting affiliations which are said to be one of the main sources of stability in divided societies”.<sup>11</sup> Notably friendships forged within the Liberal Party have endured to the present. Thirdly, the Liberal Party articulated, and focused public attention on, the core classical liberal values then under threat from the twin forces of Afrikaner nationalism and radical African nationalism. Principally, this was achieved by a fidelity to, and publicisation of, the necessity of a strict adherence to the rule of law and Parliamentary democracy as the primary institutional guarantees of the liberty of the individual. Finally, the Party sought to offer the broad South African public a viable non-racial political alternative policy. But as Mathews notes, it was in this sphere of policy formulation and dissemination that the greatest gap between achievement and aspiration lay.<sup>12</sup> The underlying conceptual lacuna in Liberal Party thinking, according to Mathews, was its “basic aversion to pluralism and a deeply ingrained suspicion of the group as a political category”.<sup>13</sup> Thus the Party never transcended its preoccupation with classical liberal principle. As such, it tended to ignore the conceptualisation and reality of the modern state which holds that individual freedom is mediated through groups and institutional associations.<sup>14</sup> The unpalatable reality facing liberals operating within the stratified South African racial order, was that simple exhortations for the limitation of state power and the preservation of basic civil liberties did not meet the demanding requirements of constitutional architecture suitable for a plural society.

However, it was the question of whether to adopt a qualified or universal franchise policy that caused the most heated internal debate from the Party’s first Congress in July 1953 through to that held in 1960. At its first Congress in July 1953, the Party had accepted a qualified franchise policy with the full approval of the Cape, the general approval of Natal and opposition from the Transvaal representatives. The principal qualification set was that of a standard six education. A greater influx of African membership into the Party and the dissatisfaction of the more radical Transvaal region, saw the franchise issue

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11 . Anthony Mathews, ‘The Liberal Party - What It Was and What It Tried to Do’, Paper presented at the Liberal Party Workshop, Grahamstown July 1985, p.3.

12 . Mathews, p.5.

13 . Mathews, p.6.

14 . Mathews, p.6.

raised at the Party's 1954 Congress. As a result of intensive debate, Congress adopted a resolution committing the Party to the incremental introduction of universal adult suffrage. The divisiveness of the issue spilled over into a meeting of the full National Committee later that year, however, where an interpretation of the policy approved by Congress was adopted by 17 votes to 15, which linked adult suffrage to compulsory education.<sup>15</sup> Continuing concern regarding the franchise question was again demonstrated at the Party's 1957 National Congress, where the Cape leadership had prepared a motion for the return to a qualified franchise and to relegate extra-Parliamentary activities to the status of being "purely ancillary and secondary". In contrast, the Transvaal region proposed to remove the educational explanatory note and to extend the franchise to all adults on a common roll. Eventually neither of these motions were put before Congress, and the major point of contention was that of Liberal Party Constitutional Committee Chairman, Donald Molteno's proposal for the provision of protection for group rights, which was defeated.<sup>16</sup>

The franchise issue was deferred at the 1959 Congress and a decision taken to debate the matter from branch level upwards, for a final and binding decision to be taken at the 1960 Party Congress.<sup>17</sup> The question was finally resolved under the guiding hand of National Chairman Alan Paton when the Party confirmed its policy of universal adult suffrage at its May 1960 Congress, held in the shadow of the post-Sharpeville State of Emergency. The policy of universal adult suffrage as adopted by the Liberal Party, in contrast to the qualified franchise of the Progressive Party, established in 1959, was one of the key issues distinguishing the two.

Ideologically, strategically and tactically, the Liberal Party steered an overtly centrist path in the South African political spectrum, rejecting, on the one hand, all forms of totalitarianism and communism and, on the other hand, demonstrating a classical liberal aversion to nationalism. Vital and acute debate concerning the contextual

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15. Brown, p.13.

16. Unhappy with the direction the Liberal Party was taking on the franchise question, and at its rejection of his proposals for a federal solution to the country's constitutional crisis, Molteno resigned from the Party in October 1957.

17. Brown, p.28.

appropriateness of classical liberal versus social democratic prescriptions for South Africa also characterised many party meetings and discussions. These divisions were sharpened by the fact that, counted amongst its membership and public representatives, were former communists, socialists, as well as a full spectrum of liberals.<sup>18</sup> By 1963 the Liberal Party Congress seriously considered a change of name to that of the Social Democratic Party, with others favouring the epithet Socialist Party. The quandary was temporarily resolved by the appointment of a Party Commission to re-appraise the Party's policies and identity. This shift in focus and discourse from classical liberal concerns with individual liberty and civil rights to those of social and distributive justice is worth noting as it further marked off the Liberal Party from the Progressive Party. The resolution on the appointment of the Commission reads in part as follows:

- a) considering that the problems of the economic and social inequality between White and Non-White in South Africa which will face those who set out to rebuild South Africa will be at least equal in complexity to the problem of racial inequality;
- b) aware of the danger that these problems of racial, social and economic inequality might well create a situation in which authoritarian government becomes a permanent feature of South African life;
- c) believing that it is the task of the Liberal Party to secure economic, social and political equality and justice for all people in a democratic South Africa; appoints a Commission to reconsider in this context the policies of the Party with a view to their restatement in a form which will indicate clearly the Party's social democratic character and that the Party sees its role in the new South Africa as taking the lead in the building of a non-racial democracy, opposed to authoritarianism, in which one of the prime concerns of the state will be the economic and social welfare of its citizens.<sup>19</sup>

Despite its ideological divisions, the Liberal Party was uncompromising in its belief in the need for the construction of a common society for South Africa. Leading Liberal

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18 . Personal interview with Jill Wentzel, 23 July 1993.

19 . As quoted by Peter Brown, in 'The Liberal Party of South Africa : A Chronology with Comment', in Papers presented at the Liberal Party Workshop, Grahamstown, July 1985, pp.53-54.

Party member Edgar Brookes stated his rejection of sectionalism and apartheid as follows:

Those of us who have intimate African, Coloured and Indian friends know well that there are no group differences which divide us as much as friendship and our common humanity unite us.<sup>20</sup>

Despite its fidelity to principle the Party operated within a political vacuum. Its adherence to the policy of universal franchise lost it any potential support it might have had amongst the white middle-class, whilst its adherence to a belief in capitalism as the only rational form of economic organisation said little to the toiling masses who were increasingly animated by a critique of racial capitalism and drawn to the seductive allures of socialism. Thus despite its commitment to assist in the formation of trades union, the Party enjoyed little reciprocal support from unions themselves. Conversely, its support for union rights resulted in the Party being unable to obtain the support of business in South Africa leaving its finances in a constantly parlous state.<sup>21</sup> Despite its universalistic perspective, there also existed very real differences between liberals and the ANC, particularly on the questions of nationalisation and the form the economy should take.

The political path chosen by the Party was conceptualised by former Liberal Party leader Alan Paton as a 'third force', acting as a countervailing buffer between two competing nationalisms. However, in attempting to forge this middle road in a highly divided and structurally conflictual society, the Party was chronically rent by a host of dilemmas. Although it was an explicitly non-racial party (and indeed a majority of its members were black) and made a conscious decision to apply most of its labours to extra-Parliamentary work, the Liberal Party was forced to compete without success, in white national, provincial, and local elections in an acutely hostile political environment. The beliefs, principles and policies espoused by the Party were increasingly irreconcilable with hardening white political attitudes predominating in the 1950's. For example, the Liberal

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20 . Rainer Erkens, 'Limits and Prospects for a Liberal Policy in a Plural Society', in South Africa - A Chance for Liberalism?, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, 1985, p.18.

21 . Brown, p.54.

Party was instrumental in motivating international pressure on South Africa in the form of sports and cultural boycotts, a tactic obviously anathema to the bulk of white South Africans.

The passage of the euphemistically-termed Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 dealt the Party a severe blow by finally removing its Parliamentary representation via the abolition of the seats held by Liberal Party MPs as Native Representatives. The Liberals suffered a further stinging blow in the 1961 general election when the Party failed to return a single candidate.

In terms of its engagement in extra-Parliamentary politics, the Party was confronted with a dilemma. To the left, the Party competed with a burgeoning ANC and the white Marxist Congress of Democrats. These antagonisms were further accentuated by the events which led to the Party's non-participation at the Congress of the People at Kliptown in 1955 called to draft the Freedom Charter. This was a significant setback for the Party as it lost the opportunity of gaining political coinage at the Congress of the People due to political, ideological and, most importantly, strategic disputes with Marxists in both these organisations.<sup>22</sup> The other dilemma facing the Liberal Party was whether or not to position itself closer to, or at least offer support to, the non-Marxist Pan Africanist Congress. But in the event, the debate became academic due to the banning of both the ANC and PAC in the wake of the Sharpeville crisis in 1960.

Jordan Ngubane reflected on the problematic of the Liberal Party thus:

The race factor affects political groups in the Republic in a most peculiar way. It compels every one of them to fight equally energetically on a number of fronts at the same time. This warfare on several fronts exhausted the Liberal Party. Its reluctance to join one of the existing racially defined blocs rendered its position untenable. In an atmosphere charged with complete polarization, any attempts to overcome the gap between the various groups was deemed hopeless.<sup>23</sup>

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22. A fuller account of this dispute is given by Peter Brown in 'The Liberal Party of South Africa : A Chronology with Comment', in Papers presented at the Liberal Party Workshop, Grahamstown, July 1985, pp.13-18.

23. Quoted in Erkens, p.22.

But most crucially, the Party suffered under the brutal repression of National Party apartheid and security legislation, with many of its members and leadership arrested, harassed and banned for lengthy periods.<sup>24</sup> Before its decision to disband in 1968, almost 50 Liberal Party members were serving banning orders. This in effect neutralised the Party as a political force. It was neither able to strategize nor organize, its leadership cadre had been decimated. The Liberal Party's failure to win white electoral support left it vulnerable to government sanction, a condition which the Progressive Party, by virtue of both its more moderate profile and the representation of Helen Suzman in Parliament, was able to withstand. This assault increased dramatically in 1964 after the formation by a number of white Liberal Party members of the African Resistance Movement. The ARM's bombing of the Johannesburg Station led to the conviction and execution of Liberal Party member John Harris, and by October 1964 Liberal Party members were involved in four trials around the country.<sup>25</sup> Party Chairman Peter Brown's 1964 banning order effectively removed him from society for ten years.

The final nail in the Liberal Party coffin was the introduction of the Prohibition of Improper Interference Bill in 1966 and after a period of legislative review, its passage into law as the Prohibition of Improper Political Interference Act in 1968. The Party was faced with its final dilemma of whether or not to sacrifice its non-racial principle for the sake of political ends. Such was the history and composition of the Party that the choice was clear, the very essence of the Party was non-racialism, and to have continued life as a white Party was viewed as the most flagrant violation of that cherished South African liberal principle. Thus on 4 May 1968 the Party held its last meeting at a village of poor houses in northern Natal, bringing the curtain down on a the first era of liberal party politics in South Africa.

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24 . The panoply of state repression aimed at the suppression of liberal opposition is well documented by Janet Robertson, Liberalism in South Africa, 1948-1963, Oxford, Clarendon, 1971.

25 . Peter Brown, pp.57-58.

Despite the crushing defeat of the Party in white elections and the often hostile relations it experienced with black nationalist movements, the Liberal Party succeeded in setting a number of precedents in South African politics. The seed of non-racial political liberalism had been sewn, and although seemingly ploughed under by the heavy hand of State repression, the principles enshrined in Liberal Party policy continued to find succour in liberal institutions such as the English-Language Press, and English-speaking universities.<sup>26</sup> The Liberal Party diaspora also continued to propagate its ideas and beliefs via a number of forums such as the Black Sash, The South African Institute of Race Relations and the Civil Rights League. In non-institutional form, liberals also expounded their views through the pages of South African literature.

In formal party political terms, however, the lamp of liberty was handed over to the single Parliamentary standard bearer of liberal principles, Progressive Party MP Mrs Helen Suzman, and thus it is to a brief overview of the formation and history of the Progressive Party that we now turn.

### The Progressive Party

By the mid-1950's a group of enlightened United Party MPs and Provincial Councillors had become increasingly restive with the Party's muted stance on questions of racial discrimination. This group of "realists" had been persuaded De Villiers Graaff to remain in the Party, and were encouraged to reform the Party from within. The group had stood for the United Party in the 1958 election on the grounds that the Party needed a liberal wing in order to "maintain its umbrella image", but given the highly polarised political dynamic in the late 1950's, this was an increasingly untenable position. Founding member Ray Swart argues that the Progressives were never an organised group within the United Party, but rather:

(W)e were a group of individuals who happened to share a belief in the same principles on the race issue. As time went by we were further bound together by our abhorrence of the ambivalence of so many of our colleagues who seemed to be more influenced in their attitudes by

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26 . Leo Marquard, The Peoples and Policies of South Africa, London, Oxford, 1969, p.169.

considerations of white political expediency than by questions of principle.<sup>27</sup>

Divisions within the United Party came to a head at its 1959 Bloemfontein Congress, and the final straw for the liberal/progressive faction within the Party was its decision to oppose the acquisition of further land for black relocation in terms of an undertaking given by the United Party in 1936 and enshrined in the Land Act of 1936. This left the progressive faction with little option but to toe the increasingly defensive and conservative party line, or to leave. The young progressives chose principle above expediency and resigned from the United Party in August 1959.

From this, the Progressive Party was formed in 1959 by a breakaway group of eleven United Party (UP) MPs and five Provincial Councillors. The eleven MPs were soon joined by the charismatic Harry Lawrence and the Progressives received a major boost through the support of former United Party MP and mining magnate Harry Oppenheimer.<sup>28</sup> The loss of the latter two was a bitter blow to the United Party as Oppenheimer took with him considerable financial clout and Lawrence was universally regarded as Parliament's finest debater.<sup>29</sup> The Progressive Party of South Africa was formally launched in Hillbrow on November 13 and 14 1959.<sup>30</sup>

### Founding principles

The Progressive Party was founded on a number of fundamental liberal principles which have anchored the Party and its successors to the present.

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27 . Ray Swart, Progressive Odyssey - Towards a Democratic South Africa, Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 1991.

28 . The best accounts of this period are to be found in Joanna Strangeways-Booth, A Cricket in the Thorn Tree, Hutchinson, 1976; and Brian Hackland, The Progressive Party of South Africa, 1959 - 1981, D.Phil. dissertation, Oxford University, 1984.

29 . Jeremy Lawrence, Harry Lawrence, Cape Town, David Philip, 1978. See also the accounts of Lawrence's oratory skills in Catherine Taylor, If Courage Goes, Johannesburg, Macmillan, 1976.

30 . Full accounts of the split are given by Joanna Strangeways Booth, A cricket in the thorn tree; Jeremy Lawrence, Harry Lawrence; Catherine Taylor, If courage goes; Brian Hackland, The Progressive Party 1959 - 1981.

The Party's earliest records acknowledge the unity of South Africa, thereby rejecting the balkanising political architecture of Verwoerdian Bantustans.<sup>31</sup> The Party recognised the ethnic diversity of South Africa, however, and the legitimate need for the protection of cultural rights and traditions, and encouraged groups to "familiarise themselves with each other's principles". The Progressive Party's classical liberal credentials were derived from its rights-based ethos, its assertion of a belief in the maintenance of the rule of law, and finally its subscription to the principles of a free-market-based economy. The latter adherence was aimed at maximal utilisation of the country's resources, with the expectation that this would lead to a continuous growth in the standard of living of all its citizens. The Party also pointedly avowed its commitment to South Africa's continued membership of the Commonwealth and the maintenance of healthy international relations.<sup>32</sup>

It is illustrative to note some of the major policy proposals forwarded by the Party at its formation Congress in 1959, particularly in the context of the grand apartheid edifice being constructed at the time. The earliest principles of the Progressives reflect a concern with the central question of racial divisions in South Africa. The constant dilemma of liberals in South Africa is reflected in the Party's difficulty in attempting to square classical liberal democratic principles in a highly divided and inegalitarian society. Thus its fundamental policy guidelines were predicated on the belief and acceptance that South Africa was a plural society and that the constitution of the country had to reflect that fact insofar as it believed that a purely majoritarian form of democracy was inappropriate for South Africa.

This tension is brought out by the Progressives' second guiding principle which was the desirability of and building of a South African nation based on 'Western Civilized' values. Progressive Party policy included a call for the safeguarding of each community from domination by another. The Party favoured a qualified franchise on a common

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31 . Unless otherwise specified all Progressive Party detail in this discussion is taken from, 'The Progressive Party of South Africa - Main Principles and Policies', adopted at Inaugural Congress, November 13th and 14th 1959, Johannesburg.

32 . Constitution of the Progressive Party of South Africa, Document Aa1, Progressive Party Archives, Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

voters' roll and a separate roll for those who did not qualify. This led the Party to develop the notion of a class-based, or means-based, franchise which in operation was itself racist, as the vast majority of non-qualifiers were black. In keeping with classical liberal democratic precepts, maximum decentralisation of governmental power was urged. The call was made by the Progressives for the inclusion of an entrenched Bill of Rights in the Constitution, guaranteeing the basic rights of freedom of speech, association, religion and language. The principle of an independent and impartial judiciary was to be pursued and the maintenance of the rule of law asserted.

In terms of economic and labour policy, the Party clearly positioned itself in opposition to the government and called for the development of an economy based on classic free-market principles including *inter alia* the following recommendations: The removal of restrictions preventing the mobility of labour. The scrapping of job reservation. The re-establishment of free trade union activity. The development of a stable urban work force "which can develop into a responsible urban non-white middle-class". The provision of adequate and appropriate training of labour in order to permit it to function at a higher rate of skill. Rate for the job wages. The question of a minimum wage was also to be investigated. The Party also called for a range of social security benefits to be implemented to protect workers at the lower income level in particular. The Party, furthermore, recognised the permanence of urban Africans and discouraged the migratory labour system whilst calling for the scrapping of the pass laws and influx control measures.

The Progressive Party also called for the repeal of the ubiquitous Population Registration Act and vowed to repeal the Group Areas Act and to allow freehold title to all. It committed itself to halt forced removals, and to scrap all apartheid legislation forcing the separation of people at public places as well as universities and churches.

Despite all these enlightened and liberal programmes, the Party reasoned that it would have to provide separate education facilities for the different population groups.<sup>33</sup>

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33 . The Progressive Party of South Africa, Main Principles and Policies Adopted at Inaugural Congress, Document Aa2 PP Archives.

### Electoral performance

Just as the Liberal Party had been humiliated at the hustings, the enlightened policies of the Progressive Party, whilst demonstrating a clearly defined opposition to government policy and offering liberals a voice in Parliament, were rejected by the white electorate *en masse*.

Some four months after the birth of the Progressive Party the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960 plunged the country into its deepest crisis, leading the government to impose a nationwide state of emergency. In April 1960 Prime Minister Verwoerd announced the banning of the ANC and the PAC, thus setting in motion a new chapter in the struggle for black emancipation in South Africa. The banning of the black nationalist organisations led in turn, to the later formation of Poqo and Umkhonto we Sizwe as underground arms of the PAC and ANC respectively.<sup>34</sup>

The reaction of the Progressive Party to these events was to intensify its criticism of government and to lay the blame for the crisis squarely at the door of the National Party's apartheid policies. The Party also first applied the principle of Parliamentary privilege to question the government on developments in the country as restrictions in reportage had severely curbed the freedom to report in the media. Records show that the small Progressive Party asked more questions of the government regarding the crisis than did the much larger United Party official opposition.<sup>35</sup> The stance adopted by the Progressives gave rise to the charge from government circles, and Minister of Justice BJ Vorster in particular, that the Party showed scant regard for the rule of law and were 'soft on security' matters.<sup>36</sup>

Verwoerd seized the opportunity to call a referendum on the Republican question and, despite the small majority of 74 850 in favour of the establishment of a Republic, accepted the result as a mandate to establish the Republic and to leave the

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34 . Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, Ravan, 1987, pp.201-260.

35 . Swart, p.88.

36 . Swart, *ibid*.

Commonwealth. In the light of the establishment of the Republic, Verwoerd called a general election for later in 1961 on the premise that a new Parliament was needed to give effect to the new Republican constitution. This was an election for a Parliament scoured of any African representation.

#### The 1961 - 1966 cataclysm

The speed and intensity of these historic events overtook the Progressive Party. Despite the best efforts of the Molteno Commission to formulate Progressive Party policy, the calling of the general election left the Party with little time to convey its policies to the electorate. The result of a strong campaign by the National Party and a joint attack on the Progressives by the United Party, including a warning “not to split the opposition vote”, was a political drubbing for the Progressive Party. The Party lost all but one of its seats in Parliament, that of the redoubtable MP for Houghton, Helen Suzman. In retrospect it became clear that had the Party nominated and the electorate returned a lesser figure than Mrs Suzman, the 1961 election may well have been its first and last.

In the 1961 election the Progressives contested 26 seats and won 70 000 votes.

Nevertheless, it had shown some electoral potential and had lost eight seats by less than a thousand votes. The Party was also disadvantaged by the single-member, plurality electoral system, which, in South Africa, has a rural constituency bias. Under an electoral system based on proportional representation, the Party would have won fourteen seats in the House of Assembly *ceteris paribus*.

In reviewing the election results Prime Minister Verwoerd remarked of the Progressive Party that, “a new star had appeared on the horizon”, but that it would be shown to be “a meteor which would soon burn itself out”.<sup>37</sup>

Five years later in the general election of 1966, in the aftermath of the assassination of Verwoerd and the Rhodesian UDI crisis, the Progressive Party again took a thorough beating at the polls with Helen Suzman the only liberal MP returned to Parliament albeit

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37 . Swart, p.98.

with an increased majority. Hackland notes that this series of electoral set-backs for the Progressives led its major patron Harry Oppenheimer to put the Party to terms such that if it failed to improve its organisation and electoral strategy he would be forced to reconsider his support.

Despite the wholesale rejection of Progressive Party policy by the white electorate, the performance of Helen Suzman in her principled stance in the House of Assembly caught the attention of many coloured voters, who, since the passage of the Separate Representation of Voters Act of 1956 were forced off the common voters' roll and onto a separate roll whereby they could elect four white MPs to represent them in Parliament and two councillors to the chamber of the Cape Provincial Council. The Progressive Party had hitherto rejected participation in "coloured politics" due to its apartheid connotation and its rejection by coloured members of the Progressive Party, but in time others reasoned that there might have been merit in electing liberal white candidates in the mould of Suzman. The Party made a decision that if genuine support for the principles of the Party could be obtained within the coloured community it would field a number of candidates in the forthcoming elections for Coloured representatives. Under the aegis of Colin Eglin the Progressive Party doubled the number of coloured votes on the roll to some 17 000. The two Progressive Party candidates nominated by the Progressive Party to stand for the Provincial Council elections as coloured representatives, Oscar Wollheim and Willem van Heerden, were duly elected in 1964.

Alarmed at this success and wary of the possibility of the four coloured representative seats going to the Progressive Party, the government twice legislated to extend the term of the sitting representatives in the Assembly, thus obviating the need for an election. The NP finally overcame the dilemma of their own creation by passing the aforementioned Prohibition of Political Interference Act and scrapping all coloured representation in Parliament and the Provincial Council. This last remnant of central representation for coloured people was replaced by a Coloured Representative Council, which was hardly representative and certainly lacked power.

### 1970 - 1976

The 1970 general election saw an improvement in the showing of the Party at the hustings, but still left the Party with its single representative in the form of, by now a lonely and frustrated, Helen Suzman. There were encouraging signs for the Party, however. In particular Colin Eglin had made significant inroads into the United Party stronghold of Sea Point, losing by just 239 votes.<sup>38</sup>

In 1970 the burden of fighting the Nationalists for so many years, together with internal disputes over political style and strategy, finally took its toll on Progressive Party leader Jan Steytler and he announced he would not be standing for re-election at Congress later in the year. This left the way clear for the dynamic, hard-working and ambitious Colin Eglin to take over the leadership of the Party.

Eglin, together with National Chairman Ray Swart, embarked on a vigorous campaign of revitalisation of the Party. New funds were raised and new party staff appointed and party machinery restructured. Eglin was instrumental in recasting Progressive Party strategy to include broadening contacts with black urban and homeland leaders, and it was during this period that relations between the Progressive Party and the then ANC-supporting Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi of KwaZulu were strengthened. Highlighting his shrewd political intuition and acumen Eglin also sought greater contact between the Progressive Party and “modern city Afrikaners”, leading to the employment of Jan van Eck and the establishment of the magazine *Deurbraak*. The Party also pursued this programme by inviting Afrikaner academics to retreats to discuss Progressive Party policy, but with little result in the short term. However, the overall organisational restructuring laid the platform for future electoral success.

Against the backdrop of a more focused and dynamic Progressive Party and, conversely, an increasingly divided and politically amorphous United Party, the Progressives made the sought-after electoral breakthrough in the 1974 general election. Eglin had pulled

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38 . Progressive Federal Party, ‘Interim Strategy Development Document - The PFP History’, 3 December 1985, pp.4-6.

together a team of candidates he termed “a few stars”, including Anglo American Director Gordon Wadell, former editor of the *Star* René de Villiers, and ultimately Eglin’s biggest personnel coup, a young University of the Witwatersrand Professor, Frederick van Zyl Slabbert.<sup>39</sup> The white electorate returned six Progressive Party candidates to Parliament in the 1974 election and set the Party on a pathway to considerable growth and public acceptance. The breakthrough was particularly critical for the Party, however, as many accounts hold that Helen Suzman had come to the end of her political tether as the single representative of political liberalism in Parliament, and was ready to throw in the towel had she not received the boost of other party colleagues in Parliament.<sup>40</sup> Shortly hereafter Dr Alex Boraine won the Pinelands by-election with a small majority for the Progressives, thus confirming the electoral trend.<sup>41</sup>

In 1975 the nascent tensions within the United Party intensified to the point of forcing a group of so-called “Young Turks” to leave the UP and establish the Reform Party under the leadership of Harry Schwarz. After lengthy debate, principally over the form of leadership role to be played by Schwarz under any amalgamation, the Progressive Reform Party of South Africa was established, thereby expanding the Party’s collective Parliamentary representation to 11 and its MPCs to 12. The amalgamation paid handsome dividends in 1976 when Harry Pitman won the Durban North constituency for the PRP in a three-cornered fight with the UP and National Party candidate Dr Denis Worrall.

### 1976 - 1981

The glacial events set in motion by the fracturing of South Africa’s regional *cordon sanitaire* in Mozambique and Angola, together with the national uprisings of 1976, effectively brought the period of unchallenged white rule to an end. These dislocations had a profound impact on white politics and set a range of forces in motion that would

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39 . Swart, pp.124-125.

40 . This view as corroborated by a personal interview with Rupert Lorimer MP, 22 June 1993.

41 . Swart, 126-127.

culminate in the organic crisis of the 1980's. In the 1970's, however, these events had the more immediate effect of disrupting traditional party and electoral affiliations.

Thus in August 1976, UP leader De Villiers Graaff initiated a plan to build a Party "for an alternative government", which would include conservative opponents of the government and disenchanted Nationalists. In reasoning that foreshadowed that used by the Independent Party, Graaff at first rejected an alliance with the PRP on the grounds that it would not broaden the base of opposition to the government.<sup>42</sup> But despite Graaff's public position, individual United Party MPs had earlier made solicitations to the PRP with regard to the fragmented opposition and an exchange of views and correspondence between Eglin and Graaff ensued. Subsequent to the intervention of a number of enlightened businessmen urging the unification of the opposition, a committee under the convenorship of Judge Kowie Marais was established to seek ways of forging co-operation between the UP, PRP and Theo Gerdener's small Democratic Party. However, the committee failed to reach consensus and both Gerdener and Graaff announced their intention to disband their respective parties in order to form a new political party. The demise of the United Party spawned the New Republic Party under the leadership of Radclyffe Cadman. However, a significant group of former United Party MPs declined to join the NRP and fused with the PRP, heralding the birth of the Progressive Federal Party in 1977.<sup>43</sup>

Capitalising on national sentiment and the still immature and fragmented nature of the opposition, Prime Minister Vorster announced a general election to be held on the 30 November 1977. The result was a landslide victory for the National Party. In winning 123 of the directly elected seats in the House of Assembly and in garnering 65,3% of the popular vote, the National Party emerged with its strongest Parliamentary majority ever.<sup>44</sup>

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42 . Swart, p.139.

43 . Swart, pp.140-142.

44 . Professor NJJ Olivier, PFP Research Department, '1981 Election Analysis'.

Despite this, the election was also a milestone for political liberalism in South Africa. Buoyed by its recent electoral successes and institutionally strengthened by the series of mergers, the outcome of the election for the PFP was that after eighteen years of existence, it had forged ahead of the NRP to become the official opposition.

The Party won 17 Parliamentary seats and doubled its share of the national vote to 16,9%. This contrasted favourably with the 10 seats won by the NRP in comparison to the 23 with which it had entered the election. Its share of the popular vote dropped to 12,2% of the popular vote.<sup>45</sup>

#### Recasting PFP constitutional policy

After its electoral breakthrough the PFP turned its attention to the burgeoning challenges thrown up by the 1976 uprising and the draconian measures taken by the State in quelling the uprising in October 1977. This led to the Party re-examining its constitutional policy under the convenorship of Van Zyl Slabbert. The general philosophy of the constitutional principles emerging from the Slabbert commission and indeed those that continued to gird PFP policy, was informed by the findings of the Slabbert and Welsh volume *South Africa's Options: Strategies for Sharing Power*. The central thrust of the book was to argue that a simple majoritarian system of "winner take all" in a highly divided society tends not to lead to a democratic polity. The prescriptive finding of the book was "neo-consociational".<sup>46</sup> The exceptionalism of the South African case for Welsh and Slabbert hinged on the politically structured and artificiality of the particular ethnic and political groups as determined by the Population Registration Act. The artificiality of these statutorily-enforced groups meant that the salient political divisions could not be pre-determined. Thus such groups as there were in South Africa would have to be politically accounted for as voluntary agglomerations rather than statutorily-defined entities.

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45 . Professor NJJ Olivier, PFP Research Department, '1981 Election Analysis'.

46 . David Welsh, 'The ideology, aims, role and strategy of the PFP and NRP', in Van Vuuren, Latakomo, Marais and Schlemmer (Eds), South African Election 1987, Pinetown, Owen Burgess, 1987.

The most significant shift recommended by the commission, however, was away from qualified franchise to universal adult suffrage.

In response to the recommendation of the Slabbert Commission and in keeping with its principles of power-sharing and curbing of governmental power, PFP policy distilled into the following central features:

1. A federal system of government with decentralisation of powers. This would be strictly a territorial federation rather than a race federation.
2. An independent judiciary and a justiciable bill of rights.
3. Universal adult suffrage, but without domination of the majority.
4. A system of proportional representation that would give rise to the idea of the grand coalition in consociational terms.
5. Voluntary association rather than racial prescription to group affiliation.<sup>47</sup>

In order to reconcile the principle of universal suffrage with the rejection of simple majoritarianism, the PFP proposed a minority veto in important political and constitutional matters, of some 10% to 15% to be negotiated at the National Convention.<sup>48</sup>

Welsh points out that overall PFP policy was informed by classical, liberal considerations about the fear of state power and therefore advocated a strong bill of rights and the decentralisation and separation of power. Thus:

The more power that is concentrated in a single site in government, the greater the likelihood and temptations that in a plural society there would be a grab for total power by a group. Therefore, the (constitutional) committee decided that it was particularly appropriate to give prominence to the advantages of a federal structure of government in this respect. A

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47 . See, F. van zyl Slabbert, 'The Nature of the South African Problem and the Progressive Federal Party's Approach to its Solution', in, South Africa - A Chance for Liberalism?, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, 1985, pp.37-49.

48 . David Welsh, 'The ideology, aims, role and strategy of the PFP and NRP', in van Vuuren, Latakomo, Marais and Schlemmer, (Eds), South African Election 1987, Owen Burgess, 1987, pp.81-101.

federal structure not only separates powers but also decentralizes them to lower levels of government.<sup>49</sup>

### The changing of the guard

In an effort to draw on a broader support base and specifically in an attempt to tap into the disenchanted elements within the enlightened Afrikaner middle-class, and with a not inconsiderable campaign of internal lobbying, the Party elected the 39-year-old Van Zyl Slabbert as its third leader in 1979. Slabbert's rare combination of talents soon led the Party to new heights in white popularity and prepared it well for the 1981 general election called by PW Botha.

### The 1981 general election

The period preceding the 1981 campaign was marked by increasingly reformist impulse from the ruling National Party. In the wake of the Department of Information scandal, Prime Minister PW Botha had embarked on an, as yet, unclear reform programme marked by the liberalisation of labour regulation, the streamlining of the pass laws and the first indications of the scrapping of so-called petty apartheid. The period was also marked by a greater coalescence between the state and the capitalist sector as symbolised in the 1979 Carlton conference. In contrast, and indeed response, to these reformist initiatives, the far right-wing *Herstigste Nasionale Party* had performed particularly well in three by-elections and had come within a few hundred votes of winning its first seat in the Transvaal constituency of Rustenburg.<sup>50</sup> Against this backdrop Prime Minister Botha called a general election some 18 months ahead of the required term.

The PFP ran a campaign based largely on economic and security questions. According to opinion polls, the Party was vulnerable on its racial policy plank and thus this was played down by party strategists. The Party failed to issue a formal policy manifesto and essentially ran a "bread and butter" campaign attacking the government on inflation and

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49 . Welsh, p.87.

50 . Craig Charney, 'Towards Rupture or Stasis? - An analysis of the 1981 South African general election', in, DC Hindson (Ed), Working Papers in Southern African Studies, Volume III, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1983.

its economic mismanagement.<sup>51</sup> The Party was advantaged by, and made full use of, the major election issues, namely questions of reform and the economy, both of which were strong PFP planks. Equally important in 1981 was the fact that the National Party was also engaged in a battle to retain the integrity of its right-wing, and was thus forced to issue contradictory electoral messages to placate the right and to attract conservative reform votes.

In the event the PFP reached its greatest electoral heights in the 1981 election. The Party increased its share of the national vote from 13,8% to 19,9% returning some 26 candidates to Parliament in the process. The Party performed particularly strongly in the major cities with the exception of Durban, which remained an NRP outpost. In the Johannesburg seats it contested the PFP improved its vote by between 9% to 26%. The Party showed marked growth in the affluent Afrikaans-speaking Pretoria constituencies, and particular, Waterkloof. Cape Town was placed even more securely in the hands of the PFP, whilst significant gains were made via the victories in Port Elizabeth, and Pietermaritzburg. The Party also made its first breakthrough in a partly rural constituency by winning the Eastern Cape seat of Albany which contains the educational centre of Grahamstown, including Rhodes University.<sup>52</sup>

For the New Republican Party the election signalled the end of any pretence it had harboured as being a party with any degree of national support. Its downward trend was confirmed by a further cut in its support from 12% to 7% and the loss of a further two seats reducing its representation in Parliament to an insignificant 8. The "Progressive" prodigal child the United Party had forced into the wilderness some 22 years earlier, had returned in the form of the Progressive Federal Party that now outnumbered it three to one in Parliament and enjoyed the same superiority in voter support.

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51 . Charney, p.185.

52 . Craig Charney, 'Towards Rupture or Stasis?', in Working Papers in Southern African Studies Volume III, D.C. Hindson (Ed), Ravan, 1983, pp.173-190.

For the National Party the 1981 election was its first electoral setback in almost a quarter of a century. It shed votes to the right and left, and was returned to power with 8% less popular support and with three fewer House of Assembly seats.

The most notable trend in the 1981 election, however, was the massive relative increase in the support base of the far right *Herstigte Nasionale Party*. Popular support for the Party grew by 560% from 34 161 votes overall in 1977 to 191 149 in 1981, although remarkably the Party again failed to return a single candidate to Parliament. The other far right-wing party, the National Conservative Party, picked up a further 1% of the vote. The HNP reduced NP majorities in every rural Transvaal seat it contested, sending a clear anti-reformist signal to Pretoria.<sup>53</sup> The voting trend over the two elections 1977 to 1981 is indicated in the table below.

<b>Shares of the Vote in Seats Contested Both in 1977 and 1981</b>				
	<b>NP</b>	<b>PFP</b>	<b>NRP</b>	<b>HNP, NCP &amp; AET</b>
1981	54,4%	19,9%	10,5%	14,7%
1977	69%	13,8%	13,6%	4,1%

Source: N.J.J. Olivier, 'An analysis of the 1981 General Election.

The 1981 elections evinced a marked structural dimension, however. The 1981 results suggested the emergence of cross-cutting class and status divisions signalling a loosening of the close ethnic and party loyalties of the previous 25 years.<sup>54</sup> As the table below indicates there appeared signs of a cross-ethnic middle- and upper-middle- class (A&B) convergence around the poles of reformist policies, whilst Afrikaans voting patterns in the blue-collar and working-class (C&D) evinced a shift away from the National Party.

53 . Professor NJJ Olivier, 'An Analysis of the 1981 General Election', Progressive Federal Party, undated, pp.9-13.

54 . Charney, pp.178-179.

Ethnicity, Social Status, and the Vote				
	English-Speakers		Afrikaners	
	AB	CD	AB	CD
NP	27%	42%	63%	70%
PFP	52%	36%	24%	9%
NRP	17%	18%	4%	7%
HNP	2%	2%	5%	14%

Source: Craig Charney, 'Towards Rupture or Stasis? - An analysis of the 1981 South African general election', in Hindson, D.C. (Ed), Working Papers in Southern African Studies, Vol III, Ravan, 1983, p.178.

These patterns and the underlying forces giving rise to an eventual fundamental political re-alignment will be discussed in the following chapter.

This chapter has sought to provide an historical sweep of the institutional antecedents and patterns of political liberalism up to the 1981 general election. The following chapter will discuss the emergence of the broad organic crisis in South Africa during the 1980's which altered immutably the form and identity of political liberalism in both its institutional and its party construct.

### CHAPTER THREE

Having sketched the historical antecedents of the Democratic Party up to the 1981 election, this chapter undertakes an analysis of the social, economic, and political context of South Africa during the 1980's which gave rise to the fracturing of traditional liberal relations and the merger of the Progressive Federal Party with other emergent liberal groups.

The trajectory of political liberalism in South Africa in the 1980's played itself out against the backdrop of, and was heavily informed by, the unfolding of a wave of acute socio-economic and political turmoil. This chapter seeks to sketch the conceptual dimensions of this phenomenon together with the state's responses to the crisis, both of which, it will be argued, had a profound impact on the course, pattern, identity and structure of political liberalism during the 1980's.

#### Theoretical underpinnings

The Gramscian concept of hegemony is instructive in yielding an understanding of the matrix of power relations marking the South African political canvas during the period under review and is presented in this chapter as a conceptual, heuristic and theoretical framework.

The term 'hegemonic' was first used by Lenin to connote a revolutionary strategy to be adopted by the working class and the party to win over the majority to its cause. Gramsci gave the term its modern currency by applying it to the strategy of the capitalist class in attempting to secure and retain state power. For Gramsci, the term is not used in its strategic modality, but rather as a conceptual tool in the construction of a framework for understanding social dynamic and conflict.

For Gramsci, classes and their representatives achieve and maintain their dominance over subordinate classes by the dual means of coercion and persuasion.<sup>1</sup>

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1 . Roger Simon, Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1985, p.21.

Hegemony is a relation, not of domination, by means of force, but of consent by means of political and ideological leadership. It is the organisation of consent.<sup>2</sup>

The hegemonic class seeks to maintain its control through a system of alliance construction by means of political and ideological strategising. During the course of the struggle for hegemony each side attempts to disorganise and destabilise the other and in order to achieve this each side constructs pragmatic alliances in an attempt to shift the balance of forces in its favour.<sup>3</sup>

Generically, the strategy adopted by the ruling historical bloc for the retention of hegemony is termed 'passive revolution' by Gramsci and is vitally important for our understanding of the South African conditions which played themselves out during the 1980's. The concept of passive revolution or revolution from above is understood as follows:

A passive revolution is involved whenever relatively far-reaching modifications are made to a country's social and economic structure from above, through the agency of the state, and without relying on the active participation of the people. Social reforms which have been demanded by opposing forces may be carried out, but in such a way as to disorganise these forces and damp down any popular struggles.<sup>4</sup>

For Gramsci, civil society is the complex network of class and social relations including political parties, trade unions, churches and universities, and it is in this arena of the "conjunctural" (the immediate and contested political terrain) that the fundamentals of class and popular democratic struggle play themselves out.

The achievement of hegemony for the historical bloc is not a concrete and permanent position, however. Power is not captured or possessed. The historical site of power in the state is perpetually contested. Thus, for Gramsci, power is relational. It is a dynamic,

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2 . Simon, p.21.

3 . Simon, p.23.

4 . Simon, pp.24-25.

a tension which is continuously challenged by antagonistic political and class interests. Consequently, there will occur periods of crisis when the hegemony of the historic bloc is threatened by coincidence and coalescence of forces. Under certain, relatively unspecified, conditions<sup>5</sup> other than to mention that this occurs when the hegemonic bloc is in danger of fracturing, a deep and protracted crisis occurs in the social and political structure. This *organic* crisis:

(S)ometimes (lasts) for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity) and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts ... form the terrain of the 'conjunctural' and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organise.<sup>6</sup>

Under these conditions the hegemonic bloc will be forced to act not merely defensively of its position, but also to restructure power relations in society in the form of new alliances, such that hegemony is retained. The intensity and severity of these conditions, argues Gramsci, are such that they have a profound effect on both class/party relations and the form of the state, forcing a crisis of representation whereby classes and their traditional party formations become dissonant. When this occurs:

(T)he immediate situation becomes delicate and dangerous, because the field is open for violent solutions, for the activities of unknown forces, represented by charismatic "men of destiny".<sup>7</sup>

Thus Gramscian theory is not used here to explain the behaviour and trajectory of political liberalism during the 1980's in South Africa, but rather to yield insights into the conflictual dynamic which characterised much of the structural crisis engulfing the country during the 1980's, which, in turn, impacted forcefully on liberalism during this period.

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5 . See the 'debate' on this topic between Deborah Posel and Saul and Gelb in their volume, The Crisis in South Africa, Monthly Review Press, 1986, p.12.

6 . Simon, p.38.

7 . Simon, p.40.

It is contended that the South African social formation exhibited the central characteristics and tendencies of the Gramscian structural crisis and that the reformist impulses of the ruling party can be understood in terms of Gramscian notions of hegemony and formative action.

The structural or organic crisis in South Africa was multi-dimensional and we shall be concerned with its social, economic and political parameters. Likewise, the state's response to the crisis was multifarious and operated at a number of levels. The peculiar dimensions to the crisis of the 1980's and the state's response thus require brief elucidation in order to anchor the central discussion of the dissertation, namely the crisis within political liberalism during the 1980's and the formation of the Democratic Party.

#### Economic

A critical determinant of the crisis which engulfed South Africa during the 1980's was that of the economy. The broad parameters of the economic crisis require brief outline in order to understand both the motivations and limitations placed on government policy by the crisis and the impact this had on class and party relations during the period under review.

Bracketing the *sui generis* conditions derived from its colonial and racial legacy, the South African political economy exhibits three cardinal structural constraints, into which the politically-derived economic exacerbations fed during the 1980's. The three structural constraints consist of balance of payments dilemmas, problems within the manufacturing sector and, thirdly, employment.<sup>8</sup> Each of these serves to constrain the inherent potential of the economy and shape all other economic policy considerations.

Historically, South Africa had been in a relatively strong position *vis-a-vis* its balance of payments, as it was able to export an abundance of raw materials and attract foreign

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8 . Terence Moll, 'Probably the Best Lager in the World': the Record and Prospects of the South African Economy, in, John D. Brewer (Ed), Can South Africa Survive? Five Minutes to Midnight, Bergvlei, Southern, 1989. Most of the conceptual and substantive argument used in this section is derived from this source.

investment due to attractive rates of profit. These marginal advantages had offset the skewed dependence on importation of manufacturing capital.

Until 1987 some 60% of earnings had been achieved through mining exports. Although South Africa had become virtually self-sufficient in the manufacture of consumer goods, there had been an increasing reliance on the importation of capital goods. The windfall the South African economy derived of a steadily increasing gold price during the 1970's had not translated into sound domestic capital projects, but rather spurred increased government and luxury spending. Such development projects as were commissioned were often foreign loan financed on the back of favourable exchange rates and the expectation of continued high earnings from gold and other minerals.

Thus overall, South Africa had historically run a non-gold trade deficit, which was balanced by mining earnings. The deficit on the current account had, in turn, been traditionally financed by inflows of foreign investment. Again, for structural reasons, linked to exchange rates and economies of scale, South Africa had not developed a vital manufacturing export capacity, making it particularly vulnerable to any downward trends in earnings on mining exports.

The second structural constraint relates to the manufacturing sector. This sector showed a steady and healthy increase in growth from 1957 to 1980, averaging at 6% real growth per annum. For the period 1980 to 1984, however, real growth rates in manufacturing were negative.<sup>9</sup> During the 1980's the South African economy entered a period of 'deindustrialization' with its share of GDP falling from 25,5% in 1981 to 22,3% in 1985. This trend was aggravated by a limited internal market, production inefficiencies and trade and other sanctions against South Africa.

A further debilitating trend for the South African economy was the decline in employment rates which, in turn, had an acute impact on political conflict in the recent past. After posting impressive increases during the mid-1960's to mid-1970's the rate of

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9 Moll, p.146.

increase of employment in the formal sector deteriorated to approximately 1% per annum for the period 1980 to 1984, whilst rates of population increase soared.

Other features of the economic crisis were a continued fall in real gross domestic fixed investment (halving in manufacturing in 1986). In the shadow of the wave of nationwide unrest, real net domestic investment by private firms in 1985 and 1986 turned negative for the first time in post-war history.

The changing pattern of economic growth is illustrated in the table below.

Economy-wide growth rates	
Average real growth rates of GDP at 1975 prices	
1957-1964	4.1
1964-1969	5.4
1969-1974	5.2
1974-1980	3.4
1980-1984	1.5

Adapted from Moll, p.41

On the tide of political unrest which exploded in 1983/84, the flow of foreign disinvestment from South Africa developed into a flood during the mid-1980's. In terms of United States companies alone, seven left in 1984 rising to almost 80 in 1988. During the same period, 1984 to 1988, some 230 US firms withdrew from the country. By 1987 a full 20% of British firms had also withdrawn.<sup>10</sup> During this period South African companies were themselves divesting from the country and investing elsewhere.

The commensurate increase in costs to the fiscus of the maintenance of apartheid repression during the period of political unrest was demonstrated in the Defence budget

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10 . Carolyn Jenkins, 'Sanctions, economic growth and change', in Nicoli Nattrass and Elisabeth Ardington (Eds), The Political Economy of South Africa, Cape Town Oxford University Press, 1990.

which ballooned at an average rate of 5,7% per annum between 1979/80 and 1986/87, which is a substantially higher figure than the growth in GDP.<sup>11</sup>

All these features of the economy, in turn, played themselves out against a changing pattern of global economic relations which impacted negatively on the South African economy.

South Africa's position in the world economy was weakened by its dependency on the externally determined gold price, and its reliance in the export of primary and intermediary commodities such as coal, copper, platinum, agricultural products, iron and steel.<sup>12</sup> Approximately 90% of South Africa's exports during the 1980's were raw materials.<sup>13</sup>

The shifts in the global economy resulted in reduced demand for South Africa's raw materials, leading to lower foreign earnings, which placed further pressure on the balance of payments. Higher world crude oil prices and the enforced premium paid by South Africa for its oil imports as a result of the oil embargo all served to fuel inflation in the economy and thereby reduce the country's export competitiveness.

The exaggerated dependence on the importation of capital goods needed to boost production also had a built-in inflationary multiplier effect. The importation of capital goods placed severe strains on the balance of payments which in turn threatened the domestic economy with recessionary impulses. Domestic inflation, in turn resulted in South African exports losing competitiveness in foreign markets.

In response to the acute economic malaise the De Kock Commission of the Reserve Bank had earlier singled out the control and reduction of inflation as its central priority and introduced a programme of economic austerity in August 1984, which included *inter alia*

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11. Moll, p.154.

12. Karl von Holdt, 'The Economy: Achilles Heel of the New Deal', in South African Review 3, Braamfontein, Ravan, 1986.

13. David Kaplan, 'Beyond the Indicators: A Perspective on the South African Economy', in South African Review 4, Braamfontein, Ravan, 1987.

the raising of the prime overdraft rate to 25%.<sup>14</sup> The recessionary impact on the economy was profound.

From 1980 to 1986 only 150 000 new jobs were created, whereas the labour force grew by approximately 1,5 million. In 1986 inflation rose by 18,6% whilst salaries lagged at 13,6%.<sup>15</sup> As a clear indicator of the impoverishment of the economy, real gross domestic fixed capital dropped from R17,6 billion in 1981 to R12,8 billion in 1986.<sup>16</sup>

Unemployment during 1986 rose to 6 million. During 1985 insolvencies rose 500%.<sup>17</sup>

This, in turn, dovetailed with the government response to the crisis in balance of payments and massive increases in government spending by the introduction of a programme of fiscal discipline. This policy found expression in government trimming salary benefits to state employees and attempts to reduce numbers employed in state-owned parastatals.

The 1985 budget introduced by the Minister of Finance Barend du Plessis reflected this new discipline by unveiling a tough monetary policy, together with curbing government expenditure to levels below the inflation rate. Further revenue was raised by an increase in GST from 10% to 12%.<sup>18</sup> Despite the approval of many in the business sector, such measures had the effect of pushing the economy deeper into recession, leading to greater 'rationalisation' within industry and inevitably substantial increases in unemployment.

#### The fracturing of Afrikaner and white political hegemony

The economic crisis impacted heavily on, and was in turn informed by, the pattern of profound social changes in the demographic and class composition of South African society unfolding in the 1970's and 1980's.

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14 . Fuad Cassim, 'Economic Crisis and Stagnation in South Africa', in South African Review 4, Braamfontein, Ravan, 1987.

15 . Cassim, pp.542-543.

16 . Cassim, p.543.

17 . Cassim, p.541.

18 . Karl von Holdt, 'The Economy: Achilles Heel of the New Deal', in, South African Review 3, Ravan, 1986, p.312.

The cardinal marker of social change in the recent past has been the relative decline in white prosperity induced by a shifting demographic balance within the country.

Between 1910 and 1950 whites constituted more than 20% of the total population. This figure fell from 20,9% in 1959 to 15% in 1985. This, together with the changing structure of the South African economy, resulted in an acute shortage of white skilled manpower.<sup>19</sup>

By the mid-1970's the South African state had already overreached itself in terms of the capacity of white manpower to implement the grand strategies of apartheid, forcing it to be scaled down in range and ambit.<sup>20</sup> The crisis in the state sector also exhibited its equivalent in the private sector. The rapid rate of economic growth during the 1960's revealed the structural tensions within the economy, such that political and ideological principle conflicted with economic rationale.

During the 1970's whites also constituted an ever-decreasing percentage of the skilled and blue-collar workforce. During the period 1971 to 1977 blacks contributed 76% of the increase in artisans and 104% of the increase in blue-collar workers.<sup>21</sup> This, together with a marked increase in black worker militancy pursuant to the 1973 Durban strikes and increasing international pressure through the Sullivan codes and the like, resulted in substantial changes in labour regulation machinery in the country, most notably through the reforms recommended by the Wiehahn Commission.

The South African government was placed in a complex dilemma. On the one hand, it was faced with demands for economic growth in order to satisfy both black and white aspirations. However, its own policies had contributed to the crisis within the country which impacted negatively on economic growth. In order to maintain growth it was

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19 . Hermann Giliomee, 'Afrikaner Politics 1977 - 1987: from Afrikaner Nationalist Rule to Central State Hegemony' in John D. Brewer (Ed), Can South Africa Survive? Five Minutes to Midnight, Bergvlei, Southern, 1989, p.111. The arguments used in this section are largely adopted from Giliomee.

20 . See in particular, Stanley Greenberg, Legitimizing the Illegitimate: State, markets and resistance in South Africa, Berkeley, 1987.

21 . Giliomee, p.112.

forced to become increasingly reliant on black skilled labour. This necessitated an improvement in the skills and training of the black working-class, leading to greater class mobility and heightened economic, and ultimately political, leverage through strong trade unions. Without economic growth the government faced increased political unrest. However, the very economic growth required the empowerment of many more blacks and their induction into the economy, thereby threatening white privilege and hegemony.

Thus a matrix of economic and political forces, including a marked increase in state expenditure on black education and the closing of the wage gap, resulted in a real drop in white income. Between 1975 and 1979 real white wages fell by 9,7% and between 1980 and 1985 personal disposable income of whites fell by 17,9%. The tax burden of whites increased markedly during the same period in real terms and relative to that paid by companies. All these factors had the effect of alienating whites, and ruling Afrikaner circles in particular.

Critics of the government within the right-wing of Afrikaner politics sought to highlight the "unholy alliance" struck up between the state and big business as evidenced in the form of the Carlton and Good Hope conferences. White complaints were that, whilst some 80% of all taxes were paid by whites, vast amounts were spent on black education and social development.

The conservative faction of Afrikanerdom also accused the government of selling out white civil servants and lower-income whites. It was argued that white civil servants had become some 25% poorer in the years 1974 to 1986, whereas their black counterparts had enjoyed a 59% increase in real income over the same period.<sup>22</sup>

Whilst the government became decreasingly wedded to the prescripts of apartheid as political blueprint for the ordering of the political economy, and looked increasingly to new partners and alliances in restructuring the historical bloc, it at the same time sought

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22 . Giliomee, p.115.

to retain and centralise power in the form of constitutional reform and national security and developmental strategies.

Politically, the symbolism involved in the watering down of unilateral white decision-making in the governance of the country, by the incorporation of Coloureds and Indians in Parliament, should not be underestimated. The National Party lost support from the right-wing both due to the relative decline in the standard of living enjoyed by whites and the privileged and protected position of the white labour aristocracy, but also due to a blurring of the status privileges enjoyed by whites, particularly those that “distinguished” the white working-class from upwardly-mobile blacks. For despite the growth in the black middle-class, historically, apartheid legislation had ensured that economic wealth did not translate into social mobility. Race classification and group areas statutes remained at the heart of white privilege, thus insulating working-class whites from the encroachment of people of colour.

Tensions within the white ruling-class intensified as labour reforms played themselves out at the work place. Whilst white workers felt increasingly threatened by government de-regulation at the work place, their response found expression in political disaffection with the National Party.

The resultant growth in extreme right-wing support amongst white voters is demonstrated below:

Ethnic support for NP within the white group (%)			
	1977	1981	1987
Afrikaners	85	63	55
English-speakers	33	28	47

Adapted from Giliomee, p.121.

The growth in support for the National Party from English-speakers in particular in 1987 will be discussed more fully later, but it is worth noting the demographic shift in the support base of the National Party reflecting its rejection by conservative right-wing, lower-middle and working-class elements, whilst the NP was infused with new electoral blood from middle-class English-speaking voters. Whilst the NP was jettisoning its traditional support base to the extreme right and was therefore becoming less of an ethnically homogeneous entity, it began to draw traditionally conservative reform support from both ex-UP and NRP supporters, but also the floating PFP voter. By 1986 white class and party political affiliation had distilled into the matrix depicted in the table below.

Household income rating by party support: February 1986			
Household income	PFP	NP	HNP/CP
Upper-middle	38%	20%	10%
Middle	43%	45%	49%
Lower-middle/Lower	19%	35%	41%

Adapted from Lawrence Schlemmer, 'South Africa's National Party Government', in Peter L. Berger and Bobby Godsell (Eds), A Future South Africa: Visions, Strategies and Realities, Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 1988, p.20.

### State restructuring

The South African state had been in a crisis of legitimacy since 1976. International pressure through diplomatic and economic isolation had increased sharply after the death of Steve Biko in detention and the state's crackdown on black opposition formations in 1977. The latter gave rise to a hiatus in the capacity of the state to carry out its reform programmes as its economic support base was undercut. This is one of the precursors of the pre-revolutionary phase according to Skocpol. As we have noted, the Soweto uprising of 1976 had deep and profound effects on the course and pattern of South African political relations. The uprising marked the end of a long and relatively uninterrupted period of political quiescence on the part of black underclasses, and consequently presaged the concomitant period of white social, political and economic

hegemony.<sup>23</sup> The events of 1976 were tectonic in South African history, and set in motion a chain of events which led to the South African state constructing a modernised defensive shibboleth comprising strategies of political co-optation, economic restructuring, and security networks, designed to forge a more coherent pattern of dominant relations entrenching long-term white and upper-class interests.

The response of the South African state to the fracturing of its regional *cordon sanitaire*, in Mozambique in 1974 and Angola in 1975, and the internal challenge to white security following the 1976 uprising was manifold.

The response of the burgeoning military establishment to its regional setbacks in Angola and the ferocity of the townships uprising was the development of a broad, integrated plan for the re-establishment of political control under the panoply of challenges facing the state. The plan formulated as 'Total Strategy' was revealed by the military for the first time in the 1977 Defence White Paper.<sup>24</sup>

The election of Minister of Defence PW Botha to Prime Minister over *verkrampste* and nascent *verligte* factions of the National Party in 1978 cleared the way for the implementation of the total strategy in both its political and military/security formulations. More than this, however, Botha's victory heralded a radical change in the style of political management at the executive level which was to have important consequences for the path of political development during the next decade.

The total strategy comprised two predominant and integrated dimensions, and it is of vital importance that an understanding of the effect both of these broad strategies played in the creation of the acutely illiberal and hostile political, social and ideological environment in which liberals operated during the period under review.

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23 . Alf Stadler, The Political Economy of Modern South Africa, David Philip, Cape Town, 1987, pp.176-184.

24 . Mark Swilling and Mark Phillips, 'State Power in the 1980's: From Total Strategy to Revolutionary Warfare', in Jacklyn Cock and Laurie Nathan (Eds), War and Society - The Militarisation of South Africa, Cape Town, David Philip, 1989.

The first dimension to the total strategy, the reform programme, was largely political and was executive-driven. The second was largely repressive in nature and formed part of the strategic hands-on management style characteristic of the Botha government. This latter strategy was largely propelled by military and security interests with its central feature being the comprehensive National Security Management System.<sup>25</sup> The two broad dimensions to the total strategy tended to overlap at the level of ideas.

In an early exposition of the strategy, former Minister of Defence Magnus Malan explained:

(T)he total onslaught is an ideologically motivated struggle and the aim is the implacable and unconditional imposition of the aggressor's will on the target state. The enemy uses all means at his disposal. The onslaught is not just military: it is political, diplomatic, religious, psychological, cultural, economic, and social. South Africa is today ... involved in total war. The war is not only an area for the soldier. Everyone is involved and has a role to play.<sup>26</sup>

This formulation held a number of destructive implications for liberalism in South Africa during the 1980's. At the level of social and political consciousness, the total strategy served to create the perception amongst whites that they had a duty to counter the alleged total onslaught. Conversely, and most important for those whites in opposition, the total strategy held that for whites not to play their part in opposing the onslaught was not only unpatriotic, but potentially seditious.

Malan's sweeping conceptualisation of a perceived threat to the state gave licence to far-ranging excesses on the part of the political military establishment. Civil and military relations became increasingly blurred and interwoven. Political issues and policies requiring sober and reasoned debate and deliberation were frequently depicted and articulated in stark, war-like terms by the securocratic propagandists. The white

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25 . Annette Seegers, "Extending the Security Network to the Local Level, in Chris Heymans and Gerhard Töttemeyer (Eds), Government by the People? The politics of local government in south africa. Juta, Cape Town, 1988.

26 . Quoted in Kenneth W. Grundy, The Militarization of South African Politics, Oxford, 1988, p.11.

electorate was subjected to a daily barrage of ideological and conceptual messages serving to reinforce the desired perception of onslaught and the inculcation of socio-psychological trauma. Surveys carried out amongst whites in the 1980's indicate that a full 80% of this section of the population believed that there was a communist threat to the country and that the government was not exaggerating in its warnings.<sup>27</sup> The extent to which white fears became entrenched in socio-political orthodoxy is further illustrated by the results of an opinion survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council in 1988.

#### WHITE EXPECTATIONS OF BLACK RULE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Expectations	%
1. The lives of whites will not continue as before.	89
2. The safety of whites will be threatened.	75
3. The way of life will not be protected.	83
4. Living standards will decline.	81
5. Crime will increase.	84
6. Whites will be discriminated against.	86
7. Law and order will not be maintained.	80
8. Property will not be safe.	80

Adapted from Schrire, 1991, p.28.

Every liberal, moral, intellectual and political virtue was at some point fundamentally challenged by the total strategy. More broadly, the fear psychosis inculcated by the securocratic state apparatus served to occlude the political space open to political formations propounding liberal democratic principles and to wipe liberal issues and programmes off the national political agenda. The scope for dispassionate, rational analysis was simply cast down by the security and political establishment and frequently reduced to a depiction by the state's revolutionary theorists as the useful idiocy of which Lenin had spoken. This simple reductionism, and the objectification had the effect of

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27. Grundy, p.12.

collapsing all opponents of the government into the broad category of “enemies of the state”, thereby bringing liberal activists into the firing line of the state’s own securocratic total mindset. As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, the state’s own onslaught against its opponents, including liberal institutions, academics, journalists, lawyers, and the clergy resulted in all becoming targets of the ubiquitous securocratic leviathan.

Repression in South Africa operated not only at the formal or legal level, however. During the 1980’s in particular, a range of repressive forces and state-sponsored groupings were unleashed, such as hit squads, the Civil Co-operation Bureau, dirty tricks campaigns, together with a host of proxy forces such as vigilantes and warlords. In moving from the total strategy formulation to counter-revolutionary strategy later in the decade, the state intensified this pattern.

The total strategy simply destroyed civil liberties. South Africa’s highly illiberal social structure is borne out by comparative international indices of human rights abuses. In 1987 the World Human Rights Guide placed South Africa 63rd out of 69 countries reviewed. South Africa’s index of 22% compared poorly with countries such as Zambia and Zimbabwe at 45% and Chile at 35%. Indeed, South Africa languished in such company as Libya and Rumania.<sup>28</sup>

South Africa’s poor human rights record was characterised by massive increases in the total number of detentions under security legislation during times of crisis. For example, in 1976/1977 detentions peaked at 3 474, but dropped to 293 in 1982. New levels of repression were reached in 1985 and 1986 under the state of emergency when the number of detained reached 4 389 and 4 652 respectively. By 1988, however, the number of detentions had dropped dramatically, but with figures up in the Pietermaritzburg area as a result of the ongoing Inkatha/UDF conflict.<sup>29</sup>

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28 . David Webster and Maggie Friedman, ‘Repression and the State of Emergency: June 1987 - March 1989, in *South African Review* 5, Ravan, 1989, pp.16-41.

29 . Webster and Friedman, p.17.

### The centralisation of power

Although the Total Strategy contained within it a range of identifiable strategies, its thrust was predicated on an integration of military, political and management features requiring centralised control and command structures. There had, since the first draft of the new constitution in 1977, been a powerful political magnetism towards notions of centralisation of power and indeed dictatorship, as a means towards the achievement of co-optive reform and alliance-building. Thus in 1977 Magnus Malan had reported that, 'One of the snags with the total strategy approach was the conflicting requirements of a total strategy and a democratic system of government'.<sup>30</sup>

In 1981 Samuel Huntington declared at a seminar at the Rand Afrikaans University:

Centralisation of power may also be necessary for the government to maintain the control over violence that is essential to carry through major reforms. No reform occurs without violence ... the reformer must be ready to welcome and use violence when it serves his purpose.<sup>31</sup>

Thus a complex and intricate web of direction and control was erected through a system of cross-directives and management. The industrial/military complex grew to an unprecedented scale. Parastatals were drawn into the strategy as in the case of the transport services and the shipping line Safmarine. Academics and "think tanks" provided both the intellectual and metatheoretical framework for the evolution of policy.

During the 1980's the shift was away from populist style political leadership that had characterised the National Party and had indeed led it to its numerous electoral victories since 1948. The new style of government was one in which the governing elite would be less receptive and susceptible to the populist demands and impulses from the rank and file of the National Party, but would rather increasingly orientate towards a form of

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30 . Gerhard Maré, 'The New Constitution: Extending Democracy or Decentralising Control?', in South African Review 3, Johannesburg, Ravan, 1986, p.213.

31 . Maré, p.214.

government and style of leadership decision-making which would reflect closer ties with capitalist interests and the input of technocrats.<sup>32</sup>

Thus State strategies applied in the 1980's represented a shift towards a form of emerging corporatism whereby functional organisations of both capital and organised labour were drawn into agreement with state structures in order to promote a given policy. The 1979 Carlton and 1981 Good Hope conferences, together with the creation of the National Manpower Commission, are illustrative of this development.<sup>33</sup>

### The centralisation of political power

The concomitant of this centralisation in military and technocratic leverage was the shift in the political centre of gravity away from the traditional nodes of white political power such as the National Party machinery and constituencies, towards the security establishment and the tightly co-ordinated and highly motivated State Security Council. The combined demands of the securing of both the broad long-term interests of the white ruling-class together with those of the narrower sectional interests of the dominant Afrikaner elite, found clearest expression in the formulation of the 1983 South African constitution. The new constitution was the centrepiece of the second dimension of the total strategy, namely centralised and controlled reform from above. The central features of the constitution require brief discussion in order to highlight the structural effect its prescripts had on the efficacy of liberal Parliamentary opposition after its implementation.

The 1983 constitution gave expression to the restructuring of the historical bloc in its attempts to construct new alliances to preserve hegemony.<sup>34</sup> The new constitution provided for the formation of an executive Presidency more powerful in his powers than

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32 . Maré, p.216.

33 . Wilhelm Prinsloo, 'Political Restructuring, Capital Accumulation and the "Coming Corporatism" in South Africa: Some Theoretical Considerations', in Politikon, Vol 11, June 1984.

34 . The outline of the constitution is largely a summary of: D Marais, Constitutional Development of South Africa, Southern, 1987; Robert Schrire, Adapt or Die: The End Of White Politics, Ford, 1991; and 'Constitution in a Nutshell, Van der Merwe and Meyer, National Party, 1983.

that of the premiership of the old Westminster system. The President was to be elected via an electoral college comprising 50 members from the White chamber, 25 from the so-called Coloured or House of Representatives, and 13 from the Indian House of Delegates. The term of office of the State President was linked to that of Parliament. The State President appointed the cabinet. Besides the tricameral Parliament with its built-in white majority, a President's Council comprising 60 members with 20 members appointed by the white chamber, ten from the House of Representatives and five from the House of Delegates, 15 appointed by the President and ten by the opposition parties in all three chambers.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the broader inclusiveness of the new dispensation, access to real political power within the system remained firmly entrenched within the white chamber itself.

Conceptually and politically, the new dispensation sought to broaden legitimacy for the system, yet entrench white dominance. The constitution modernised the terms of racial domination by distinguishing between "own affairs", i.e. those matters over which the racially-defined group held exclusive control such as education, and "general affairs" such as foreign affairs which were jointly legislated and administered. The tricameral system numerically guaranteed white supremacy. This included the 4:2:1 preponderance of whites as to coloured as to Indian representation in Parliament. Likewise, the built-in white control of the President's Council assured the ruling party a victory in any legislative dispute referred to it.

All the *ad hoc* committees remained intact with the same members and secretariat. No access was granted to co-opted alliance partners in the tricameral system. As an institution Parliament became increasingly marginalised as a seat of power.

Botha consolidated his own grip on power and that of the office of the Prime Minister by rationalising the cabinet, and reducing the number of *ad hoc* cabinet committees from some twenty to (eventually) four. The most important of these, and by far the largest,

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35 . Marais, pp.60-72.

was the State Security Council (SSC). This Council functioned as the prime security policy-making body in government during Botha's tenure.<sup>36</sup>

The reform of the executive, together with the inordinate input of senior officers of the military with their emphasis on co-ordination, strategic planning and centralised and formalised channels of control, resulted in the most highly centralised executive the country had seen. In effect, the SSC functioned as an inner cabinet, much to the chagrin of many of the NP caucus.

Botha's construction of a form of politico-military modern-day "Bonapartist" edifice was clearly antithetical to the central demands and principles of liberal democratic government. Whereas liberal democratic tenets hold that good government is characterised by constitutional checks and balances on the use of power, combined with the principles of accountability, transparency, consent, and representativeness; on each of these counts the South African government during the 1980's was characterised by its opposite.

In practical terms the liberal opposition in Parliament became structurally excluded from input into political governance, membership of standing committees notwithstanding. The legitimacy of the concept of loyal opposition had long since been abandoned, as Botha crudely admonished the PFP that he did not trust them on security matters. A consequence was that neither he nor individual Cabinet Ministers had any scruples in lying to or withholding information from Parliament on questions of "national security". Botha had used this strategy of challenging the opposition on security matters and trustworthiness to great effect when contributing to the ousting of the former leader of the PFP Colin Eglin in 1979.<sup>37</sup>

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36 . Schrire, p.37.

37 . For a fuller account of these events see Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, The Last White Parliament, London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985, and Ray Swart, Progressive Odyssey, Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 1991.

In overview, a general decline in the institutional influence and input of the National Party and Parliament in policy-making in favour of an increasingly powerful and independent executive branch is apparent. These trends severely circumscribed the role and efficacy of Parliament, and led to acute frustration and a sense of helplessness amongst the liberal opposition which would eventually find expression in the resignation of the leader of the PFP, Van Zyl Slabbert in February 1986.

Thus during the 1980's an acute paradox unfolded whereby the demand for Parliamentary opposition and the use of Parliamentary privilege was greater than ever before, whilst on the other hand, liberal opposition within Parliament became structurally and constitutionally marginalised.

It was in this social and political milieu that the questions about liberals' paradoxical and sometimes contradictory participation in institutions such as Parliament and the courts was thrown into sharp focus and it is to a discussion of the effect of the crisis at the institutional level that we now turn.

## CHAPTER FOUR

The organic crisis in South Africa which reached its apogee during the mid- to late-1980's also heralded the most acute crisis in liberalism in its long and robust history. It has been argued that during the period of crisis, the South African socio-political order constituted the antithesis of the liberal democratic condition. This was a condition of chronic repression, with the space for the dissemination of oppositional ideas and association, practically suffocated under the weight of repressive legislation and practice. In this chapter it will be argued that the dynamics of the organic crisis were such that they threatened the very existence of the embattled liberal ethos.

### The institutional crisis of liberalism

It was argued in chapter 1 that liberalism emerged within a particular matrix of historical, cultural, and economic circumstances culminating in its materialisation in party political form in the 19th century. Whereas the fountainhead of liberalism is to be found in the critique of tyranny and absolutism, the sustenance of this critique and its emergence into a developed ideology was historically dependent on the simultaneous flourishing of social institutions such as a free and independent press, free political association, constitutionalism and the rule of law. Thus liberalism took root in Britain, Europe and the United States, undergirded by specific social and economic frameworks conducive to, and constitutive of, the growth of a liberal society. It was also noted that the South African liberal tradition was founded on, and sustained by, its relationship to a matrix of institutional support including the broad framework of the rule of law, a free and independent press, and the Church. It will be argued in this chapter that the dynamics of the organic crisis of the 1980's were such as to force open and fracture some of the more delicate and tenuous alliances and bonds holding this protean movement and culture together. In other cases the crisis operated to strain severely the tendons of these relations to the point of dislocation.

The crisis of liberalism in the 1980's was at once unique and contradictory. The intensity of the onslaught against liberal institutions such as the press, universities, and the rule of

law itself, and even the semblance of liberal institutional persuasion through the privileges of Parliament, had become sharply eroded due to the overwhelming pervasiveness of the total strategy. The uniqueness of the crisis of the 1980's for liberals, however, was the degree of combined pressure on its values and beliefs also emanating from the left.

This section attempts a brief sketch of several cardinal social institutions that had historically had a forceful impact on the nature, scope and trajectory of political liberalism in South Africa which were subjected to a sustained attack by both the state and radical critics during the 1980's which resulted both in a "slide-away" from liberal principle within these institutions and, relatedly, the disruption of the relations which had traditionally operated between these institutions and political liberalism in its party construct.

#### The erosion of the rule of law

The principal conceptual, historical and constitutional framework providing for the realisation of the liberal state was that of the rule of law defined as:

(C)ontrolled executive power, equality before the law, the maintenance of personal freedom, and independent and impartial courts.<sup>1</sup>

The debate over the conceptualisation of the rule of law is deep and profound and beyond the ambit of this discussion, but it is relevant to note the existence of the debate and its particular relevance for South Africa during the period of crisis. The International Commission of Jurists declared as early as 1961 that:

The rule of law is a dynamic concept which should be employed to safeguard and advance the will of the people and the political rights of the individual and to establish social, economic, educational and cultural conditions under which the individual may achieve his dignity and realise

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1 . As quoted by John Dugard, in, 'Human Rights and the Rule of Law', in Democratic Liberalism in South Africa - Its History and Prospect, David Philip, 1987, p.277.

his legitimate aspirations in all countries whether dependent or independent.<sup>2</sup>

This social welfarist conception of the rule of law goes far beyond the traditional interpretation that characterised the foundation of the western liberal politico-legal order. South African liberal jurists' rejection of this welfarist conception of the rule of law is argued broadly on the grounds that social welfare rights are practically unenforceable by the courts and that the guiding rules of such principles would be impossible to define and to retain in the form required by impartial jurists. Liberal jurisprudence further contended that such a conception would serve to "detach legal thought from social reality". Indeed for liberals, the traditional doctrine of the rule of law stands a greater chance of acceptance by a wider cross-section of society than a conception which serves to politicize the rule of law.<sup>3</sup>

However, Mathews argues that the application and advocacy of the traditional formulation of the rule of law, whilst conceptually sound, has resulted in it being debased in the highly divided context of South Africa. The traditional framework is upheld most successfully in egalitarian societies in which all sides believe there is something to be gained by appealing to the law in defence of their interests and as a neutral and fair institution. Thus for Mathews, the course liberals ought to follow is in the pursuit of strategies which achieve the degree of egalitarianism which makes the rule of law appealing to all sections of society.<sup>4</sup>

Added to this structural limitation, the assault on the rule of law by the South African state has been relentless, and the political tension between the rule of law and executive fiat intense. Historically in South Africa, when the precepts of legal justice have conflicted with those of the demands of executive power, it has been the weight of political consideration, particularly since the accession to power of the National Party in

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2 . As quoted in AS Mathews, 'Human Rights and the Rule of Law, II, in, Butler, Elphick and Welsh, (Eds), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa - Its History and Prospect, David Philip, 1987, p.282.

3 . Mathews, p.282.

4 . Mathews, p.284.

1948, that has ranked prior to accepted 'Western' norms of legal convention and procedure.

As we have noted, the concept of rule of law is founded on a human rights ethos and, as such, stands in contradiction to the basic tenets of the South African state which are supposedly predicated on the sovereignty of God over man. Thus the very conception of the rule of law was considered by governmental legal theorists as an unacceptable philosophical and ethical framework for the South African legal order due to its humanist basis. Official legal doctrine as expounded in 1968 rejected the concept as being a political, rather than legal construct, and as the South African state operated on the assumption of rule of law is rule by law, it was therefore deemed to be acting justly if it acted within the prescripts of legislation duly passed by Parliament.<sup>5</sup>

The most notorious example of the government's lack of regard for the sovereignty of law was its packing of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in 1955 and the foreclosure of judicial review by the passing of the 1956 South Africa Act Amendment Act of 1956.

The widespread abrogation of the principle of *habeas corpus* dates to the country's first declaration of a state of emergency after the Sharpeville crisis in 1960 and was formalised in 1963 when the detention without trial clause was approved in the General Laws Amendment Act. These conditions were later tightened by the passage of the Internal Security Act in 1982. Under the provisions of the respective detention acts, some 73 000 people were detained between 1963 and 1989, with the most draconian measures adopted by the state under the ubiquitous state of emergency powers used between June 1985 and February 1990.<sup>6</sup>

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5 . John Dugard, 'Human Rights and the Rule of Law, I', in Butler et al (Eds), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: its history and prospect, pp.271-280.

6 . David Webster and Maggie Friedman, 'Repression and the State of Emergency: June 1987 - March 1989' in South African Review 5, Braamfontein, Ravan, 1989.

Whilst the assault on the rule of law by the state has been debilitating, the imposition of successive states of emergency from 1985, also directly animated the major critique from the left of the liberal conception of the sanctity and independence of the legal order in that, particularly during the period of crisis, far from affording its citizenry fair legal process, the South Africa courts were used effectively as instruments of oppressive political policies. Activists were often charged on the most tenuous of political criteria such as conspiring to 'make townships ungovernable' and conspiracy with the ANC. Long, dragged-out trials operated to remove activist leaders from the mainstream of organisations, such as was the case with UDF leadership in the Delmas trial. The denial of bail to the accused further served to remove the van of UDF leadership. The relatively small number of prosecutions resulting from detentions served to support the instrumentalist critique.

The performance of the judiciary in response to the threats of the encroaching and increasingly ubiquitous security system led liberal legal academic Anthony Mathews to conclude:

(T)he court's failures in the area of security law are greater than the achievements ... (O)ne may legitimately complain that the Supreme Court, since 1950, when the total onslaught on freedom and legality began, has failed (with some exceptions) to protect individual liberty, to understand and apply the requirements of due process, to check or restrain arbitrary action and to speak resolutely against uncivilised and sometimes barbarous official behaviour.<sup>7</sup>

The highly illiberal South African social order not only had severe repercussions for the underclasses in society, but also for legal professionals operating within this framework. Burgeoning state and executive power and the *de jure* and *de facto* abrogation of the rule of law and principles of *habeas corpus* placed many in the legal profession in a moral dilemma that went to the heart of the crisis of liberalism during the 1980's.

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7. Anthony Mathews, 'The South African Judiciary and the Security System', in South African Journal on Human Rights, Volume 1, 1985, pp.199-209.

This dilemma was brought into focus by both the intellectual criticisms levelled at the Hartian school of legal theory and legal positivism embraced by many liberal legal academics in South Africa, by legal academic Raymond Wacks. Wacks reasoned that even in a politico-legal order that was fundamentally just and egalitarian, the power of judges is of the magnitude that its use demands extreme circumspection. However, in a social formation that is fundamentally unjust, as in the South African case, its application confronts the judge (or by implication any legal practitioner) with a direct and personal moral challenge, and to the very purpose of the judicial process. This leads Wacks to conclude that, given the weight of unjust legislation in South Africa, judges ought to resign from the bench in order to safeguard the principles of justice:

A (judge's) resignation would be a clarion call: a statement of judicial despair and outrage. It would be an assertion of the judge's absolute fidelity to justice, a protest against the abuse of law. In a repressive legal order it would constitute an act of faith in the face of unconscionable legislation.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from the conceptual, moral and theoretical challenges to the liberal conception of the rule of law in the 1980's, the clearest symbolic radical challenge to the judicial system during the crisis was the emergence of 'people's courts', established by township street committees to mete out 'people's justice' to both civil and political offenders. As Lodge noted:

Of all the manifestations of people's power, the efforts of local organisations to administer popularly acceptable forms of civil and criminal justice were the most challenging to the state's moral authority.<sup>9</sup>

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8 . Raymond Wacks, 'Judges and Injustice' in The South African Law Journal, (1984) 101, pp.284-285. The Wacks intervention sparked an intensive debate not only about the role of judges, but the legal system in general. See the contributions to this debate in, Hugh Corder (Ed), Democracy and the Judiciary, IDASA, 1989, and Hugh Corder (Ed), Law and Social Practice on South Africa, Juta, 1988.

9 . As quoted in Jeremy Seekings, 'People's Courts and Popular Politics', in South African Review 5, Ravan, Braamfontein, 1989, p.133.

The ambivalence of the liberal community in condemning their arbitrary and gratuitous practices also served as a conspicuous marker to the overall liberal slide-away during the 1980's.

A further moral and legal dilemma confronting liberals during the period of crisis was the challenge of civil disobedience. The principle and practice of civil disobedience against an unjust and illegitimate authority is deeply embedded in liberal moral and political philosophy, examples of which can be found in the contractarian theories of Hobbes and Locke and the later classical liberal writings of John Stuart Mill. Thomas Jefferson claimed, on behalf of the American colonists that, "it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off (despotism).<sup>10</sup> The essence of the liberal dilemma is captured by Lon Fuller:

On the one hand we have an amoral datum called law, which has the peculiar quality of creating a moral duty to obey it. On the other hand we have a moral duty to do what we think is right and decent. When we are confronted by a statute we believe to be thoroughly evil we have to choose between two duties.<sup>11</sup>

In South Africa during the 1980's liberals were faced with this quandary in acute form. Indeed, one of the distinguishing characteristics between liberals operating within the formal political system and those aligning themselves to the methods of the "struggle" was their adopted position on questions of conscience and civil disobedience.

The challenge to liberals thrown up by the crisis of the 1980's was also clearly articulated by the question of conscription. The state's decision in October 1984 to commit troops, and by extension conscripted soldiers, to the townships to quell the uprising gave rise to heightened resistance to conscription as a question of moral conscience. Church groups', but in particular the 1983 Black Sash conference's, call for an end to conscription gave

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10 . As quoted in Michael Walzer, 'The Obligation to Disobey', in De Crespigny and Wertheimer (Eds), Contemporary Political Theory, Nelson, 1970, p.297.

11 . As quoted in Charles Villa-Vicencio, Civil Disobedience and Beyond; Law resistance and religion in South Africa, David Philip, 1990, p.107.

rise to the formation of the End Conscription Campaign in late 1983.<sup>12</sup> In 1988 the ECC became the first white formation to be banned in 20 years, but whilst active, served as the locus to which many young liberals looked for guidance on their rights, duties and obligations under the law on questions of military service. Notably the leadership of the PFP, and indeed the liberal press, adopted a predominantly hostile stance to the ECC, and the question of conscription became the central divisive issue between young liberals and the PFP leadership in the 1980's.

### The English Language Press

The centrality of freedom of thought and expression to the liberal ethos was discussed earlier. Indeed, the force of liberalism historically has been the pervasiveness of the idea that freedom of thought and expression not only challenges all restrictive ideologies and practices, but is also the wellspring of human progress. The institutional repository of these principles has been a free and independent press. In this regard the quintessential liberal statement of the cardinal importance of a free press and access to information was penned by American founding father Thomas Jefferson:

No experiment can be more interesting than that we are now trying, which we trust will end in establishing the fact, that man be governed by reason and truth. Our first object should therefore be to leave open to him all the avenues of truth. The most effectual hitherto found is the freedom of the press.<sup>13</sup>

The libertarian theory of the press, which broadly informs the operation of the English Language Press (ELP) in South Africa, holds that the principle of an independent and free press is indivisible from basic liberal tenets regarding the nature of the individual freedom and the regulation of the relationship of the individual and the state.<sup>14</sup>

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12 . Laurie Nathan, 'Marching to a different beat: the history of the End Conscription Campaign', in Cock and Nathan (Eds), War and Society - The militarisation of South African Society, David Philip, 1989, pp.308-323.

13 . Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, Four Theories of the Press, University of Illinois, 1962, p.47.

14 . Siebert, p.40.

Conversely, the centrality of a state-controlled press (or any ideological state apparatus) in maintaining undemocratic and illiberal practices, bears testimony to the potency of the press in the formulation and promulgation of ideas. It is largely accepted that the press does not shape thought, but impacts profoundly on what is thought about. Thus the press is functional in setting the political and social agenda of discourse in society.

Together with the traditional informational and 'Fourth Estate' role of exposing and challenging governmental excesses, the English Language Press in South Africa has historically also worked in unison with other liberal formations to challenge the state's assault on human rights. Historically, the ELP, although firmly committed to the preservation of the interests of its capitalist (and historically, in particular, mining capitalist) interests of its owners, to a greater or lesser degree opposed the Nationalist government in more vocal and strident form than did the United Party. The ELP also served as a public medium for the advancement of the views and interests of black and white opposition. This led Elaine Potter to argue that due to the ineffectiveness of the United Party as opposition to the illiberal policies and practices of the National Party, and further due to the exclusion of black people from formal political representation in Parliament, the ELP acted in the post-1948 period, as an "external opposition".<sup>15</sup>

One of the advantages the ELP enjoyed over political parties in making it an "effective opposition", was that its editorial direction was not determined by the clamour for electoral votes, but as the demise of the *RDM* showed, if it went too far for white readership advertising revenue declined. The other advantage the ELP enjoyed was that it could, to a point, express and represent views of the disenfranchised in South Africa. The beacon of the liberal press was the *Rand Daily Mail (RDM)*. Its role was central through its unrelenting opposition to governmental racial policy and practice and was, for example, the first newspaper to support the Progressive Party in the 1961 election. The *RDM* also played a leading role in the training of black journalists.

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15 . Elaine Potter, The Press as Opposition: The Political Role of South African Newspapers, London, Chatto Windus, 1975.

The effectiveness of the ELP's "black representative" role should not be overstressed, however, and was more apparent than real. Nevertheless, there existed a sense of mission and purpose about the ELP editors historically, as was highlighted by a former editor of the *Durban Daily News*, who argued that, "Our great responsibility was to (take up) the cudgels of the millions of voteless people".<sup>16</sup>

In retrospect, the high point of the ELP in its "fourth estate" role was in exposing and relentlessly publicising the scandal of the Department of Information by the *Sunday Express* and *Rand Daily Mail* in particular, which led to the downfall of Prime Minister Vorster.<sup>17</sup> In a perverse twist of irony both newspapers were closed down by South African Allied Newspapers (SAAN) in the 1980's, the *RDM* in particular being hit hard by the inroads made in its readership numbers by the Department of Information-funded *Citizen* newspaper. Indicative of the pressures on the ELP in the 1980's the principled, yet heavy loss-making *RDM* was replaced by the *Business Day*<sup>18</sup>. Another watermark for the ELP was SAAN newspapers' role in exposing the details of the deaths in detention of Steve Biko in 1977 and Neil Aggett in 1981.<sup>19</sup> In summarising the role of the ELP, Ken Owen has argued:

South Africa's English journalists deserve their reputation for courage in the face of political assault by the Government and - more importantly - political collapse on the part of opposition parties, universities, church, business interests and other elements of English South Africa.<sup>20</sup>

The low point in the history of the ELP was plumbed in 1983, however, when many newspapers supported the National Party in its referendum campaign for the implementation of the "fatally flawed" tricameral Parliament.

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16 . Potter, p.158.

17 . Owen, p.236.

18 . Gerald Shaw, 'The English language press', in Butler *et al* (Eds), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa, Cape Town, David Philip, 1987.

19 . Owen, p.236.

20 . Ken Owen, 'The Way Forward: The Press', in G. Jacobs (Ed), South Africa - The Road Ahead, Jonathan Ball, 1986, p.239. A fuller account of the forces and pressures under which the ELP operated during the period of crisis is offered by Harvey Tyson in Editors Under Fire, Random House, 1993.

Despite its distinguished pedigree, the efficacy of the ELP in curbing government excess was limited and the extent and commitment of the ELP to the cause of non-racial democracy was sometimes uneven and occasionally complacent. Years of harassment and restrictions, together with managerial pressures on editors and journalists, took their toll and, in the view of former *Star* editor René de Villiers, this resulted in a sense of frustrated resignation to the impermeability of the Nationalist edifice.<sup>21</sup>

Central to this sometimes contradictory and paradoxical positioning of the ELP was the fact that it too operated in a hostile and restrictive environment. In terms of the state's assault on the press, two years after coming to power the National Party instituted the Press Commission which deliberated for some fourteen years, after which time it concluded that much press coverage and copy was harming South Africa's international image. The principle of self-censorship pervaded the thinking and discourse of government ministers who, whilst paying lip service to the desirability of a free press, passed a phalanx of restrictive acts which curbed the press in its reportage of security matters in particular. In 1954 the government established a Commission of Inquiry in Regard to Undesirable Publications. The final outcome of its findings was the passage of the 1963 Publications and Entertainments Act which provided, at the urging of the then Deputy Minister PW Botha, for pre-publication censorship.

The range of laws circumscribing the right to publish freely was vast and grew with the intensification of apartheid legislation. Included in these acts were, the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act, the Public Safety and Criminal Law Amendment Acts and the Riotous Assembly Act and General Law Amendment Act of 1956 and 1962 respectively. Subsequently, even more draconian measures were introduced by the government and in 1977 it exercised its power in crudest form by closing down the *World* and *Weekend World*. In 1981 it moved to close its successors the *Post* and *Sunday Post*.<sup>22</sup>

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21 . Personal interview with René de Villiers, November 1987.

22 . Hachten and Giffard, p.103.

Amongst the findings of the Steyn Commission of 1980 was the following:

The South African people are being subjected to a total onslaught both external and internal emanating from the Soviet Union and its proxies and fellow travellers ... Improper climate setting is an ingredient of South African journalism and this type of journalism mostly challenges the establishment ... With the exception of the Citizen, the English Language Press are uniformly opposed to the government. Consequently almost every action by the Government is ruthlessly and often irresponsibly criticised ... Our evaluation satisfied us that the media do indeed contribute to the extending of the ambit and intensity of the conflict situation and political polarisation, and that they in fact encourage the revolutionary forces which are at work in this country.<sup>23</sup>

During the 1980's the assault on the press also evinced a structural dimension. At the time of the demise of the *Rand Daily Mail* PW Botha announced that this event ushered in a 'new South Africanism' in the press. This new South Africanism was not merely a construction of Botha's imagination, but reflected the general corporatist propinquity between government and big business as discussed in the previous chapter. During the emergency, government intelligentsia coined a new term "consensus journalism" which, de-coded, translated into self-censorship and uncritical reportage for the sake of so-called "national interest".

A process of direct intervention and interference from the state and PW Botha in particular operated in the Afrikaans press, whereas the process used to force compliance from the ELP was perhaps more insidious.<sup>24</sup> In the case of the ELP the state simply leapfrogged editors by holding discussions with the corporate owners of the newspapers in order to gain compliance.<sup>25</sup> Commenting on the workings of the new alliance, Dugard noted:

This link would also explain the decision of the SAAN board to close its most anti-Government newspapers in Johannesburg and continue with the

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23 . Dalling, p.168.

24 . Personal interview with Professor Willem de Klerk who, as editor of Rapport, was repeatedly telephoned by President PW Botha in an attempt to muzzle him.

25 . Timothy Hughes, The English Language Press in South Africa, unpublished mimeograph, University of Cape Town, 1987.

*Sunday Times* and *Financial Mail* which are both close in thinking to the new alliance between big business and Government ... the reason for the closure of the *Mail* and *Express* is now out in the open. And we, the South African public, know how far the new alliance between big business and Government is prepared to go.<sup>26</sup>

The most draconian measures adopted by the state were announced in 1987 by former Minister of Home Affairs Stoffel Botha in terms of the Public Safety Act aimed specifically at publications not toeing the corporatist line. Despite the fact that the Minister possessed an embarrassment of restrictive legislation to eradicate acute journalistic opposition, the new legislation empowered the Minister to ban publication of a newspaper after a number of warnings. The Minister was aware that the closure of any but the strongest of newspapers, such as those of the *Argus* stable, would result in financial collapse. Given that the *Argus* as a matter of policy never contravened emergency regulations, it was thus clear that the legislation was aimed at curbing the alternative media which had sprung up during the 1980's.

The Ministry further established a Directorate of Media Relations, to deliberate on the desirability of publications in terms of their non-compliance with the new regulations. The absurdity of the Directorate was highlighted by the Minister's claim that it would establish "scientifically", through the employment of experts, whether or not the copy in a publication promoted a climate of revolution.<sup>27</sup>

But as with other liberal and liberal-sympathetic institutions, the threat to the ELP emanated not only from the state. The acutely and violently divided nature of South African society also brought the libertarian interpretation and practice of the ELP under attack from both black journalists and the left. During the 1970's there had developed a strong Black Consciousness tradition amongst African journalists, resulting in "separatist" tensions on newspapers. These tensions found expression in the formation of the exclusively black Media Workers Association in 1980.<sup>28</sup> The formation of the

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26 . Keyan Tomaselli, Ruth Tomaselli, and Johan Muller, Narrating the Crisis: hegemony and the South African press, Johannesburg, Richard Lyon & Co, 1987, pp.84-85.

27 . *Argus*, 3 September 1987.

28 . Hachten and Giffard, p.139.

Association heightened tensions between black journalists and management, resulting in strike action later that year. The working environment, both personal and political, experienced by black journalists brought them into an intense state of cognitive dissonance. The traditional libertarian theory into which black journalists were inducted, and which demanded impartial and objective reportage, was a position increasingly untenable for black journalists caught up in the maelstrom of the conflict and divisions of South African township life. Black journalists found it increasingly difficult merely to record events as dispassionate observers. These dynamics led to the call for advocacy journalism, or committed journalism.<sup>29</sup> These impulses crystallised in the founding and publication of a number of “alternative” publications such as *Grassroots* and *SASPU National* overtly critical of political liberalism. At the same time the crisis gave rise to the emergence of radical journals such as *Work in Progress* whose revisionist critique served to challenge both conventional and liberal orthodoxy.

A perception is held by a number of liberals that white journalists, too, abandoned their liberal roots and engaged in a policy of pro-UDF journalism often hostile to liberal principle and liberal formations in particular.<sup>30</sup> Added to this was the phenomenon of under-reporting of “necklacings” and crimes committed by “Comrades” in the progressive movement during the crisis years.

Added to these factors were the personal and political pressures to which liberal journalists were themselves subjected, including the closure of newspapers such as the RDM, which led to an increasing number simply emigrating, thereby robbing political liberalism of many of its more articulate and informed advocates and practitioners. Thus by 1987 the ELP as a central liberal institution, was deeply embattled and in a number of

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29. See here the debates in the collected volume The Star Centennial Conference: Conflict and the Press, Johannesburg, Argus Publications, 1987.

30. See Ken Owen, ‘Liberalism: What Kind of South Africa?’, in Liberalism and the Middle Ground, SAIRR, 1986, pp.21-31; and Ken Owen, ‘The Way Forward: The Press’, in South Africa: The Way Forward, 1986, pp.231-245. An overview of these trends is offered by Gerald Shaw, ‘The English-Language Press’, in Democratic Liberalism in South Africa - Its History and Prospect, Butler et al, pp.288-300.

instances concerned more with the question of economic survival than with carrying the lamp of liberty.<sup>31</sup>

### The Church and political liberalism in South Africa

As was pointed out in the historical overview, the genesis of a developed liberalism was a trenchant critique of absolutism, and in particular the religious absolutism of the Church. The relationship between political liberalism and the Church in South Africa is historically exceptional, however, in that, unlike its European variant, it has been characterised more by mutual support than antagonism.

As has been noted, liberalism in South Africa has historically been infused with a moral code heavily informed by Christian ethics and teaching, leading to a close and often symbiotic relationship between political liberalism and the Church. The message of a shared “brotherhood”, the virtues of tolerance and forgiveness, the vision of a common Christian society devoid of artificial divisions, and indeed the Gospels’ depiction of the meekness of Christ’s demeanour in dealing with both opponents and the sovereign state, all served as indelible ethical markers to the behaviour and belief of numerous leading South African liberals. For Jan Hofmeyr, the only liberal ever to have come close to governing South Africa, Christian belief served as the cornerstone of his political conviction:

The central truth, which we cannot escape, try as we may, is that of the Fatherhood of God, carrying with it the implication of the brotherhood of man, irrespective of race, creed or colour, and the concept of a world-wide family, all the members of which stand in the same relationship to the head.<sup>32</sup>

Relations between liberals and the Christian church were particularly close during the interwar years. According to Elphick, liberals of the 1920’s and 1930’s are to be understood primarily in relation to the ‘vast network of religious and social institutions

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31 . Timothy Hughes, ‘The English Language Press in South Africa’, Honours Paper, Department of Political Studies, UCT, October 1987.

32 . As quoted in Elphick, ‘Mission Christianity and Interwar Liberalism’ in, Butler et al, p.75.

that constituted the benevolent empire'.<sup>33</sup> Elphick notes that much of the liberal discourse and opinion on questions of nationalism and racism held during this time was informed by the international debates thrown up by the General Missionary Conferences and conferences on these topics convened by the church.

The English churches in South Africa have exhibited a marked ambivalence, however. From their inception they have been uncomfortable with and have opposed discriminatory practices on the grounds of belief and due to the fact that a majority of their membership was black. On the other hand, they have also been infused with an ethos of paternalism and cultural chauvinism. The view expressed by the Anglican Church in the 1950's is illustrative:

Giving the vote to all non-Europeans would not only be a danger to the Europeans, but a very grave danger to the non-Europeans themselves. In South Africa the population is not overwhelmingly black but, except in a few rare instances, overwhelmingly ignorant. We welcome qualified Africans as responsible citizens, but the time is not ripe for universal enfranchisement.<sup>34</sup>

More contemporaneously, the perceived need of liberals to move beyond the level of abstract protest against governmental racial policy towards the formulation of just alternatives, in the light of the Prohibition of Political Interference Act and the demise of the Liberal Party, led to the formation of the Christian Institute-sponsored Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPRO-CAS) in 1969. The project, both in its conceptualisation and recruitment of commissioners, was largely informed by a Christian liberal imperative. The ethical framework of the final report of the Political Commission is located firmly within a liberal Christian paradigm and its workings and findings mark a high point in relations between political liberals and the church in seeking common solutions to the South African morass.<sup>35</sup> However, even at this point local and international pressures had been building up which, in time, would result in the straining

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33 . Elphick, p.69.

34 . Charles Villa-Vicencio, Trapped in Apartheid, David Philip, 1988, p.77.

35 . South Africa's Political Alternatives, Report of the Political Commission of the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society, Johannesburg, 1973.

of relations between rank-and-file and leading liberals and important elements of the Church, and it is to this process we now turn.

### Church activism

Although English churches in South Africa remained captive of a theology of moderation, the tectonic changes in South Africa's post-1948 socio-political structure had a profound ecumenical effect. The crudely discriminatory and patently unjust nature of apartheid rule demanded of the Church a heightened and demonstrable commitment to social justice, together with greater vigilance in countering the destructive impact of apartheid ideology. Of profound domestic significance for the church in South Africa were calls made at the World Council of Churches Assembly in 1948 for the churches to take a vigorous stand against discrimination or segregation on the grounds of race or colour.<sup>36</sup> The domestic response to this call was a sustained, if somewhat uneven, period of clerical protest against apartheid legislation such as the Mixed Marriages Act, the Group Areas Act, the migratory labour system and the 1953 Bantu Education Act. Such was the stance taken by the church that theological academic John de Gruchy has commented:

There must be few comparable instances in the history of the Christian church where such sustained protest has been waged over such a long period against state legislation and action.<sup>37</sup>

As Villa-Vicencio points out, however, whilst the English churches protested against the Bantu Education Act, the Roman Catholic Church in South Africa openly resisted the state's efforts to take full control of black schooling by keeping its African schools open without the benefit of the state subsidy.<sup>38</sup> The more forthright stance of the Catholic Church was again highlighted by the 1957 Catholic Bishop's condemnation of apartheid as "fundamentally and intrinsically evil".<sup>39</sup>

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36 . Daryl M. Balia, Christian Resistance to Apartheid, Braamfontein, Skotaville, 1989, p.11.

37 . John W. de Gruchy, The Church Struggle in South Africa, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, p.88.

38 . Villa-Vicencio, p.101.

39 . Daryl Balia, Christian Resistance to Apartheid, Skotaville, 1989, p.23.

Positions adopted by the church have reflected not only a response to government policy, but have also been increasingly informed by civil protest and resistance. Thus the political crisis into which the country was plunged by the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 propelled Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Joost de Blank to convene, via the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Cottesloe Conference. Whilst the conference failed fully to address the underlying structural questions besetting the country. It marked a shift in consciousness of many white clerics to the role of the church amidst political conflict and violence.

The post-Soweto (1976) period witnessed an observable increase in the number of black people occupying leadership positions within the Church and none were more vociferous in their condemnation of the apartheid state than the newly-elected General Secretary of the SACC Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu who took up this position in 1978. Through the agitation of black clerics in particular, increasing theological pressure was brought to bear on the South African state. In taking its lead from Dr Alan Boesak, then Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, the 1982 World Alliance of Reformed Churches Assembly in Ottawa declared apartheid a heresy, thus setting the tone for a further tightening of the ecumenical assault on the apartheid state.

The emergence of an overtly political critique of the government came in 1984 in the form of the *Call to Prayer for and End to Unjust Rule* articulated by Boesak and the subsequent publication of its *Theological Rationale*. The document contains the following call:

We have continually prayed for the authorities, that they may govern wisely and justly. Now, in solidarity with those who suffer most, in this hour of crisis we pray that God in His grace remove from His people the tyrannical structures of oppression and the present rulers in our country who persistently refuse to heed the cry for justice ...<sup>40</sup>

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40 . Quoted in Charles Villa-Vicencio, Civil Disobedience and Beyond: law, resistance and religion in South Africa, David Philip, 1990, p.83.

The call evoked an unprecedented protest within the white establishment including that of the *Natal Witness*, which advised that:

The SACC, and the churches in general would be better advised to try to change the hearts and minds of their followers - and to let the political process take care of itself.<sup>41</sup>

The increasingly overt political protest strategy of leading clergy was demonstrated most clearly in 1985 when whilst the Progressive Federal Party sat in its chambers, prominent church leaders such as then Bishop Desmond Tutu, Reverend Dr Beyers Naudé, Dr Allan Boesak, and Archbishop Denis Hurley led marches on Parliament and in other centres to demand the removal of police from the townships and to insist that the government meet urgently with legitimate black leaders to resolve the political crisis.

The path of increasing antagonism between state and church in fact foreshadowed growing tensions and dissonance between important elements of the church and liberals. Unlike the confrontation between the church and state, however, the dispute between liberals and the church was principally over questions of the means for the achievement of liberation. The dominant issues of disagreement concerned the use of economic measures such as sanctions and the use of violence to bring about liberation. As we have noted, liberals retained both a principled and pragmatic opposition to the use of violence as a means to the achievement of a just ends. They also, however, through their belief in the structurally liberalising consequences of a growing industrial and market economy, adopted a strong anti-sanctions position. This position was also informed by a reasoned critique of the efficacy of sanctions in terms of the perceived non-alignment of intended cause and effect, and because sanctions ran contrary to their own particular class interests. Disputes over these two controversial questions increasingly marked relations between political liberals and those identifying with the struggle from within the Church, the area to which we now turn.

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41 . Balia, p.110.

### The church and economic pressure

One of the major fracturing points between that of the church and liberals to the state's racial policies stemmed from the debates of the 1966 WCC-sponsored "World Conference on Church and Society" concerning economic measures against South Africa. The conference recognised the social danger of racial discrimination and noted that the capacity of those practising such policies to remain in power was buttressed by foreign investment. As such, churches globally were called on to recognise the legitimate rights of those discriminated against on the grounds of race and a call was made to:

Support all practicable measures aimed at changing any political and economic order which reflects the denial of political rights or economic opportunity, segregation, discrimination, or other suppression.<sup>42</sup>

The resulting "Message to the People of South Africa" issued by the South African Council of Churches called on Christians to make a conscious choice between allegiance to human, secular and ascriptive affiliations hostile to the message of the gospel, or to commit to the authority of Christ. It is of note that at the time the English Language Press came out strongly in support of the message.<sup>43</sup>

Later that year the WCC, in consultation with SACC, convened a meeting in Harare of some 60 world Church leaders, which concluded that South Africa had reached its "Kairos", or moment of truth, and issued the strongest statement yet, calling on the international community to apply immediate and comprehensive sanctions.

In 1968 at its fourth assembly held in Uppsala Sweden, the World Council of Churches led the clarion call to economically empower the black underclasses in South Africa whilst weakening the regime. This was followed by the adoption of a firm programme of action spearheaded by the WCC to promote disinvestment in South Africa on the grounds that foreign investment in South Africa served to strengthen the white minority government. In 1976 the National Conference of the SACC initiated a study on the question of disinvestment resulting in the preparation of a code of ethics for businesses

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42 . Balia, p.31.

43 . Balia, pp.35-36.

operating in South Africa. The latter decision was largely informed by the liberal position held by many in the upper echelons of the SACC that economic development served in the long term to erode the artificiality of apartheid structures and, secondly, the more moral question of the “harm” economic sanctions would do to the acutely impoverished appeared uppermost in swaying the SACC to oppose outright economic sanctions in favour of the code.

SACC thinking on the question took a somewhat different direction under the guidance of newly-elected Secretary-General Desmond Tutu in 1978. International business was called on carefully to reconsider its position on investment and to give credence to efforts to empower the disadvantaged. Again the WCC gave the lead when calling in 1980 for Christians to pressure governments to impose a comprehensive range of sanctions on South Africa including: the withdrawal of investments, an end to bank loans, an arms embargo, oil sanctions and for the general isolation of the state of South Africa.<sup>44</sup>

The SACC response was characteristically divided along racial lines, and it was only in 1985 that the National Conference resolved to call on foreign churches to push for economic sanctions against South Africa as a peaceful means of promoting change.

#### The right to resist

In the same year as the launch of SPRO-CAS, the WCC moved to a more radically critical position *vis-a-vis* issues of racism, and the South African government in particular. The church was reminded of its historically recognised right of resistance to tyranny, which served as a precursor for the WCC to give support to resistance movements and revolutions aimed at the eradication of racism or economic tyranny.<sup>45</sup>

The ecumenical programme to combat racism was hereby established whose task it was to fund resistance movements, and to raise the organisational strength of the oppressed. Through this was born the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) and as the major resistance movements opposing the South African government, the African National

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44 . Balia, p.106.

45 . Balia, p.47.

Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) became major beneficiaries of PCR funding.

This development met with considerable opposition from the then white-dominated SACC, but with almost unanimous support from black churches. Hardening divisions within the church were driven home by the passionate arguments of black and white clergy who had sons serving in the liberation movements and SADF respectively. One of the few exceptions amongst white clergy was Rev Beyers Naudé who proclaimed that black people had “breathed a sigh of relief” that the church was finally demonstrating a serious commitment to the eradication of racist rule in South Africa and had now come to clearly identify with the wronged and the oppressed. SACC disquiet about this shift in policy resulted in a telling WCC response:

(Blacks were) more and more speaking a language different from yours. They have become impatient because in their eyes the white liberals don't deliver the goods. They respect you and love you, but they are not impressed by the results of your strategy.<sup>46</sup>

By 1974 the All Africa Conference of Churches had begun to grasp the nettle of the use of violence in the prosecution of the liberation struggle. The position proffered by General Secretary Burgess Carr was that the selective violence of the liberation movements should be viewed as a defensive device and one which could find some biblical justification in that the freedom fighter had:

(H)elped the Church to discover a new and radical appreciation of the Cross. In accepting the violence of the Cross, God, in Jesus Christ, sanctified violence into a redemptive instrument for bringing into being a full human life.<sup>47</sup>

The implications of the AACC conference were fully discussed by the SACC conference later that year, and after heated debate, the Hammanskraal Resolution was agreed to. The resolution, *inter alia*, called on Christians not to obey the call to arms of an illegitimate

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46 . Balia, p.51.

47 . Balia, p.56.

and unjust authority. Christians were warranted to engage in armed conflict, if at all, only in the prosecution of a “just war”. Followers of the Church were called on to both reject the structural violence of the government, and to eschew the radical option adopted by the liberation struggle. A scripturally-supported “third way” was recommended, that of conscientious objection and other non-violent means of protest. This intervention by the Church not only offered moral guidance to its congregation, but struck at the heart of state authority. As such, it was to bring the church into an overt conflict with the state and indeed with many liberals. With the exception of the *Rand Daily Mail* all English-speaking newspapers condemned the resolution. PFP spokesman on Defence, Van Zyl Slabbert, also expressed the party’s opposition to the provisions of the resolution.<sup>48</sup>

A more thorough-going critique of the immorality of the South African state and of the question of structural violence later emerged within the school of “contextual theology”. The thrust of this school was a re-interpretation of the message of the gospel within the context of conditions of injustice and repression. This hermeneutical intervention had a profound effect on the thinking of a number of leading clergy, and particularly those closely involved with the struggle. Contextual theology generated a thoroughgoing critique of the state, capitalist relations and indeed the liberal/christian ethos in South Africa, and served to lay the groundwork for the Church’s most acute period of activism. A leading proponent of contextual theology Albert Nolan highlights the tenor of its critique:

Confrontation and conflict does not, and need not necessarily entail *hatred*. Class conflict and class struggle, which Christians have traditionally been reluctant to acknowledge, do not necessarily entail hatred. Such struggles may in fact be the only effective way of changing the situation, the only effective way of pulling down the mighty from their thrones.

Those who maintain an unjust distribution of wealth and power and those who prop up their thrones are in fact our enemies ... As a group or class they will never come down from their thrones willingly or voluntarily ... The ruling class as a whole cannot step down: we will have to pull them down from their thrones.<sup>49</sup>

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48 . Balia, p.58.

49 . Albert Nolan, *Taking Sides*, CIIR, London 1984, pp.10-11.

Leading from the critique of contextual theology a critically important conceptual turning point in relations between liberals and elements of the Church, emerged through the 1985 publication of the *Kairos Document*, which demanded that the church in effect choose sides in the struggle between the state and the forces of liberation.<sup>50</sup> The document *inter alia* asserted that:

(O)nce it is established beyond doubt that a particular regime is tyrannical, it forfeits the right to govern and the people acquire the right to resist.<sup>51</sup>

The *Kairos* discourse tapped into the problematic of the 'Just War' and gave rise to the theological contextualisation and rationalisation of the use of violence as a last resort in the prosecution of the liberation struggle. Thus by 1987 the SACC had adopted the *Lusaka Statement*, which *inter alia* declared:

While remaining committed to peaceful change, we recognise that the nature of the South African regime which wages war against its own inhabitants and neighbours compels the (liberation) movements to the use of force along with other means to end oppression. We call upon the churches and the international community to seek ways to give this affirmation practical effect in the struggle for liberation in the region and to strengthen their contacts with the liberation movements.<sup>52</sup>

As the Greek word *Kairos* implies, the 'moment of truth' had arrived in South Africa, when liberals were increasingly forced to choose sides on a host of fundamental values and allegiances. Although both the church and liberals were committed to non-racial democracy the two adopted increasingly bifurcated stances on the appropriate methods and means for the achievement of these shared goals and principles. Insofar as leading clerics and theologians promoted a form of liberation theology and socialist programme for a future South Africa, both their challenge and prescripts were fundamentally at odds with those of liberals.

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50 . James Leatt, 'The Church in Resistance Post 1976'. Research Paper prepared for the South Africa Beyond Apartheid Project, p.140.

51 . As quoted in Villa-Vicencio, p.83.

52 . As quoted in Villa-Vicencio, p.60.

### The state's response to church activism

The state's response to the Hammanskraal Resolution was to pass legislation dealing severely with conscientious objectors and to fund the establishment of the Christian League of Southern Africa. The express aim of the latter was to counter the influence of the Christian Institute and the SACC.

By 1982 the government had appointed the Eloff Commission to look into the affairs of the SACC. The thinking of the Eloff Commission conformed to the pattern of "Total Strategy" and sought to lift the protective ecclesiastical veil in order to reduce the Council to a "legitimate" secular and political target. The state stopped short, however, of declaring the SACC an "affected organisation".<sup>53</sup> Whilst the implicit aim of the Commission was an attempt to both discredit the Council and to delineate (in the eyes of the establishment), the acceptable parameters of theology and political intervention, it had the unintended effect of confirming to both the liberation movements and the underclasses in South Africa that the SACC did indeed champion their cause and was a relevant player in the burgeoning wave of black protest.

That the state stopped short of declaring the SACC an affected or restricted organisation was significant in that it demonstrated the paradoxical position of the church during the period of crisis. The political space open to political and civil protest formations became so constricted by state oppression that the church both physically and abstractly became a major locus of political protest. The avowed Christian identity of the South African state and the Christian national ethic girding the National Party government made it ethically difficult for it to demonise the church in the same way it had done with all other oppositional groupings. Thus the church became radicalised not only by the every day experiences of its increasingly black clergy, but also by the fact that in providing a "safe" bulwark against the extremes of the state's excesses it made itself attractive as a site of protest for the Mass Democratic Movement. Thus a dialectic operated whereby the dynamics of protest animated the clergy to adopt more forcefully critical positions which, in turn, led them into leadership positions and spokesperson of the disenfranchised

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53 . Balia, p.92.

majority. The phenomenon of black clergy serving as patrons of the formations of the Mass Democratic Movement is to be understood in this context.

In summary then, in adopting or being drawn into an overtly political discourse and praxis, the position of the black clergy brought it into conflict with the PFP, especially on issues of sanctions, violence, civil disobedience, and participation in the political structures of the "system". Indeed, as will be discussed in the following chapter, SACC leaders were at the forefront of the call for the boycott of elections during the 1980's and for the PFP to quit Parliament, both of which had a deleterious effect on the party.

Thus it may be concluded that whilst liberals and the church continued to share a commonality of interest in their principled rejection of racism, their historically symbiotic relationship was severely challenged by the forces thrown up by the dynamic of the structural crisis during the 1980's.

#### The English-speaking Universities

During the period of crisis the dual State/radical assault against liberal institutions also extended into the sphere of English-language universities. The apartheid state's assault on the academic freedom of English-language universities is well-documented, as is the spirited response to this challenge.<sup>54</sup> During the 1980's, however, English-speaking universities, as central repositories of liberal values, teachings and ethics, were also besieged from the left.

The Marxist-revisionist challenge to liberal historiography and scholarship has been briefly alluded to, but apart from the considerable intellectual challenge to liberals from the 1970's onwards, the English-speaking universities qua liberal institutions, came increasingly under the hammer of the radical challenge during the 1980's.

As part of its campaign for the isolation of the South African state, the ANC called for the implementation of a cultural boycott which included *inter alia* the operation of an

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54 . See the essays contained in the volume The Future of the University in South Africa, Van der Merwe and Welsh (Eds), St Martin's, 1977.

academic boycott. Whilst its avowed objective was the weakening and isolation of the South African State, in its effect, the call for an academic boycott struck at the heart of the *fons et origo* of the liberal ethos. Academic freedom has two dimensions, the freedom to learn and the freedom to teach; and forms a sub-set of the first generation fundamental liberal freedoms of speech, association and conscience. Its abrogation or threat to its free operation is thus viewed by liberals as a fundamental assault on core liberal values.<sup>55</sup>

The clearest presentation of the liberal view of the role of the University in promoting the free exchange of ideas is provided by the 1975 Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression at Yale:

A university must do everything possible to ensure within it the fullest degree of intellectual freedom. The history of intellectual growth and discovery clearly demonstrates the need for unfettered freedom, the right to think the unthinkable, discuss the unmentionable and challenge the unchallengeable.<sup>56</sup>

The academic boycott implicitly directly challenged this conception. Its methods of enforcement included the refusal of international institutions of higher learning to receive South African academics but, more potently, attempted to prevent foreign academics (and research material) from entering South Africa. The reasons for targeting the academic community are of interest. In summary they included the accusation that it formed part of the ideological state apparatus and thus served to 'bolster the regime', particularly those operating in repressive non-liberal institutions. Secondly, that the academic community in South Africa generally identified with and served to promote a colonial 'Western' conception of academia. Finally, it was argued that foreign academics served to legitimise the South Africa state by virtue of their mere presence.<sup>57</sup>

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55 . See David Welsh, 'The O'Brien Affair' (A speech to the Cape Town Press Club) in Reality, May 1987, pp.17-19.

56 . As quoted in the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Events Which Occurred on the Campus of the University of Cape Town on 7 and 8 October 1986, (The Du Plessis Commission), UCT, 18 December 1986, annexure 3, p.4.

57 . Glen Goosen, *ibid*, pp.12-13.

The underlying rationale of the academic boycott was contextualised by one of its protagonists at the University of Cape Town in October 1986:

The campaign for the complete isolation of South Africa is a last attempt to force change by non-violent means. As a tactic it cannot be effective unless it is swift, hard and thorough-going in its implementation. Each wavering concession and each small breach - including unsolicited violation of the academic boycott - is only going to prolong the terrible waiting.<sup>58</sup>

The vague and undeveloped reasoning underlying the academic boycott fuelled the extant dynamics of the 'liberation before education' strategy, together with the increasing trend of political intolerance at the English-language universities.<sup>59</sup> Taken together, these forces led to even greater curtailment of academic freedom at the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand.<sup>60</sup> This phenomenon was most clearly and publicly demonstrated in October 1986 when a lecture series delivered by international scholar, statesman and politician Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien to the University of Cape Town, was disrupted by a group of students protesting O'Brien's rejection of the academic boycott. Whilst the disruption of the lectures was widely condemned, these actions were merely symptomatic of the assault on the liberal ethos at English-language campuses. The extended public debate on what became known as the "O'Brien Affair" served to highlight the underlying tensions that had developed between liberals and radicals, or so-called "progressive" academics and students on English-language campuses. The University was rent by the issue, a condition that was compounded by the procedures and findings of the Du Plessis Commission established to investigate the disruptions. A leading international scholar wrote of the Du Plessis Commission's Report:

I am disgusted (but alas, not all that surprised) at its mixture of naivete and doublethink, its obvious partiality ... the flabbiness of its

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58 . As quoted by Neville Alexander in 'The Academic Boycott - Issues and Implications', in *Forum*, published by the Committee of the UCT Academics Association, Number 29, March 1987.

59 . Du Plessis Commission, pp.28-29.

60 . See the results of a survey of academic freedom and freedom of speech of the Academic Freedom Committee, University of Cape Town, September 1991.

recommendations, and its apparent willingness to countenance thuggery in the name of the 'sensitivity' of the issues involved ... The Commissions's feeble response to the violence and intimidation that took place will do nothing to 'heal' wounds; far from promoting 'reconciliation' within the university community, it can have no other effect than exacerbating the polarization that already exists ... I regret most profoundly that the original image of UCT, which made me happy to come here and proud to be a member of its staff, is now badly tarnished ... it has become just another of the institutions collapsing under pressure from an anarchic mob. I see very little in the way of a future for this university in which academics can pursue their vocation in peace, free from intimidation.<sup>61</sup>

Thus the liberal epithet used historically to describe the English-speaking campuses and the values for which they stood, were challenged not only by "progressive" academics, but also by the increasing number of black students managing to prize their way through the myriad educational and bureaucratic restrictions placed on them by the apartheid state.

The assault on liberal values, beliefs and institutions brought on by the organic crisis during the 1980's led to a condition of chronic despondency and lack of faith amongst its adherents. The response of "defeated" liberals was often convoluted and contradictory. Thousands simply emigrated. Others resigned themselves to defeat and slid comfortably into the false security zone provided by the pervasive exhortations of the total strategy. Still others, felicitously termed "angry" liberals, abandoned liberal principle and praxis and sided with the burgeoning "progressive" movement. Some, very few, held the liberal line. Indeed, the problem for liberals in the 1980's was that they were increasingly unable to define or measure the line. The sands were shifting beneath their feet.

Former Liberal Party and Black Sash activist Jill Wentzel not only recognised the obvious external threats from the ideological left and right to liberalism during the 1980's, but identified and articulated a more insidious internal erosion amongst people formally or ascriptively defined as liberal. She noted with the perspicacity of thirty years of liberal activism, that formerly liberal institutions became increasingly occupied and

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61 . Confidential correspondence to Dr Stuart Saunders pursuant to the release of the Du Plessis Report (name withheld).

directed by people who had abandoned the search for “realism and decency” in favour of people who had lost sight of the relationship between means and ends, and who were increasingly animated by the prescripts of liberatory, rather than liberal ideology, as enshrined for example, in the *Kairos Document*. Wentzel recounts:

I first became uneasy at the Black Sash conference in Durban in 1982 when the more radical, mostly Marxist, members were that much more energetic than usual in lecturing the rest, predictably on economic justice being more important than civil rights and also on the stupidity and moral slackness of ‘working within the system’. What upset me the most was ... that the majority of the delegates and observers, who didn’t like this general drift, showed no signs of standing up to it ... (T)hat trend, that unwillingness to stand up to the hard left, seems then to have established itself throughout the white liberal constituency ... What was developing, though it took me long to realise it, was a different, more romantic, highly moralistic impetus in the ranks of the Sash, the PFP and all the usual opponents of the government.<sup>62</sup>

Liberal newspaper editor Ken Owen had also, as we have noted, observed related patterns amongst liberals. He saw his task as one of pointing out the moral and political indefensibility and dangers of “slide-away” liberals and radicals:

I looked around me at the liberal establishment in Johannesburg, whose idea it seemed was to die glorious deaths and I thought God help us all if it’s left up to you people. So I started shouting that the Emperor had no clothes.<sup>63</sup>

The liberal crisis of identity and related slide-away forced a series of organised liberal responses, however. In July 1985 some 60 participants and observers convened a Liberal Party workshop at Grahamstown. The workshop had a functionality at a number of levels. Firstly, it brought together many of the surviving figureheads of the classical liberal tradition in the country with the purpose of focusing on the liberal question, for the first time since the SPRO-CAS report in 1969. The sociological impact of this “belongingness” for liberals in the increasingly hostile political environment is not

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62 Jill Wentzel, ‘The Liberal Slide-away’ in, Liberalism and the Middle Ground: 1986 Presidential Address and Symposium on Liberalism, SAIRR, 1986, p.45.

63 . Personal interview with Mr Ken Owen, 21 July 1993.

measurable, but can be regarded as significant. Secondly, that this group of individuals believed it necessary to meet *qua* liberals, indicated that there remained a core of belief in the liberal ethos, its principles and relevance during the period of crisis. Thirdly, the affirmation of this belief laid the groundwork for the vital debate regarding judgement of its historical performance and future tasks. In concluding his paper on the historical sweep of the Liberal Party former LP Chairman Peter Brown noted:

At the 1964 National Congress of the (Liberal Party), held in the shadow of the impending ARM trials, Alan Paton in his address, quoted from the *Christian Recorder* of that day,

“If this noble spirit of liberal thinking and liberal living passes from the South African scene, we have harmed the future, almost beyond repair. We will have educated a generation, perhaps two, without any knowledge of the liberal spirit in their education and growth. That means that in 10 or 15 years time, we will have a crop of adults who have no idea of the proper relation between freedom and responsibility, so important for the happiness of a nations and its people”.

It is now 20 years later. Have we reached that state? And if we have, should we be doing something about it, and if so, what?<sup>64</sup>

These observations dovetailed with those of a number of liberal academics at the time, and served to sow the seeds for a period of intensive liberal, intellectual rumination which laid the groundwork for a critical review of the liberal ethos, its strategies and its politics during the second half of the 1980's.

#### Intellectual reconstruction

Such was the crisis in which liberals found themselves institutionally, politically and intellectually that by 1986 the very survival of the ethos in South Africa was drawn into question. Given their socially defined role as portends of social, ideological and political trends it was not surprising to find liberal intellectuals articulating their concerns before the political and institutional wings of the movement began mobilising to redefine and regroup.

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64 . Brown, pp.64-65.

Thus in September 1985 Charles Simkins, professor of economics at the University of Cape Town, addressed the crisis of liberalism in its intellectual mode when delivering a series of lectures entitled *Reconstructing South African Liberalism*.<sup>65</sup> Simkins's lectures were premised on the observation that the failure of liberalism to construct an adequate response to the protracted assault on its values, beliefs, and institutions rested on the fact that after the 1968 decision of the Liberal Party to disband:

(A) political centre around which liberal thought could crystallise and develop has led to a considerable loss of definition in the articulation of general liberal principles applied to South Africa conditions.<sup>66</sup>

Thus many of liberalism's arguments had been lost by default. The defensiveness of South African liberals, he believed, derived principally from the accusation by the Black Consciousness Movement and African Nationalism in general that liberals served as a second-line defence of white political and cultural dominance. The second cause of liberal defensiveness was the left's claim that liberals operated as a first-line defence of South African racial capitalism, a particularly virulent form of capitalism that had produced arguably the world's greatest spread of income inequality. Any reconstruction of South African liberalism would thus be required to respond to these challenges and had to demonstrate the claims to be counterfactual.

The fundamental question reflected on by Simkins was whether or not South African liberalism, in the midst of a state of emergency and having endured a protracted period of assault, had been damaged so badly as to "render reconstruction impossible". The conclusion drawn, however, was that the fundamental liberal values (even at the common sense or implicit level) had taken sufficient root within the broad South African social formation, that their extirpation was practically impossible. Secondly, Simkins detected subterranean shifts in power relations between black and white communities which demanded increased and accelerated reform, and by extension liberalisation, on the part of the state. The third fundamental underpinning the potential for liberal reconstruction

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65 . Charles Simkins, *Reconstructing South African Liberalism*, South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1986.

66 . Charles Simkins, 'Reconstructing South African Liberalism', Lectures delivered at the University of Cape Town, 1985, p.1.

for Simkins was the opportunities likely to be opened up by a burgeoning industrial economy and related urbanisation. These structural forces could be expected to result in considerable increases in black economic and social mobility, and whilst no causal link between a burgeoning black middle-class and the inculcation or acceptance of liberal values is made, it was contended that the political power derived from economic and social advance would be likely to lead to the opening up of the political debate and process.

The key theoretical foundation of Simkins's reconstructive work is that of the contractarian social justice theses of John Rawls. Simkins builds his arguments on the twin Rawlsian principles of justice, namely:

First, each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with similar liberty for others.

Second, social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.<sup>67</sup>

The first principle is logically prior to the second. From the two basic positions Simkins proceeds to offer a number of broadly-defined liberal political, constitutional and economic models for consideration. The vital substantive point of importance in Simkins's work is his advocacy of the development of a pragmatic liberalism. This view is founded on the insights of Hoernlé some fifty years earlier concerning the absence of necessary social structures to satisfy the prerequisites for the growth and development of a liberal ethos and polity in a racially divided society. The absence of these features and the intervention of others inimical to liberal democracy, serves to constrain such liberal development as might otherwise have taken place. Simkins regards pragmatic liberalism as a form which accounts for the social and political power realities operating within the particular social formation. Pragmatic liberalism is also thus identified with the acceptance of a "second best" compromise over its preferred position. Derived of his advocacy of the necessity of a second-best pragmatic liberal position, Simkins builds on

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67 . John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, Oxford, 1989, p.60.

the earlier consociational recommendations of Slabbert and Welsh contained in their volume *South Africa's Options*.

Pragmatic liberalism, then, is a rational choice over the mutually destructive certainty of an insistence on the imposition of a pure or ideologically-driven social political or economic schema.

The original position of a pragmatic liberalism in South Africa holds that the unpalatable reality of power in the country is that it resides firmly within the hands of a white minority and that its wrenching by force from the minority would render the values ideals and objectives of liberalism worthless as such a conflict would reduce the country to state of protracted civil war, *ergo* the need for a pragmatic second best compromise position.

For Simkins the critical point to be asked of all social political and economic arrangements is, given the past and present realities of the South African social order, what policies and institutional architecture will best meet the two requisites of Rawlsian justice? In other words, Simkins's is not *per se* an ideologically-driven endeavour but one derived from a concern for social justice and pragmatism. Thus in terms of economic policy Simkins concludes:

If measures can be found which would improve the long -term prospects of the poor over a *laisser-faire* policy they should be implemented; if not, not.<sup>68</sup>

Simkins proves sceptical of the Nozickian minimalist position and its prescripts for fair compensation, given the gross inequalities produced by the peculiar operation of the South African political economy. Simkins also proves sceptical of the capacity of *laisser-faire* prescriptions to meet the fundamental requirements of Rawlsian social justice. Thus the appropriate political, constitutional and economic model for the South

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68 . Charles Simkins, 'Reconstructing South African Liberalism', University of Cape Town, 1985, p.65.

African scenario is one that A) works, and B), most closely satisfies the pre-requisites for social justice.<sup>69</sup>

The consequential importance of Simkins's work was two-fold. Firstly, it stimulated both a broad and introspective debate amongst liberals, would-be liberals, neo-liberals and its critics. Secondly, Simkins's intervention served to provide the conceptual pole around which liberals could articulate ideas in the absence of the Liberal Party. That Simkins had little faith in the PFP to provide this pole derived from the enormous compromise he believed the Progressives to have made when electing to continue as a whites-only party in 1968 when the Liberal Party had disbanded.<sup>70</sup>

Most importantly for consideration in the latter part of the study, was the impact Simkins's work had on leading liberal thinkers in South Africa and how this animated and ventilated the liberal debate. This was particularly true of *Business Day* editor Ken Owen who, in turn, played a vital role in the emergence, formulation and publicity given to the pragmatic liberal thrust of the Southern Transvaal Region of the PFP in 1988.

In direct response to Simkins's *Reconstructing South African Liberalism*<sup>71</sup> was the holding of a symposium on liberalism in South Africa hosted by the South African Institute of Race Relations, entitled *Liberalism and the Middle Ground*.<sup>72</sup> That this institution should be the symposium, rather than the formal intellectual hosts of liberalism, the English-speaking universities, spoke volumes about the embattled status of liberalism and the variegated institutional responses thereto. In attempting to find a context for the summation of the symposium, Simon Bekker formulated four critical questions facing liberals during the crisis: Firstly, should there be liberals in South Africa in 1986? The normative question posed was appended with the rider that if there ought not to be

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69 . Simkins refines and expands on these themes in his 1986 Hoernlé Lecture, 'Liberalism and the Problem of Power', and the much broader and programmatic work, The Prisoners of Tradition and the Politics of Nation Building, SAIRR, 1988.

70 . Simkins, p.16.

71 . Charles Simkins, Reconstructing South African Liberalism, South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1986.

72 . Liberalism and the Middle Ground, Presidential Address and Symposium on Liberalism, Johannesburg, 1986.

liberals in South Africa in 1986 what ought those who thought of themselves as liberals be, or aspire to be? The second question asked by Bekker was, did the circumstances engulfing the country during the crisis years allow liberals to operate as socially free agents? The question put was, can there be liberals in South Africa in 1986? Bekker asks a third and fourth question on the assumption of an affirmative answer to the first two, and that is, how ought liberals to behave and what programme of action did they need to carry out in the context in which they found themselves?

In providing the lead, Bekker repeats the two cardinal caveats laid out by Simkins in his defence of liberalism, namely that liberals should remain liberals conditionally upon their rejection of liberalism acting as a second line of defence for white dominance, and likewise that they specifically oppose acting as a first-line defence for the form of capitalism in South Africa which has given rise to acute inequalities. Thus there could be no simple defence or advocacy of a pure, unadulterated free-market theory in advancing the liberal position in South Africa.

In answer to the second question raised at the symposium, namely, 'is it possible to be or to live as a liberal in contemporary South Africa?', most of the delegates adopted Simkins's response to the question by arguing that the rate and extent of industrialisation in South Africa has laid the foundation for the possibility of sufficient wealth creation and redistribution to provide for the emergence of a liberal society. The strategic question of how to implement these principles during the time of crisis and beyond was less convincingly dealt with. The most persuasive argument hinged on the need for liberal values to become universalised, rather than remaining the ideological fief of the white middle-class. In order to achieve this there would be a need for the strengthening of liberal institutions.<sup>73</sup> As we have seen, however, these institutions were severely embattled and their responses to the crisis often contradictory and contingent.

In another important response to the liberal crisis, a group of liberal scholars convened the 'Houw Hoek' conference in July 1986, with the explicit aim of "enhancing the long-

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73 . Bekker, p.20.

term chances of a democratic liberal outcome of the South African crisis".<sup>74</sup> The conference also had the more immediate short-term goals of (a) clarifying the history of liberal institutions and ideas in South Africa, (b) to re-think the liberal tradition in the light of the current South African realities, and (c) to reflect on the best strategies for furthering the democratic liberal cause in the present crisis. As was the benchmark of liberal scholarship and practice in South Africa, the strength of the contributions to the conference lay in their diagnostic interventions; and their weakness in the concrete prognostications for a future liberal democratic South Africa. One of the clearest indicators of the minority status of liberalism was also highlighted within the symposium by the fact that it was unable to draw black participation.

The final discussion of attempts at a liberal reconstruction we shall investigate, is the contribution of the then Director of the Centre for Policy Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Professor Lawrence Schlemmer, in a 1988 position paper, "Beyond Protest: Thoughts on change strategies in South Africa". Schlemmer's intervention was motivated by the observation that strategies for change adopted by opposition formations have failed due to both conceptual inadequacies and tactical myopia. Schlemmer identifies the forms of protest characterising anti-apartheid opposition, namely: confrontation, protest and the expression of moral outrage, and a third category of moral pressure and pragmatic vacillation, the latter of which broadly informs the liberal Parliamentary ethos.<sup>75</sup> Whilst Schlemmer points out the inadequacies and contradictions of the varied confrontational strategies adopted hitherto, including the consequences of the possible failure of sanctions and violence, his observations regarding the form of protest adopted by liberals is of particular importance.

Whilst Schlemmer acknowledges the importance for the historical sustenance of the liberal tradition in South Africa of Helen Suzman's form of "moral pragmatism", to move beyond protest requires careful strategic judgement that may be impaired and

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74 . Butler, Elphick and Welsh, (Eds), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa - its history and prospect, David Philip, Cape Town, 1987, pp.3-4.

75 . Lawrence Schlemmer, 'Beyond Protest - Thoughts on Change Strategies in South Africa', Centre for Policy Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, 1988.

indeed retarded by the protestations of moral outrage. Schlemmer reasons thus:

(T)he protagonists of the (moral protest) position make the assumption that the South African government is morally corrupt or at least insensitive in pursuing white domination in the face of its obvious illegitimacy. This immorality is met with sustained moral criticism ... yet if the government is as morally deficient as is presumed, moral exhortation can be calculated to have little or no effect. The process has acquired elements of a self-sustaining charade.<sup>76</sup>

Schlemmer warns that moral protest may have the unintended consequence of further alienating government, thus in reality leaving it impervious to such sanction. Finally, he warns against the tendency for those engaged in self-sustaining knee-jerk reflex protest against dismissing all government reforms as sham, as this may itself serve to foreclose the space the state believes it has for reform resulting in it reverting to apartheid authoritarian type. Rather, Schlemmer argued, it behoved those with a sincere interest in the eradication of apartheid and the construction of a just order, to seek ways of capitalising on the erosions of apartheid derived of structural forces and to construct strategies that result in easing the state way from its non-negotiable core reform categories. Schlemmer's critique served as an important contribution to the construction of a pragmatic liberal programme for the late 1980's, the thrust and content of which will be discussed later in the dissertation.<sup>77</sup>

In conclusion, in this chapter has sought to document and contextualise a number of the major tensions and contradictions operating at the level of liberal institutions during the period of crisis, together with the genesis of a liberal response in the form of pragmatic liberalism. The following chapter will seek to trace and explain the impact of the organic crisis on the trajectory and identity of political liberalism in its party construct namely, the Progressive Federal Party.

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76 . Schlemmer, p.3.

77 . This is not to suggest that the positions adopted by the pragmatists and Schlemmer's strategic analysis in particular, went unchallenged by the liberal intellectual community. The dangers of a shift away from the conceptual and programmatic underpinnings of moral outrage within the liberal tradition is discussed by André du Toit, in, 'Justice and Truth in South Africa?', Inaugural Lecture at the University of Cape Town, 14 September 1988.

## CHAPTER FIVE

The forces sketched in the foregoing discussion of the structural crisis in South Africa had a profound impact on the role, political positioning and self-identity of the Progressive Federal Party. Although the crisis and eventual demise of the PFP was brought to its apogee by and during the broad organic crisis, the political origins of its demise are to be found within the formative action programme of the ruling National Party in response to the crisis. In this chapter an examination of a number of specific factors giving rise to the crisis and eventual metamorphosis of the PFP is undertaken. The issues discussed are viewed as central and salient but not exhaustive, and serve rather to map the political co-ordinates of the nadir in the PFP.

### Tricameralism and the 1983 Referendum

In its attempts to win consent and legitimacy, the South African state was forced to look increasingly not only to new potential allies within the white electorate, but also sought to construct a multi-ethnic, middle-class alliance on a tripartite basis, with Indian and Coloured political representatives. Constitutionally, the state moved towards a sham form of multi-ethnic consociational democracy. In terms of potential African allies it looked furtively towards Inkatha as a bastion of conservative and traditionalist support within the African community together with other Bantustan leaders it hoped to co-opt in the construction of a form of racial federalism.

As was noted in chapter three, the central political feature of the ruling party's formative action programme was the tricameral constitution. The background to the watershed 1983 South African constitution had a number of important political dimensions which require brief contextualisation.

The constitutional proposals were the outcome of a protracted period of political debate surrounding the nature, pace and direction of reform in South Africa, dating back to the 1976 Report on the Future of Coloured People by Professor Erica Theron. The need and desirability for the political accommodation of Coloured people had been largely accepted by the Vorster government upon receiving the Theron Report, but the 1976

Soweto uprising gave impetus to the implementation of the Report's recommendations and animated policy-makers within the National Party to reform with more speed and purpose.

The Theron Report gave rise to a Cabinet Committee which formulated constitutional proposals resulting in draft legislation in 1979. The Joint Select Committee under Minister Alwyn Schlebusch was later transformed into a Commission of Enquiry and the final report of the Schlebusch Commission was submitted to the President's Council for debate in 1981.<sup>1</sup>

However, the National Party's increasing orientation towards a policy of "power-sharing" and the re-drafting of its 1979 NP-approved blueprint, which proposed the formation of three separate ethnically defined Parliaments, into the tricameral proposals, precipitated the splitting of a group of 16 conservative Transvaal NP MPs under the leadership of Dr Andries Treurnicht and the formation of the far right-wing Conservative Party.

The Conservative Party sought to reverse the reformist trends of the government and to adhere fully to the principles of Verwoerdian ideological prescripts. The Conservatives took with them the majority of the Afrikaner working-class, blue-collar workers, together with large numbers of the Afrikaner civil service and farming community.<sup>2</sup>

"Liberated" of its reactionary wing, the National Party endorsed the tricameral constitution at its July 1982 Federal Congress and thereby set in motion a process that would have the unintended consequence of transforming the South African political order.

The loosening of traditional support bases and structures in the National Party necessitated the galvanising of others. The government would henceforth have to rely

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- 1 . DJ van Vuuren, 'The dismantling of bases of statutory apartheid', in Rhodie, Van Vuuren, Wiehahn and Wiechers (Eds), South Africa: the Challenge of Reform, p.114.
  - 2 . More comprehensive data are contained in Helen Zille, 'The right wing in South African politics', in Berger and Godsell (Eds), A Future South Africa: visions, strategies and realities, p.57.

increasingly on English-speaking support for its policies and thus be forced to court a significant section of the traditionally oppositional white vote. Prompted by the conservative challenge to his traditional power base and mindful of the need to cement new alliances, Prime Minister PW Botha sought a mandate from the electorate in the form of a referendum on the proposed new constitution in November 1983. Botha's strategic thinking in holding a referendum was characteristically politically astute. On the one hand, a vote in favour of the proposed tricameral constitution would pull the political rug from under the fledgling rebels of the Conservative Party and serve as a useful damage control mechanism holding together the severely fractured Afrikaner ruling bloc. On the other hand, the referendum would serve to wrong-foot the liberal opposition which would be forced either to support the government in its reformist initiatives or be seen to be political spoilers, retarding the very process which they had been advocating for thirty years. In the white public eye it appeared implausible that the liberal opposition could oppose progressive reforms of South Africa's racially exclusive constitution. In effect that is exactly what was required of the PFP and it cost the party considerable support. Given the political realities of white politics in the first half of the 1980's in South Africa, the PFP was placed in a "no-win" situation. The splitting of the National Party in effect re-defined the white political spectrum, leaving the NP *de facto* the party of the white political centre and locating the PFP further to the left in the perception of the white electorate.

The white referendum of November 1983 both contributed to and reflected this perception and heralded a shift in support of the moderate white electorate towards a reforming National Party and away from the Progressive Federal Party.<sup>3</sup> The short-term wooing of English-speaking support by the National Party in the 1983 referendum was merely the precursor to the broader political re-alignment in the white voting spectrum. In 1983 this task was made easier for the National Party by the supportive position

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3 . See Dirk Laurie, 'Mathematical models for election analysis and their application to white South African politics in the period 1981 to 1987', in Van Vuuren, Latakgomo, Marais and Schlemmer (Eds), South African Election 1987, Pinetown, Owen Burgess, 1987. Psephologist Dirk Laurie notes a strong correlation between the results of the 1983 referendum and voting behaviour in the 1987 white election.

adopted by the New Republic Party which came out in favour of a “yes” vote in the referendum again merely foreshadowing the future pattern of white voting.

#### The PFP opposition to the 1983 referendum

Despite vigorous internal debate and indeed some dissent, the Progressive Federal Party publicly and unequivocally rejected the constitutional proposals on the following grounds:

1. The constitutional proposals were foisted on the electorate and indeed the rest of the country by a single minority party.
2. The constitution excluded blacks and would lead to greater polarisation and conflict between racial groups in the country.
3. By its use of “own” and “general” affairs and by the separate chambers of Parliament as well as the retention of both the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act the constitution in fact, entrenched apartheid rather than reformed it.
4. Too much power accrued to the State President under the new constitutional arrangement.<sup>4</sup>

Despite its spirited opposition the PFP lost the first battle surrounding the tricameral constitution when the debate on the South African Constitution Amendment Bill was guillotined by the government and approved by Parliament in 1983. Fighting a rearguard action, PFP leader Van Zyl Slabbert followed up his rejection of the constitutional proposals by calling for Coloured and Indian referenda to test its acceptance, credibility and legitimacy within those communities. This, too, was rejected by the government.

Having failed at both the first political hurdles the PFP was thus forced to launch a campaign against the format of the referendum itself. The PFP argued that the construction of a referendum question, requiring a simple answer in the affirmative or negative, failed to distinguish why a person disapproved of the option. On the one hand a conservative could vote “No” in the referendum on the grounds that to vote “Yes” would

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4. Slabbert, F. van Zyl. The Last White Parliament, 1985, Sidgwick and Jackson, London.

be to accept the principle of power sharing. In fact, the Conservative Party also rejected the constitutional principles on the grounds that they granted the State President too much political power. This rejection, far from being a liberal suspicion of the accumulation of political power in the hands of the few, was motivated by a fear of the future State President being allowed to force through political reforms at the expense of the Parliamentary process upon which the Conservative Party hoped to have some impact.

The PFP argued that the referendum questions ought to have been structured as follows:

1. Do you believe that only whites should participate in Parliament?
2. Do you believe that only whites, coloureds and Indians should participate in Parliament?
3. Do you believe that whites, Coloureds, Asians and blacks should participate in Parliament without one group dominating the other?<sup>5</sup>

All of Slabbert's proposals were rejected and a simple, and a politically obfuscating "Yes" or "No" question was asked:

"Are you in favour of the implementation of the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act, 1983, as approved by Parliament?"

#### The referendum campaign

The referendum campaign was marked by an aggressive National Party/government marketing strategy which was facilitated by the aforementioned emergent government / private sector corporatism. The broader triangular corporatist dynamic of state, business and media, including most importantly the National Party's tight control of the state-run SABC, served as a powerful vehicle for conveying the alleged merits of a "Yes" vote. Television coverage saturated viewers with the alleged merits of the constitution whilst its opponents were depicted as either reactionary spoilers or "unrealistic radicals" infused with a "boycottist" mindset. The potency of the Government campaign and the degree of corporate donor backing enjoyed by the National Party was highlighted by the fact that it

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5. Slabbert, p.111.

expended more funds on advertising in one day than the Progressive Federal Party had at its disposal for the whole campaign.<sup>6</sup>

Evidence produced during the campaign clearly suggested a strong “Yes” vote bias in SABC reportage. PFP meetings were reported or depicted as poorly attended and important sections of PFP speeches were carefully edited out. During the campaign the amount of television time afforded proponents of a “No” vote was less than one half of that granted to supporters of a “Yes” vote, leading PFP media spokesperson David Dalling to accuse SABC Director General Riaan Ecksteen of “unprofessional journalistic tricks”.<sup>7</sup>

A decision taken by the two large Afrikaans printing groups Nasionale Pers and Perskor not to allow any PFP advertisements to appear in newspapers controlled by the two groups effectively foreclosed any opportunity for Afrikaans-speaking people to read a liberal perspective on the referendum and constitution.<sup>8</sup> In keeping with its liberal fourth estate function, however, both the Argus and SAAN groups agreed to carry National Party advertisements.

Further politically alienating for the Progressive Federal Party was the decision of the Coloured Labour Party to participate in the tricameral system. The decision on January 4 1983 of the Labour Party at its annual Congress in Eshowe, Zululand, to participate in the as yet undefined new constitutional proposals was historic. Hendrickse pre-empted the National Party by his decision to participate in the tricameral Parliament and thereby accorded a much needed fillip to the vague and largely discredited proposals. The impact of Hendrickse’s decision on white voter thinking was significant, as it signalled a form of acceptance of the proposals by a black leader who had previously been detained by the Nationalist regime, that meaningful reform was underway. Furthermore, the position adopted by Hendrickse that the new political architecture, as flawed as it was, could be reformed from within added grist to the mill of those accusing the PFP of boycottist and

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6 . Slabbert, p.112.

7 . Cape Times, 15 October 1983.

8 . Cape Times, 16 September 1983.

obstructionist policies. In terms of political perceptions the PFP thus became seen to be now more radical, extremist, unrealistic, and uncompromising. As the vast majority of South African English-speaking voters was none of these, the party lost considerable political sympathy from its traditional white constituency.

Playing on the historical frustrations of oppositional English-speaking voters, and their effective exclusion from political power and leverage, the Minister of Finance Owen Horwood (the only English-speaking Cabinet Minister) claimed the referendum would:

(G)ive English-speaking voters an opportunity to intervene in a decisive way in determining the future of South Africa.<sup>9</sup>

The major difficulty for the Progressive Federal Party, however, was to convince the electorate and strategic elements within the white polity, that the constitution, far from being “a step in the right direction”, was in fact fatally flawed and that its implementation would have the opposite effect to that anticipated by a gullible white public.

The referendum campaign had the dual effect of dividing the spectrum of liberals from one another, whilst at the same time straining some of the institutional relationship between the PFP and its traditional support base. Historically, the PFP had attracted a broad range of support with varying degrees of commitment to both the party and liberal principle, whose only common defining feature was an opposition to apartheid. Thus when government was seen to be moving towards the amelioration of political apartheid, the *raison d'être* of many of the floating or weakly committed voters for supporting the PFP was eroded, if not effectively removed. It was also noted earlier that the preferred political programme of political liberals was reformist and incrementalist in nature and it was thus conceptually difficult for the party to convince its own liberal supporters that the government's tricameral “reform” was counterproductive. That the CP had split from the National Party also belied the argument that the reforms were mere tokenism.

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9. Cape Times, 20 October 1983.

The divisiveness of the issue within reformist ranks was demonstrated by the opposition from within the PFP caucus to the line adopted by the leadership on the constitution. Party finance spokesperson Harry Schwarz put forward motion supported by other members of the Federal Executive that would allow party members to vote “yes”.<sup>10</sup> Earlier opposition to the party’s line on participation in the President’s Council had led to the expulsion of Mr Japie Basson in 1980. Even the most committed liberals were divided over the issue as was indicated by former Liberal Party leader Alan Paton’s reluctant “No” vote despite the flawed nature of the constitutional proposals. Indeed, the crisis of confidence within liberalism during the 1980’s can be traced as much to the effect of the Botha regime’s reforms as it can be attributed to the draconian measures against liberals by successive National Party regimes.

#### The PFP and the media during the referendum campaign

It was contended earlier that relations between liberal political formations in South Africa and the English language press became strained or dislocated during the period under review.<sup>11</sup> This trend finds its origins in the support given to a “Yes” vote by a number of ELP editors during the referendum campaign. Whereas a number of ELP editors condemned the constitutional proposals as an unsatisfactory half measure, the “something is better than nothing” or “a step in the right direction” approach generally prevailed. It is not clear, however, to what extent the English Language Press took its lead from its corporate owners who largely also favoured a “Yes” vote. The leading business journals *Financial Mail* and *Finance Week* both came down in support of a “Yes” vote despite editorial reservations about the content and structuring of the new constitution. Indeed, the *Financial Mail* later went on to rebuke the PFP for its “immature” attitude to the constitution accusing it of being “unrealistic”.

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10. *Sunday Express*, 4 September, 1983.

11. This thesis would, of course, be contested by neo-Marxist structuralists such as Althusser, and in the South African context, Tomaselli, who would regard both the PFP and the English language press as fractions of the ideological State apparatus. According to this thesis, despite the apparent tensions between the two, their relationship is ultimately one of class domination and political obfuscation.

### The PFP and Business

Whilst it is true that elements of mining and financial capital in South Africa have enjoyed representation in the executive of the Progressive Party and its successors, and that a symbiotic relationship exists between the two, the crude reductionist assumptions regarding the determinacy of Progressive Party policy by the Anglo American Corporation were severely tested during the referendum campaign.

Whilst Mr Harry Oppenheimer, Dr Zach de Beer, Clive Menell and leading liberal businessman Tony Bloom rejected the constitutional proposals, former Anglo American Chairman Gavin Relly publicly favoured a "Yes" vote. 135 prominent businessmen, professionals and academics also established and supported a "Reform Fund" on the assumption that to have delivered a "No" vote would have sent the wrong signal to foreign investors and observers whereas a "Yes" vote would give the green light to further reform.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most striking aspects of the referendum campaign and the debate surrounding the new constitution was how little support the constitution in and of itself enjoyed. Outside of government circles it was difficult to find anyone who believed that the constitution was a well-developed and adequate document. Even those who publicly supported a "Yes" vote in the referendum frequently predicated their support on a rejection or an extremely qualified acceptance of the constitutional proposals per se. This was particularly the case in the business community. More remarkable still was the fact that a number of key business-decision makers had not read the constitutional proposals before accepting and publicly supporting them. The "step in the right direction" approach was typified by Dr Albert Wessels, Chairman of Toyota South Africa:

I am going to vote "Yes" at the referendum on the new constitution. Not because I think the new constitution is perfect or adequate. But to block the Government in its first major step towards sharing power with other ethnic groups seems extremely unwise. I am voting "Yes", therefore, for a

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12 . South African Institute of Race Relations, Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1983, Braamfontein, SAIRR, 1983, p.79.

process of development, as much as for the present constitution which I also support.<sup>13</sup>

The political naivete, or, at worst, political duplicity, of big business was exemplified by Ted Pavitt Executive Chairman of Gencor and President of the South Africa Foundation when he announced:

I have not read the new constitution and I am no expert on constitutional law or politics, but I have had discussions with members of the Government and I am assured the new dispensation does not lower the guillotine on the inclusion of blacks. I am taking the Government on trust that it intends making some constitutional provision for blacks at a later stage.<sup>14</sup>

Significantly, Pavitt made no mention of whether he had consulted representatives of the majority of South Africans who opposed the constitutional proposals. Heading the list of non-sequiturs was Professor Johan van der Vyver, Professor of Law at the University of the Witwatersrand, who expressed the following sentiment:

Looking at the new constitution more closely, one must at once concede that its patent defects are manifold and of a radical nature. ... I shall vote "Yes", but I will continue to voice my strong opposition to the constitution.<sup>15</sup>

### Churches and the Referendum

The PFP and the church were *ad idem* on the constitutional proposals, however. All the major English churches in South Africa, the Anglican and Methodist, as well as the Roman Catholic Church, came out against the constitutional proposals and urged their parishioners to vote "No" in the referendum. Dr Khoza Mgojo, President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, described the constitutional proposals as:

(A) naked violation of the Word of God. We have a duty before God to place on record our opposition to a system which, if accepted, will entrench the sin of apartheid.<sup>16</sup>

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13 . Sunday Tribune, 16 October 1983.

14 . Sunday Express, 16 October 1983.

15 . Sunday Times, 6 October 1983.

16 . Weekend Argus, 17 September 1983.

largest and broadest oppositional political formation in the country's history, namely the United Democratic Front. The birth in August 1983 of the UDF heralded the most acute challenge from the left to the PFP in particular and liberals in general.

The front was a loosely strung agglomeration of over 600 anti-apartheid movements across the country established with the expressed purpose of opposing the tricameral constitution and of raising opposition to the referendum.<sup>18</sup> The significance of the birth of the UDF for the PFP was manifold. The formation of the UDF finally heralded the end of any lingering illusions some PFP supporters may have harboured as to their perceived role as guardians or custodians of black political aspirations. A self-defined role which had already been severely attacked by the Black Consciousness Movement. Likewise whereas PFP MPs, and in particular Mrs Helen Suzman, had carved a political niche as a spokespersons for liberal values of justice and by extension for the disenfranchised, the upsurge in black militancy attendant on the formation of the UDF, undercut this role. Secondly, the UDF garnered considerable support from some of the traditional PFP constituencies such as white students, intellectuals and activists. Thirdly the UDF captured the imagination of many within the progressive press. On many issues the UDF simply displaced the PFP as the media spokesperson for the disadvantaged.<sup>19</sup> The political and civic structures established by the UDF also effectively impeded PFP access to the townships; although relations between the UDF and individual members of the PFP were later considerably strengthened.

The middle ground previously regarded as a PFP fief, was thus increasingly challenged for occupancy from left and right. Against this background the white electorate gave an overwhelming endorsement to Botha's proposals, and in turn sent a clear signal to the PFP and the CP.

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18 . Jo-Anne Collinge, 'The United Democratic Front', in South African Review 3, Ravan, 1986, pp.248-249.

19 . This was the clear perception of David Dalling, former Media Spokesperson for the PFP, in a personal interview, 14 June 1993.

The major features of the referendum results were as follows:

76% of the eligible white voters cast their votes in the referendum. The percentage of “Yes” votes was 65,95% and the “No” vote was 33,53% with 0,52% of papers spoilt. The poll was higher than the 67% poll in the 1981 election. More than half of the 1981 PFP voters had voted “Yes”. Of the 34% who had voted “No” only 10% were PFP supporters. A full 40% of those who had voted for the PFP in the 1981 general election did not vote in the referendum. For every five PFP voters who voted “Yes”, seven voted “No”. The only area where there was a “No” majority was in the Conservative Party stronghold of Pietersburg where there was a 52,39% “no” vote.<sup>20</sup> Viewed in broader perspective, however, the referendum result translated into a mere 1 360 223 white voters determining the constitutional exclusion of some 30 million people in South Africa.

For the PFP the results of the referendum also served to painfully highlight the vagaries of the English-speaking “floating voter” and the electoral dilemma faced by liberal political formations in South Africa given their restricted appeal to white voters by virtue of the Prohibition of Political Interference Act.<sup>21</sup>

Despite strong opposition from the PFP to the formulations of the new constitution the PFP elected to participate in the new Parliament as in the view of Slabbert not to participate:

Was to abandon all hope for peaceful, non-violent change toward our future.<sup>22</sup>

This decision was in sharp contrast to Slabbert’s 1982 declaration that:

The PFP will not be party to a programme which increases polarisation between black and white or which leads to dictatorial rule.<sup>23</sup>

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20 . South African Institute of Race Relations, Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1983, pp.88-89.

21 . See Schlemmer, L. “How the English Float their Vote” in Leadership SA 1983 and “How the English Float their Vote” in Rand Daily Mail, 29 October 1983.

22 . David Shandler, ‘Analysing the PFP’, in South African Labour Bulletin, Vol 13 No 8 , February 1989, p.45.

The problem for the PFP was that it had always advocated a reformist programme and had conscientised its supporters to support such a programme. However, it came to regard the constitution as fatally flawed and was thus both in principle and practice forced to reject it. This sent mixed messages to PFP supporters and caused considerable cognitive dissonance and confusion.<sup>24</sup>

For the PFP, three discrete yet related phenomena were unfolding. Firstly, the National Party's formative action policy would eventually translate into the National Party adopting more reformist and traditionally PFP-held positions and rhetoric, thereby drawing a significant portion of the moderate white vote. Secondly, the emergence and broad appeal of the UDF served to challenge the PFP on its left flank both in terms of support, but equally importantly, in terms of its historical interactive role. Finally, the referendum marked a turning point in its relations with a elements of its traditional political, corporate, civic, and business allies. The latter was of particular significance in terms of funding and the disproportional influence a number of leading businessmen had on the collective consciousness of the white English-speaking voter in South Africa.

#### The challenge of the struggle and the seeds of division<sup>25</sup>

Traditionally the PFP had viewed Parliament as the most effective, and indeed the only, channel for achieving meaningful change in the country, but from 1984 onwards, and more specifically after the onset of the uprising, PFP members were drawn into increasing contact with township dwellers whose every-day life experiences left an indelible impression. This was particularly the case with those such as Jan van Eck and party employees such as Margie Probin, Molly Blackburn, Di Bishop and Val Rose Christie, who worked in the townships and were involved in the party's Unrest Monitoring and Action Committee (UMAC), whose establishment was a response to the

23 . Pretoria News, 14 May 1982.

24 . David Shandler, 'Analysing the PFP' in South African Labour Bulletin, Volume 13, Number 8, pp.44-45.

25 . This short section is largely a summary of relevant chapters contained in, David Shandler, 'Structural Crisis and Liberalism: A History of the Progressive Federal Party, 1981 - 1989', MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1991.

emergency. The task of these groups was to monitor violence and protest in the townships, to take affidavits from victims and witnesses of repression and police action, and finally to act as a conduit between township politics and Parliament so that, despite press restrictions and consecutive states of emergency, the PFP could continue to play its historical role of exposing oppression and injustice. During the emergency PFP MPs continuously used Parliamentary privilege to challenge the government and to inform the public of events in the townships.<sup>26</sup> The presence and intervention of UMAC and other PFP MPs in particular often averted violent clashes and ameliorated police action.<sup>27</sup> Such a role was also firmly in keeping with the party's principled stance on human rights throughout the years, but was given particularly concrete form during the 1980's. An emergent problem for the PFP leading both from the crisis and the activities of those involved in township work, was the attraction UDF politics had for some members on the left of the party and amongst the youth in particular. This was to have important repercussions for the party in the 1987 election and indeed for the later-to-be-formed Democratic Party.

In response to these new challenges in 1984 the PFP decided to defy the government's ban on the mixing of races in political parties and opened up its membership to all. The response of black people in South Africa was muted and tardy. Since the emergence of the UDF and the political battle lines between "system" and "struggle" politics had become deeply entrenched and arguably unbridgeable by a white Parliamentary party seeking to adhere closely to its classical liberal principles whilst attempting to expand its own support base. The PFP decision to open its membership to blacks was viewed not only as one of principle but also strategically important in an effort not to lose ground to extra-Parliamentary forces. Commenting on the PFP decision, Rev Frank Chikane stated at the time:

The PFP is at present working within the framework of apartheid.

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26 . Both Pierre Cronjé and Jan van Eck informed the author that communities encouraged them to continue to play this interactive role in parliament throughout the 1980's despite holding boycottist positions *vis-a-vis* the tricameral system.

27 . See Jan van Eck Eyewitness to "Unrest", Emmarentia, Taurus, 1989.

Whatever change they can impose within their own organisation does not have a bearing on our struggle for a just South Africa.<sup>28</sup>

### The outreach campaign and convention alliance

In 1985 the PFP intensified its outreach programme in an effort to win support in the other two Houses of Parliament. This strategy was aimed at intensifying the pressure on the government to speed up reform and to embark on negotiations with representative leaders. The UDF response was that the PFP was abusing a political gap created by government repression against the UDF, in order to recruit black members. In its actions the PFP was accused of flying in the face of the wishes of the majority and giving credibility to the system.

The strategy of participation in the other two Houses was also strongly opposed by elements within the party, particularly the youth and, again, those who had dealings with extra-Parliamentary formations. Molly Blackburn called the move “political suicide”. The deputy leader of the PFP youth was suspended from the party when threatening to lead a walkout of members should the party go ahead with its plan. Despite these protests in August 1985 a decision in principle was taken at the Party’s Federal Congress to participate in all three houses provided this met with substantial support from these communities.

### Convention Alliance

The PFP’s strategic response to the mounting conflict engulfing the country was to launch the national Convention Alliance, which was aimed at forging a centrist political alliance in opposition to the extremists dominating the political stage both from within Parliament and in the liberation movement. Echoing the words of Paton thirty years earlier Slabbert urged:

We must show that there is a third option. An option, in the middle, way away from violence, to change the status quo and away from the repression to maintain it.<sup>29</sup>

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28 . As quoted in Shandler, p.45.

29 . Shandler, p.49.

Slabbert's creation came to nought and was rejected by both the ANC and UDF. This was a hard lesson for the PFP. Despite this, important ground had been broken for members of the PFP by the proposal that the Alliance must include formations from the liberation movement.

#### The PFP and Inkatha

The PFP enjoyed close relations with the Inkatha movement in the 1980's and a number of leading figures in the PFP had shared a personal friendship with Chief Buthelezi since the 1950's.<sup>30</sup> Between the PFP and Inkatha there existed a joint co-ordinating committee and Colin Eglin served on the forerunner of the KwaZulu Indaba, the Buthelezi Commission. This relationship reached its zenith with the formation of the national Convention Alliance. However since that time, due to the behaviour of Inkatha in Natal and pressure from the MDM, relations between the two parties cooled and on occasion became decidedly frosty.

As the struggle within the country intensified, both the UDF and COSATU emerged as major political players, forcing the PFP leadership to deal with them as well as their Inkatha allies. This resulted in the party taking a decision in 1985 to invite speakers from the extra-Parliamentary movement to address PFP meetings.

It was at this time that the party began to re-appraise its objective of winning the balance of power in Parliament and sought to extend its political purview to that of credible negotiation. This change in attitude and strategy resulted in a meeting between the party and the ANC in 1985. The meeting appeared to galvanise the PFP's leadership into an acceptance that no political solution could be forged without the ANC. Slabbert and Boraine were later to declare publicly that it was futile for the ANC to give up the armed struggle if the conditions which led them to take up arms continued to persist. The final shift in Slabbert's strategising came early in 1986 when he conceded that he would be

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30 . See Ray Swart, Progressive Odyssey, Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 1991, pp.114-115.

happy to be party to an alliance under the leadership of the ANC.<sup>31</sup> Such declarations were political mana from heaven for the NP securocrats and ideologues in forthcoming elections.

Slabbert's enthusiasm was not shared by all in the party, however, and the traditional divisions nascent within the party re-emerged over the question of relations with the ANC. Leader of the party's conservative wing Harry Schwarz argued:

Common opposition to apartheid cannot be allowed to put the party into bed with revolutionaries who seek violent methods to overthrow the state.<sup>32</sup>

The party also entered into a number of issue-specific alliances with radical or UDF-aligned white political formations such as the Cape Democrats and JODAC. Due to the pressures placed on the youth in terms of the emergency regulations, the PFP youth also found itself often in close agreement with the End Conscription Campaign.

Thus the radically altered pattern of South African politics had dislocated the Progressive Federal Party from its traditional orientations and identity both within the white political spectrum as well as in its interactive role. The party's response to these challenges as appeared as highly contradictory at a number of levels. By 1985 the party appeared increasingly like a modern day United Party, an umbrella party attempting to be all things to all constituencies, with the fundamental difference that the PFP was attempting to achieve this across an even broader spectrum of political engagement and belief. In attempting to bridge the unfordable, the party was in, fact, losing credibility with both its traditional constituency and ones with whom it had enjoyed close relations in black politics. In terms of system politics, as we have noted, the party had become increasingly marginalised, whilst in terms of its "forward scouting" an interactive role, it had simply been displaced by the UDF. By 1985 the PFP was operating in an increasingly asphyxiating vacuum.

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31 . Shandler, p.50.

32 . Shandler, p.50.

### Slabbert's resignation

The combined factors of the 1983 referendum campaign setback, the party's displacement and its declining effectiveness as a vessel for political opposition had not only a deleterious effect on its membership and support structures, but severely shook its leadership cadre. For Van Zyl Slabbert the referendum reversal and the Convention Alliance debacle were personal defeats, and ones that directly impacted on his decision to quit Parliament. Slabbert was later to reflect:

One of the most painful periods in my political life was the 1983 referendum when out of deep conviction I had to be critical and negative whilst together with everybody else I would have liked to believe we were getting out of the mess.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless when it came, in February, 1986 Slabbert's resignation from the PFP was a massive shock to the majority of his own party and the white liberal electorate. As the second major reversal for the party during the period of crisis it is necessary briefly to elucidate its dynamics.

Slabbert occupied a unique position in South African politics, not only as a charismatic Afrikaner leader of a liberal political party, but also as an intellectual with a clear, pragmatic, and strategic yet philosophical mind. Slabbert's Afrikaner credentials were impeccable and he was therefore immune to the opprobrium of NP '*boerehaat*' insinuations frequently levelled at the PFP. The PFP leader was also possessed of strong debating skills which he used to brutal effect in Parliamentary debate. Slabbert was personally reviled by PW Botha who was both sensitive to Slabbert's oratorical skill and the power of his intellect.

Through his personal charisma Slabbert had improved the image and public identity and image of the party. He had headed the seminal 1978 PFP constitutional policy commission which accepted important changes to policy such as consociational government, and a federal constitution. As has been noted in 1981 Slabbert had also led the party to, by far, its greatest electoral success. Such was his personal allure that the

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33 . House of Assembly Debates vol 7, February 7 1986, col.425.

PFP election fund was named after him resulting in its most successful donor campaign. Slabbert also enjoyed the confidence of all major strands of the party from the youth, for whom he had a particular appeal, through to the business community. It was by virtue of his personal and intellectual skills that Slabbert was able to bridge the intensifying divisions nascent within the party. Thus when it came, Slabbert's resignation was a body blow to the party as the very uniqueness of appeal which Slabbert had drawn was excised in the space of a day.

His resignation from Parliament on the final day of the 1986 no confidence debate symbolised for Slabbert not only no confidence in the government, but a more deeply held conviction regarding the redundancy of the institution of Parliament in the socio-political context of the South African crisis. The PFP leader had for some time, agonized over his and the party's continued participation in Parliament.<sup>34</sup> On the advice of Eglin, Slabbert sought an interview with State President Botha in order to assess whether or not there was hope in pursuing Parliamentary opposition. Slabbert claimed after his resignation that his November 1985 meeting with Botha had convinced him of the futility of further engagement in Parliamentary opposition.<sup>35</sup>

Subsequent to his meeting with Botha, Slabbert formulated a plan which was circulated to key people within the party, to bring the Parliamentary crisis of legitimacy sharply into focus.<sup>36</sup> The strategy was for all PFP MPs to resign their seats, fight by-elections and then refuse to take up their seats in Parliament. The plan was received with a mixture of scepticism and outright hostility by caucus. Key thinkers within the party reasoned with Slabbert that he had crossed the line separating idealism from the practical pressures and dynamics of party politics. For others the plan flew in the face of the principles they had fought for, and for which they had often been defeated at great personal cost during the "dark days" of the 1950's, and 1960's. More cynical opinion held that such was the

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34 . Personal interview with Mr Colin Eglin MP, 7 June 1993.

35 . Cape Times, 18 February 1986. The final outcome of the meeting as the publicly embarrassing publication of the taped conversation between the two leaders which depicted a different side to the discussion than that painted by Slabbert.

36 . Personal interview with Professor Nic Olivier, 25 June 1993.

naivete of the plan that its intention was for it to be rejected, thus giving Slabbert personal justification for his departure.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, on the final day of the no confidence debate Slabbert announced:

In the course of the week I have tried to gauge my predominant feeling about the (no confidence) debate as it developed. It was an overwhelming sense of absurdity ... Parliament's reaction to 1985 in its first week of session was, as far as I am concerned, a grotesque ritual in irrelevance. We carried on as if nothing had happened ... The magic moment for any political leader is to find the right time to go. I believe it is perhaps slightly less painful to go when people want one to stay than to stay when people want one to go. I have decided the time has come for me to go.<sup>38</sup>

Slabbert's resignation impacted not only on the enthusiasm and commitment of party rank and file, but also on the thinking of PFP sympathizers amongst academics, and the liberal and radical youth. For many in the youth and the radical wing of white opposition, Slabbert's resignation from both the institution of Parliament and from the PFP also indicated that he had unbundled himself from the "system" and the tethers and affiliations of a white bourgeois party operating comfortably within that system. This had the further effect of ascriptively defining those who stayed with the party and within the system as conservative liberals, or "system" liberals or as simply "uncommitted". In effect, Slabbert's resignation added credibility to the extra-Parliamentary movement, but the corollary was that it diminished the legitimacy of the PFP in the eyes of many and served to undercut its credibility.

Organisationally, within the space of a few days the PFP lost its most charismatic leader, and when it became clear he would not be elected leader, Federal Chairman Alex Boraine also left the party to join Slabbert. Slabbert's departure also had a negative impact on the party's coffers and its donor base.<sup>39</sup>

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37 . The reaction to Slabbert's proposal was gleaned from interviews with current and former MPs in 1983.

38 . House of Assembly Debates, Vol 7, & February 1986, Cols. 414 and 425.

39 . Personal interview with Councillor Neil Ross, 30 August 1993.

Slabbert's resignation also highlighted the broader crisis within liberalism. Far from being a word associated with the PFP, the 'progressive movement' had become a political synonym for those engaged in and supporting extra-Parliamentary movements and formations. Clearly the term liberal in South Africa had attracted unacceptable connotations, and had in the mind's eye of those engaged in the extra-Parliamentary struggle been reduced to the protection of capitalist interests in general and those of the white middle-class in particular.

However, on another view, Slabbert's resignation had a potentially positive, but as yet hidden, dimension. As former PFP National Director Neil Ross noted:

His leaving allowed the party to become more pragmatic, get its feet down on the ground and, in fact, to crystallise its viewpoint. Because Slabbert straddled people's viewpoints they were able to in fact go along with things because it was Slabbert. And some of the people we lost in breakaways that followed, you know the old thing of purging the party to strengthen it, I think in this instance was true. In fact, we had spanned too wide a span in terms of people's political viewpoint and in many ways I think Slabbert's departure from the Parliamentary scene was a blessing.<sup>40</sup>

### The 1987 election

In the wake of the resignations of Slabbert and Borraine, the PFP immediately set about rebuilding the party under the guidance of Colin Eglin. Strategists within the party had identified the key problem areas for the party as being: internal structure, communication, direction, decision making and consistency.<sup>41</sup> The principle conceptual shift made by the party was in ditching the negatively orientated strategy of "effective opposition", to a more assertive and proactive self-conception of an "alternative government".<sup>42</sup> A programme was established to rejuvenate the party organisationally which effected a process of internal restructuring. By late 1986 the groundwork had been laid for a new leadership cadre within the party, and a modern political marketing image was under design, principally aimed at the constitutionally necessary elections to be held before 1989. In terms of policy direction, a strategy committee was established which set about

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40 . Personal interview with Councillor Neil Ross, 30 August 1993.

41 . PFP, 'Strategy for a new South Africa', September 1986, p.1.

42 . Colin Eglin, 'Strategy of Alliance' in Leadership, Volume 6, number two, 1987, p.26.

planning the integrated strategy designed to “Thrust the party to power in 1988 and beyond”.<sup>43</sup>

The PFP was also buoyed by the publication of a series of *Mark en Menings* surveys which indicated that by November 1986 it had recovered a full two percentage points to 18,6% of popular white support from a low of 16,2% after Slabbert’s resignation. Furthermore a full 37% of the electorate were shown by surveys to be broadly supportive of the principles and policies of the PFP.<sup>44</sup>

Central to its reconstruction, was a plan devised to re-kindle the successes of 1981, and to take the party beyond its traditional electoral boundaries. The strategy developed was enshrined within the policy document “Strategy for a New South Africa” which had been planned to serve as the basis for the PFP’s expected 1988/1989 election campaign. However, rather than fighting the campaign in 1989, in the midst of a state of emergency, with some 30 000 people detained, including most of the central leadership of the UDF, the threat of a burgeoning right wing, and increasing international pressure, President PW Botha unexpectedly called an early General Election for the House of Assembly for May 6 1987.

#### The PFP 1987 election campaign

The PFP’s 1987 electoral strategy and campaign was based on three key assumptions:

Firstly, it was assumed by strategists that the party would win two-thirds of the 1981 NRP vote, that the PFP would hold its own against the right-wing threat and that it would achieve the same electoral swing as it had done between 1977 and 1981.

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43 . PFP, *ibid*.

44 . David Welsh, ‘The ideology, aims, role and strategy of the PFP and NRP’, in Van Vuuren, Latakomo, Marais and Schlemmer (Eds), South African Election 1987, Pinetown, Owen Burgess, 1987, pp.81-101, p.92.

Secondly, the strategy assumed basic social and political stability in South Africa, thus the assumption held that there would be no *coup d'état* and that “violence does not reach intolerable levels”.

The final assumption was the so-called ‘hinge’ assumption. In essence this argument held that black support or black credibility would vary in direct relationship to the amount of support the PFP could win. Conversely, white support and credibility would also vary in direct relationship to the amount of black support the PFP could win.

Together with the 26 seats held by the PFP on the eve of the election, strategists targeted a further 26 priority “winnable” seats. The targeted groups beyond the traditional Progressive support base included, disillusioned Nationalists, the floating voters lost to the party in the 1983 referendum, uncommitted NRP supporters, women and the youth.

A PFP communication strategy was also developed to “win the hearts and minds” of the electorate by making PFP policy and rhetoric more accessible and “voter friendly”.

Finally, the campaign sought to “turbocharge” PFP policy to reach to a targeted audience of 500 000 voters in the targeted 52 seats by multi-media direct marketing methods.

Deeply concerned to counter its perceived image problem and to tap into a broader electoral sentiment prior to the election, the PFP formed an electoral alliance agreement with the NRP and, has been noted, also came to an electoral agreement with the Independent candidates.

Such was the optimism and buoyancy of the PFP prior to the 1987 election that *Cape Times* deputy editor Gerald Shaw stated, “The Official Opposition has seldom entered an election campaign in better heart”.<sup>45</sup> The buoyancy and optimism was short-lived, however, as the election turned into a nightmare for the party.

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45 . *Cape Times*, 21 February 1987.

### Campaign issues

The 1987 election was called putatively as a mandate for National Party reform, but, in effect, was an attempt by Botha to cap conservative support, particularly as the two far-right formations, the Conservative Party and the Herstigte Nasionale Party, were at loggerheads. However, Botha and the NP machinery had increasingly become a captive of the Frankensteinian securocratic machinery it had created and thus turned to the question of white security, foreign interference in South Africa's domestic policies and internal and external radicalism as the main planks of its "total electoral strategy".

Far from conveying a message of reform to the electorate, the National Party embarked on a campaign strategy that all but destroyed the PFP and which confronted it with its deepest crisis.

The technique applied by the National Party, together with the assistance and complicity of its propaganda machinery in the Afrikaans press and SABC, was the construction of a phalanx of crude but effective political and conceptual linkages. The first step in the chain was to illustrate that PFP policy of universal adult suffrage would, by definition, result in majority rule. The following step was to publicise the fact that such a dispensation was the expressed aim and objective of the ANC. Having established that the PFP and the ANC shared the same political objective, the conceptual linkage of the ANC and SACP alliance in exile was demonstrated. The conceptual loop was completed thus: the PFP believes in one man one vote, as does the ANC. One man one vote would result in black ANC majority rule and by extension, due to their alliance SACP rule, ergo a vote for the PFP is a vote for the SACP. The brutally negative campaign against the PFP concluded with an advertisement proclaiming, "Over my dead body would I vote for the ANC. So why vote PFP?"<sup>46</sup>

The defensiveness and reactive nature of the PFP campaign was best illustrated by the final ad of the PFP's campaign which reasoned, "Is the PFP for the ANC, communism, terrorism or violence?" This advertisement thus acknowledged that the image existed,

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46 . Business Day, 29 April 1987.

and failed to tell the voter immediately and unequivocally where the PFP stood on these issues.<sup>47</sup>

This perceptual linkage between the PFP and a demonised ANC was given credence by a number of bombing attacks on civilian targets during the election campaign. Blanket television coverage of civil protest and violence throughout the campaign re-affirmed the images of black radicalism.

The role of the SABC in this campaign of destruction cannot be underestimated. Notice 1249 of the Government Gazette of 15 June 1979 states as a condition of the SABC's licence that it is obliged to:

(R)eport newsworthy current events in the Republic and abroad clearly, unambiguously, factually impartially and without distortion.<sup>48</sup>

However, this statutory proclamation was abused in the most cynical manner during the 1987 election campaign to the detriment of the PFP. Research commissioned by the PFP revealed that for the period 16 March to 3 May 1987 the National Party was granted 23,5% of all election-related coverage. When coverage given to Cabinet Ministers in their capacity as government spokesperson, together with Security Forces and "other pro-Government categories" was included, the figure rose to 53,7%. In contrast, the PFP/NRP alliance received a total of 12% of election coverage.<sup>49</sup>

The structuring and coverage of election material was also heavily loaded in favour of the ruling party. The so-called "Goldilocks effect" operated, whereby the "too hard" position of the Conservative Party preceded the "too soft" position of the PFP, followed by the "just right" option of the National Party. Whilst Cabinet Ministers were "questioned" by SABC interviewers with obsequious servility, PFP leaders were made to jump through

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47 . Argus, 4 May, 1987.

48 . As cited by Gavin M Stewart, 'Policom 1987: political news on South African television during the May election', in Van Vuuren et al, South African Election 1987, p.140.

49 . Stewart, p.149.

the hoop. The research also found that in all interviews (there were no debates) throughout the campaign the National Party representative or government Minister was afforded the opportunity of the final comment.<sup>50</sup>

Without access to the state-controlled media and without the support of a stridently liberal newspaper after the closure of the *Rand Daily Mail* in 1985 the PFP failed to get its message across in an authoritative and believable manner. It remains an open question as to whether or not the PFP could have delivered its message effectively at all under the conditions imposed by the state of emergency.

The fracturing of relations between radicals and liberals was further accentuated in the election campaign and served to both confuse many committed PFP supporters and, in effect, damage the party.

The mixed messages being received by liberal voters were highlighted just one month before the May 6 election. In a public debate with Denis Worrall, former PFP leader Van Zyl Slabbert argued that Parliament had *almost* no relevance at all, and concluded:

To put it bluntly - the forces for democracy lie stronger outside Parliament than inside...If democratic culture is to survive in our land, it will be *despite* and not *because* of the politics of this Parliament.<sup>51</sup>

At the same time white UDF-aligned formations including NUSAS and JODAC supported the two-day stayaway and the position of “non-participation”, thus effectively conscientising thousands of young concerned whites at the universities to the contradictions of the “emergency” election and thereby by extension “delegitimising” the PFP for many students.

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50 . Stewart, p.147-149.

51 . Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, The System and the Struggle. reform, revolt and reaction in South Africa, Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1989.p.92 & p.100.

In explaining its position on the white election the UDF called on the PFP to reject the racist Parliament and pointed out that:

...PFP supporters will have to recognise that their children's future lies neither in a futile bid for a few extra seats in a moribund Parliament, nor in leaving South Africa.<sup>52</sup>

In a conference after the election result UDF patron Archbishop Desmond Tutu berated the PFP adding:

I repeat the plea I made to the PFP donkeys years ago - get out of Parliament because you have given the world the impression that we have a multi-party democracy when it is now clear that we have a total charade.<sup>53</sup>

#### Election results

The election results were a crippling blow to the party. The PFP entered the General Election as the official opposition party in Parliament with 26 MPs and had put up 77 candidates, two of whom were unopposed. The party had sought to double its Parliamentary representation but emerged decimated, displaced as the Official Opposition by the Conservative Party, and losing almost one third of its seats.

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52 . As quoted by HJ Kotzé and E Lourens, 'Shouts at the gate, whispers in the backyard: extra-parliamentary perspectives on and reactions to the 1987 election', in Van Vuuren et al (Eds), South Africa Election 1987, Pinetown, Owen Burgess, 1987. p.125.

53 . Kotzé and Lourens, p.126.

The table below indicates the poor performance of the PFP relative to previous elections.

<b>Performance of white political parties in recent general elections.</b>						
PARTY	1977		1981		1987	
	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%
HNP AND CP	-	3	18	14	22	30
NP	134	65	118	53	123	57
NRP AND INDEPENDENTS	10	12	8	6	2	3
PFP	17	17	26	18	19	14

Sources: PFP electoral reviews, Professor NJJ Olivier 1981 and 1987.

Far from making the expected breakthroughs in marginal National Party seats, the party lost support to the NP in traditional opposition constituencies. As Welsh notes, the PFP/NRP alliance failed in that, where faced with a choice between a PFP or NP candidate, the large majority of NRP voters voted NP. In the marginal PFP Albany constituency the NRP rejected the alliance in toto and the PFP incumbent EK Moorcroft was beaten by the Nationalists by 844 votes.<sup>54</sup> Laurie also notes that 3/4 of the NRP voters who supported a "Yes" vote in the referendum supported the NP in the 1987 election.

The UDF non-participation and stayaway action, may also have cost the PFP its seats in Wynberg and Hillbrow and contributed to its poor performance in Green Point.

The 1987 PFP election assumptions and strategy also proved erroneous. The assumptions were glaringly misplaced in that they simply did not account for the fact that unlike the 1981 election, the 1987 election took place in a period of acute crisis or, viewed differently, in the maelstrom of a pre-revolutionary phase of struggle. At a purely

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54 . David Welsh, p.95.

political level the PFP assumptions also misread, ignored or had forgotten the lessons of the 1983 referendum.

The election strategy proved fundamentally flawed at a number of other levels. It was based on 1981 figures and assumed that most ex-United Party supporters would vote PFP in the election, as historically the UP in terms of its broke more to the PFP than to the NP. Therefore, the executive of the PFP, even before receiving research data, had formulated their strategy for growth which aimed at winning the 52 seats. When the research data were later analysed it indicated that had people voted for reform, then PFP strategy was not unrealistic. However, in NP/PFP contested seats, the electorate had voted security first, and reform second. One example was East London North which was identified as a top priority seat. The vote for the PFP was 17% and for the NP 51%, and that had been identified as a strategically takable seat.

The effect of Slabbert's withdrawal had also become apparent during the election campaign. PFP research consultant Dr Jan Hofmeyr noted:

The PFP didn't get the message across because they did not have the communicators, they did not have the people who they could put onto platforms and could put the message across with credibility. Take the ad campaign of the Independents. All the images and rhetoric was well worked out. It comes across as viby, you can trust them, they've got stature, and the PFP's one was dead.<sup>55</sup>

Research also indicated that whilst both English and Afrikaans voters placed the "unrest situation" as the major issue of concern in the election (combined 57%), the second major issue of concern was "power-sharing" (combined 55%).<sup>56</sup> The critical failing of the 1987 PFP election campaign was that it failed to tie the two central issues of reform and security together.

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55. Personal interview with Dr Jan Hofmeyr, 10 June 1993.

56. Nic Rhoodie & MP Cooper, 'Whites' perceptions of the fundamental issues surrounding the election of 6 May 1987', in Van Vuuren et al, South African Election 1987, p.193.

Hofmeyr added:

I don't believe they would have been believed even if they had. It would have taken eight months of sustained marketing to get people to warm to their message. There was an arrogance about the party when speaking to the public. They always spoke at people instead of speaking with them.<sup>57</sup>

The marketing strategists also had difficulty convincing candidates and activists on the left of the party in particular to accept what the data were saying:

We fought an absolute battle in the Western Cape to get them to take seriously the need to speak to ordinary white people with their fears. From Colin it was much more a case of tentativeness, rather a case of "Will this work, I don't know, maybe we should give it a chance".<sup>58</sup>

The PFP had been further "tainted" by the accusations of its former MP for Bryanston, Horace van Rensburg that it was anti-Afrikaner and equivocal on security matters and the ANC/SACP:

In recent times I have personally experienced the intensive anti-Afrikaners hostility that surfaces when the flimsy veneer that usually shrouds this ugly prejudice in the PFP is ripped aside.<sup>59</sup>

Van Rensburg's outbursts extended into April and were aimed at exacting maximum damage to the PFP during the election campaign. Van Rensburg accused the PFP of giving the End Conscription Campaign its mailing list and of "putting young South Africans on the border at risk".<sup>60</sup> Van Rensburg's political histrionics later extended to claiming to have received death threats which he believed to be linked to the PFP.<sup>61</sup>

Van Rensburg's accusations contributed to the image of the party as being anti-Afrikaner, soft on communism and of disguising the consequences of its policies to the electorate. That the accusations came from an ex-PFP MP also lent them some credence in the

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57 . Personal interview with Dr Jan Hofmeyr, 10 June 1993.

58 . Personal interview with Dr Jan Hofmeyr, 10 June 1993.

59 . Cape Times, 13 February 1987.

60 . Citizen, 22 April 1987.

61 . Sunday Star, 15 February 1987.

public eye. It is hard to calculate the impact this had on potential *verligte* support the PFP hoped to attract in the election, but it was no doubt damaging. In what appeared to be an orchestrated strategy, Van Rensburg's outbursts were exploited by the National Party to the fullest extent. Its publicity chief Con Botha used Van Rensburg's vitriol in an attempt to depict the PFP as an "unfit home" for disenfranchised Nationalists.

The vain efforts to counter the destructive impact of the Nationalist onslaught also had the effect of distracting the PFP from its central campaign thrust, namely reform, and it was thereby forced to fight a defensive rearguard action throughout the campaign.<sup>62</sup>

A number of other less easily identifiable issues also contributed to the party's performance including: the poor state of the voters' rolls, resulting in the PFP's depleted force of voluntary workers spending too much time tracking down missing people, the inordinate length of the campaign, and the large-scale emigration of English-speaking South Africans, robbing the party of thousands of its natural constituency.<sup>63</sup>

In summary the 1987 results reflected subterranean trends which had been nascent since the 1982 CP split from the NP. The 1987 white election was the first time these trends had been given public expression at the ballot box.

In a post-election analysis Heribert Adam concluded:

During the past few years, the white electorate has shifted in two contradictory ways: it moved to the left on apartheid issues but to the right on security. These shifts are not unrelated. The crumbling of certainty about traditional apartheid was a factor in bringing law and order issues to the fore. By cultivating (and also manufacturing) anxieties, the authorities lured doubting voters into their camp. By associating the PFP with the African National Congress, terrorism and anarchy the NP represented itself as the reliable guarantor of a basic human need.<sup>64</sup>

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62 . *Cape Times*, 18 February 1987.

63 . Welsh, pp.95-96.

64 . Heribert Adam, *African Notes*, 4 June 1987.

For the PFP the reversal of the 1987 election results, coming as they did a year after Slabbert's departure, had the effect of calling the future role and indeed existence of the party into question.

### Dakar

The party was thrown into further turmoil by the participation in July 1987 of Party Chairman Peter Gastrow, Greytown MP Pierre Cronjé and President's Councillor Pieter Schoeman, in a meeting with the African National Congress in the Senegalese capital of Dakar under the aegis of Slabbert and Borraine's newly formed Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA).

For the embattled party leadership this was a triple blow. In the first instance the party had just emerged barely intact from a mauling by the NP on the question of white security and contact with the ANC. Secondly, the trip was organised by Slabbert who had severely publicly damaged the party in his departure. Thirdly, the planning of the trip was kept from party leader Colin Eglin until the day of the departure thus leaving the leader unprepared for the furore that was to follow.

The underlying dynamic was complex, however, and served to highlight more clearly than any other event the internal contradictions operating within the PFP at that time, as Peter Gastrow explained:

This initiative and meeting was totally in line with what I thought politics was and ought to be about.

We had people in the caucus at that stage who were really raving against the ANC and I therefore decided I would not raise it with caucus and that I would deal with it confidentially and not speak to anyone about it.

I thought it was an excellent idea to go because I have a very basic approach which has brought me into conflict with my colleagues on a number of occasions, because my accent is not on principles, my accent is on process. And it was my view that we needed to get involved in the political process towards a solution. It's one thing to proclaim your liberal values the beacon approach sending out the liberal principles and values, it's important. It's a game which I don't get satisfaction from, I like to get involved in a process which to me seems to lead to something better. And

that is why I got involved in '85 already in this contact between the ANC and the PFP. And I had no doubt a meeting like this at Dakar with some leading lights, Afrikaner intellectuals and some heavyweights from the ANC that this would have a positive outcome as far as the overall political process was concerned. No doubt I was prepared to take whatever came my way because this was far more important than giving 15 excellent speeches in Parliament to me. And I think it was far more effective.

The range of discussions at Dakaar convinced me that there was a real chance of arriving at a negotiated settlement. That these people were prepared to talk and compromise despite some hot rhetoric, underlying that, there was a readiness to talk and they were in fact keen to talk. That was very encouraging and motivating. This motivated me to move along this path of process politics.

The second problem related to the contact with the ANC and the involvement of Slabbert and the question "Where is your loyalty?" Is it IDASA/Slabbert or is it this party and our leader?"

My impression was that people in the caucus felt they were dealing with an odd-ball, this fellow, and he's not really in tune with, in step with what we're all about. I don't think that was the case though, it was just the frustration of being in a caucus which, in my view, had no conception of what process politics was all about and wasn't prepared to get involved in process politics. PFP politics was "beacon politics". It was what Pierre Cronjé always used to call "the tennis match scenario", where the PFP was in a position of the line judge who sits there and says "wrong, fault, this is the score", a moral high-ground approach and beaming out principles which is important, yes, this is why the PP and Helen Suzman roles were important. But it was just that my approach was to get involved, it means "contaminating yourself" occasionally and it will lead to criticism from opponents, as the Dakar experience showed. At that stage the PFP caucus and National Council had no conception of what I was talking about.<sup>65</sup>

Upon his resignation from the PFP Gastrow stated that the PFP's liberal position was conservative in terms of today's politics.<sup>66</sup>

The treatment of the Dakaar issue by the PFP caucus led PFP MP for Claremont Jan van Eck to reconsider his position in the party. Following his attendance of the funeral of the "Cradock Four" in July 1985, Van Eck had become increasingly drawn into struggle

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65 . Personal interview with Peter Gastrow MP, 13 May 1993.

66 . Cape Times, 9 October 1987.

politics and was chairperson of the PFP's Unrest Monitoring and Action Committee (UMAC) which had led him into adopting forceful positions on community issues and in particular on the role of the South Africa Police in the unrest.<sup>67</sup>

Increasingly, Van Eck had been made to feel uncomfortable within the party. On the one hand he was viewed as "the useful idiot" of the left by members of caucus, whilst on the other he was used as a marketing tool by the party leadership with both the PFP youth and in support of the party's claim to be involved at grass roots with the community.

Van Eck's exposition of his own experience in the party yields a unique insight into its internal dynamic:

In a post-1987 strategy "think tank", I argued that if the majority of the people choose an economic system other than liberal democracy then that is democracy. From this point things got nasty and that was the time when people started a campaign to oust those who did not subscribe to liberal democracy, saying that they didn't belong in the party. There was already a deep division within the party then between people who wanted to play "hands-on" politics, who actually wanted to go out and do things and you would measure the party's performance not by the brilliance of its speeches or its constitution or bill of rights, but we wanted to say, "we want to make what we believe in, of practical importance", so that people say, "Ja, there's a benefit for change, there's a benefit for people who do what we do, where we are". So it was the ultimate very old challenge to liberals: Can you as liberals transcend into the coal face, or do you always have to stay in a lofty tower?"

The ones of us who were in the hands-on side were people who had been involved at grass roots level already. So if you took the caucus, then almost without exception and said who were the guys working in the broader community, then those were the guys. That division came to the fore, but it remained a division, but what happened was that the people who were opposed to the way we did things and opposed to our way of taking the PFP into the community started to force choices onto us. They started to force us by saying things like, "if you don't approve of liberal democracy then you don't belong in the PFP". So a very unpleasant thing developed. I was doing what I was doing I believed in liberal principles, but I was applying them in practice with people who were not always upholding them. So fine, that means you're a teacher, you're helping

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67. See Van Eck's account of these experiences in his publication, Eyewitness to "unrest", Pretoria, Taurus, 1989.

them, but the other side became increasingly intolerant and more determined to oust people like us.

Then Dakar happened. The party showed total rejection of our involvement in Dakar as the PFP and the interpretation of our involvement from the grassroots was that there was great excitement and the youth specifically were desperately happy saying, "this is exciting", and the party's leadership response was terrible. After this I remember going to a PFP national youth Congress comprising 23 people! All the youth had fantastically challenging questions and Colin just blocked them all.

What I found was that personal animosity towards what Slabbert was perceived to have done to the PFP played first role and that the party was losing all ability of moving forward into a new era. I felt that if you can't even accept three guys going on a trip to Dakar with people, most of whom were highly respectable, that to me was virtually the end.

What had developed, the party had polarised, and there were some of us who wanted to position the party more left to use the term broadly, and there were those who wanted to position the party more right. It was tug-of-war, neither was objecting to either position they were holding, they just didn't want to hold positions publicly. They didn't mind talking to the ANC, but it couldn't be too actively done. You do it half-heartedly because it looks good for votes, but you're not so deeply dragged in so that to some extent you lose control over yourself. The PFP increasingly adopted lines which were in conflict with the democratic movement. The PFP increasingly began suffering from the fatigue of those in the laager who couldn't see the other side's point of view any more because you are fighting for survival. The PFP was being heavily challenged by the white community.

Then they start bringing in experts from the outside who tell the party that we are increasingly perceived as a left-wing radical organisation and for the first time since 1971 when I joined, the PFP starts fashioning itself along white electoral party politics. It had never done that before, it was a bearer of the truth, it was a party that tried to change white people. If we wanted to win votes it was quite simple, you play to all the fears and prejudices and what are you then, you are just an enlightened National Party. The fear of loss of seats, though, was understandable because the party wanted to grow, but not in an undemocratic South Africa. We couldn't aim for the majority of whites we could just attempt to enlighten and take that into the National Party. So it became clear from that moment onwards that everything that I was involved with was potentially detrimental to our positioning in the white electorate. Every day I had to look at graphs of where we were in the South African political spectrum and what are we labelled as and that led to more and more motions adopted at Congresses. Harry Schwarz went on annual campaigns to bully Congresses of the PFP into adopting reactionary policies, heavier anti-

sanctions speeches, heavier anti-MK, heavy anti-everything. We were then dead, we could no longer play the leading role and we were no longer setting the pace. We were being dragged behind the electorate we were not leading it any more.<sup>68</sup>

Both the Gastrow and Van Eck expositions indicate a clear dichotomy within the PFP caucus and one that stemmed from the dual, yet contradictory, claims of adherence to liberal principle and the demands of the *realpolitik* of South Africa. The South African social formation was undergoing acute schisms. The National Party was engaged in a programme of formative action that was undercutting the PFP's historical role as harbinger of reformism, whilst at the same time the socio-political crisis had thrown up forces which challenged the PFP to become engaged in and identify with the "struggle" for democracy. In attempting to straddle both stools the party was achieving neither and was being eroded from left and right. The moral, principled "beacon" liberalism in South Africa appeared increasingly irrelevant, given the reformist thrust of the government and the scrapping of some of the most public and personally offensive forms of racial discrimination. From the left, both the PFP's continued participation in Parliament served to give the appearance of legitimacy to the system. The issues thrown up by the crisis brought the PFP into dissonance with the "progressive movement", however, particularly on the question of sanctions and violence. This served to locate the party in the anomalous position of objectively constituting a fraction of the ruling bloc and seeking to protect the long-term interests of that ruling economic class, whilst at the same time challenging the political structures of racial oligarchy.

The range of choices facing the party were partially pre-determined by the departure of those who had been involved with and identified with the struggle. The second determining factor was the necessity for adherence to the overarching liberal principles which served to independently identify the party. The third guiding and constricting factor was the class composition of the PFP and its funding base. Thus the party was left with little choice but to make itself relevant within the formal structures of white politics

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68 . Personal interview with Jan van Eck MP, 7 June 1993.

and to carry forward its principled message. The problem for the PFP was to combine these two objectives.

The final thread requiring investigation within the fabric of the white political tapestry was the emergence and success in 1987 of the Independent Movement, and it is this political phenomenon that is discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER SIX

It has been noted that the organic crisis had a profound effect on both the structural conditions within South Africa during the 1980's, but also had the consequence of forcing the re-alignment of white political forces to the left and right of the governing party. This chapter discusses the emergence of the Independent Movement<sup>1</sup> in white South African politics in the late 1980's and seeks to locate this phenomenon firmly within the broad sweep of the organic crisis in South Africa and the fracturing of the ruling bloc.

Whereas previous attempts to forge a united opposition party to the left of the National Party had comprised largely of English-speaking and traditional opponents of the government, the efforts to structure a new united anti-apartheid white political party during 1988 and 1989 were characterised by the prominent participation of ex-Nationalists, "Independents" and so-called *verligte* or enlightened Afrikaners.

The emergence of the Independent phenomenon had a far-reaching impact on liberal politics in South Africa, and indeed the political product of the protracted negotiations to form the Democratic Party strongly reflected the character of the Independent Movement.

### *Verligtes*

The roots of the Independent movement lay deep within the Afrikaner *verligte* phenomenon which had become a significant movement in the 1970's. As early as 1972 Michiel le Roux had developed a typology of the *verligte* Afrikaner.<sup>2</sup> *Verligtes* were distinguished by their recognition of the right of other population groups to political representation and sovereignty and that mutually destructive conflict was to be avoided at

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1. The term 'Independent Movement' was one contested between its major personalities and is not used here to depict the specific political formation led by Dr Denis Worrall prior to the founding of the Independent Party, but rather as a convenient collective for the non-aligned figures emerging within white politics prior to the 1987 general election.
  2. Michiel le Roux was later instrumental in the conception and identity of the Independent campaign in Stellenbosch in 1987.

all costs. The dilemma that faced *verligtes* was how to reconcile their belief in the legitimacy of the claim of other population groups to sovereignty and political representation whilst protecting the secular interests of the political elite of which they were a constitutive element.

The distinguishing characteristic of *verligtes* was their rejection of the model of apartheid as an acceptable solution to the dual claims of mutual sovereignty and independence. In recognising the layered and complex nature of the South African political tapestry *verligtes* also rejected the notion of pre-determined political blueprints for solving the problems of ethnic and racial conflict. The approach of the *verligtes* was consultative rather than prescriptive.

Due to its recognition of the perceived salience of groups and their respective rights the National Party was perceived as philosophically the most acceptable home for *verligtes*, but they continued to have grave misgivings about the unjust application of the policy of "separate development".<sup>3</sup>

Despite locating themselves within the ruling bloc *verligtes* stood apart in terms of their critique of the moral repugnance of petty apartheid and the unworkability of the system. Leading from this critique *verligtes* reasoned that the most effective political role to be played by their small constituency was that of a moral conscience to Afrikanerdom.

The 1976 Soweto uprising eradicated any lingering doubts *verligtes* had about the utility of apartheid as a suitable framework for just political blueprint for South Africa and instilled a greater urgency in their representations to and within government for active reform. Characteristic of the *verligte* academic thrust of the time was that contained in Stellenbosch academic Willem Esterhuyse's *Afskeid van Apartheid*, which called for the scrapping of symbolic apartheid in order to give blacks new hope. Esterhuyse remained

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3 . Michiel le Roux, 'The New Afrikaners: Views on the ideals and policies of the moderate Afrikaans students', in *Student Perspectives on South Africa*, edited by H.W. van der Merwe and D. Welsh (Cape Town: David Philip), pp.86-95.

ambivalent at the time as to whether the central tenets of racial rule ought to be scrapped however.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these increased misgivings and with the notable exception of a small number of liberal and radical academics, later known as *oorbeligtes* (over-enlightened) who launched a withering attack on *verligtes* in the early 1980's, *verligtes* remained within the establishment and continued to attempt "reform from within". By the late 1970's and early 1980's the reformist tone, discourse and formative action of the early years of the Botha administration gave rise to increased optimism amongst *verligtes* and indeed the perceived progress of the tricameral constitution was viewed as the first step in a direction that would sooner, rather than later, lead to a just and equitable political order enjoying the full support of the majority of the population.

The popular backlash against the tricameral constitution and the government's repressive response to the uprising destroyed this optimism, however, and paved the way for a more strident and fundamental critique by dissident Afrikaners of governmental policy. By the mid-1980's the nascent fissures within the enlightened wing of Afrikanerdom, together with the patent failure of government policy, forced open a broader philosophical debate within the intelligentsia and, indeed foreshadowed the further political fracturing of Afrikanerdom, though this time to the left.

#### The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK)

In a watershed decision, the synod of the NGK published a policy document at its 1986 synod entitled *Kerk en Samelewing*, (Church and Society), in which it declared apartheid as an unscriptural error. The document went on to exhort its members to "confess their participation in apartheid with humility and sorrow". Newly elected moderator and enlightened theologian, Professor Johan Heyns, added that there was no theological justification for apartheid, and that under no circumstances should policies be allowed to be based on political domination or exploitation. Heyns moved beyond his theological

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4 . Hermann Giliomee, 'Apartheid, Verligtheid, and Liberalism', in Butler, Elphick and Welsh (Eds), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its history and prospect, pp.377-388.

intervention when he warned that “if the government applies apartheid, we will have to contradict them and reject it”.<sup>5</sup>

The public rejection of race-based policies by the NGK had a marked impact on the thinking of enlightened and critical Afrikanerdom. During the 1980’s considerable dissonance became increasingly apparent between government “total onslaught” orthodoxy and the moral outrage of the Afrikaner intelligentsia, the NGK, and the enlightened wing of the establishment.

Afrikaans political socialisation had been characterised by relations of mutual social, ideological, cultural and political support between the individual, church, and state; relations which were now increasingly questioned as the unworkability of apartheid and the untenability of its moral underpinnings were laid bare.<sup>6</sup>

#### The academic revolt

The onset of the 1984 uprising, the imposition of the state of emergency in 1985, the impact of PW Botha’s “Rubicon” speech and the resultant critical financial crisis into which the country was plunged, led a group of Stellenbosch academics to form *Besprekingsgroep* ‘85. The Group sought to discuss and formulate strategies that would assist in leading to solutions to the country’s intensifying problems.<sup>7</sup>

In its original conception the group sought to engage “progressive” elements within the ruling National Party and Minister Chris Heunis, in particular, to persuade them by means of reasoned argument, debate and written submission, that an urgent imperative existed for the complete dismantling of apartheid and the construction of a constitutional formula that would give satisfaction to the legitimate political aspirations of the black majority in South Africa.

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5 . Quoted in Stanley Uys ‘The Afrikaner Establishment’ in Shaun Johnson (Ed), South Africa, No Turning Back, London, Macmillan, 1988, p.221.

6 . See Adam and Giliomee, The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power, David Philip, 1983, pp.83-128.

7 . Personal interview with Professor Sampie Terreblanche, 8 July 1993.

Frustrated by their lack of access to the inner cabinet within the securocratic framework then operating within government, the group penned a particularly critical document in January 1986 for submission to the Special Cabinet Committee on Black Constitutional Development. The document, in effect, set a timetable of six months for the government to put its house in order. The document was rejected by government and its treatment by the cabinet and PW Botha in particular led to sharp clashes between Botha and the academics.<sup>8</sup> After a final showdown with Botha the academics made the important symbolic and political decision to break with the traditional conventions governing relations between Afrikaner academics and the government by publically condemning its policy prescriptions publically via a scathing press statement. It is important to note here that the Stellenbosch academics' revolt itself exhibited a structural dimension, as Du Toit noted:

Under the new constitution enormous power has been concentrated in the hands of the executive president, who has at the same time been insulated from many of the traditional constraints of collective leadership in Afrikaner Nationalism. Nowadays, should the NP's grassroots supporters, its intellectuals, the caucus, or even members of the cabinet disapprove of the state president's course of action, it seems there is little they can do about it. And as long as Mr Botha wants to remain President, it seems that there is no chance of any rival mounting a challenge from within the party ranks.<sup>9</sup>

The split with the Afrikaner intellectuals robbed the National Party of much of its intellectual talent pool and underscored the increasingly moribund character of both its policies and leadership.

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8 . Besprekingsgroep '85: Memorandum vir voorlegging aan die spesiale kabinetskomitee i.s. swart staatkundige ontwikkeling, Januarie 1986. See also Discussion Group '85 press statement 7 March 1987 and Discussion Group '85 statement 12 March 1988. In an important linkage with the earlier point regarding the moral outrage of the intelligentsia and the church's rejection of apartheid, Professor Sampie Terreblanche informed the writer in a personal interview that the line of argument adopted by the group of 28 in their final split with PW Botha was one of reasoned persuasion on the grounds of the scriptural and moral indefensibility of apartheid.

9 . Cape Times, 28 February 1987.

From *verligte* to liberal?

It was not only the ruling National Party that was damaged by the splitting of the academics, however. This disjuncture signalled a much broader moral and philosophical crisis rentng Afrikanerdom and one which gave rise to fundamental debate on the nature and its future and identity. Of particular importance for the philosophical identity of the future Democratic Party was the contribution to this debate made by academic and former newspaper editor Willem de Klerk.<sup>10</sup>

De Klerk had coined the epithets *verligte* and *verkrampste* in the 1970's and had, as a leading Afrikaner intellectual, been at the centre of the crisis within Afrikanerdom. De Klerk was removed from his position as editor of the leading Afrikaans newspaper *Rapport* in 1987 and was to play a vital role in the later formation of the Democratic Party.

For De Klerk the debates and schisms within the Afrikaner intelligentsia were not merely academic in nature, as a position had been reached in Afrikaner political history where serious and profound choices had to be made and, indeed, these fundamental choices were facing white South Africans in general. The choices facing Afrikaners were not merely questions of a shifting political ideology or philosophical identity, but were also of a practical and strategic nature. The philosophical and political soul-searching amongst enlightened Afrikaners was for De Klerk organic and denoted a form of political reconnaissance aimed at ascertaining whether liberalism in particular held the answer to Afrikaner fears, and a solution to the type of political impasse facing the country.

The acid test for Afrikaners, according to De Klerk, was whether liberalism had the wherewithal to break the political and constitutional deadlock and to provide a viable strategy for taking the country into the political future. De Klerk proved sceptical of the potential for western or classical liberalism to provide this intellectual and political home

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10 . All quotes in this discussion are taken from, Willem de Klerk, 'Word Afrikaners Nou Liberaliste?', in *Die Suid Afrikaan*, Number 19, February 1989, and are translated from the original Afrikaans.

to Afrikanerdom, which was, in part, due to a perceived innate “weaknesses” within liberalism. For De Klerk, a liberal:

(I)s master of analysis but not always of synthesis. Diagnosis and prognosis are his strong points but not therapy. Stating of problems but not the solutions. To let things slide and an aversion to structuring.

De Klerk argued, however, that whereas historically Afrikaners had given up on liberals due to their low-profile political positions and their lack of political activity, including their lack of vision and strategy, the irony of the 1980’s was that traditional Afrikaner ideology had produced its own crisis and had itself been found wanting in terms of strategy and analysis. This had afforded liberals the opportunity to “move Afrikaners from point ‘A’ to point ‘B’.” This, De Klerk claimed, had never before been possible.

Although there were clear signs emerging of Afrikaner resistance to National Party rule, De Klerk noted that this should not have been construed as “liberal” resistance and did not automatically portend some form of Afrikaner conversion. Although many Afrikaners felt comfortable with the simple and broad principles of liberalism, they had not committed themselves to their full acceptance. Accordingly, despite their liberal behaviour and discourse the new Afrikaners derived their form of liberalism from quite different sources to that of the traditional or classical liberals. Their liberalism stemmed from elements of Calvinism.

De Klerk’s argument held that Calvinism was a bipolar ideology/religion that, on the one hand, exhorts its adherents to submit to authority, order, and discipline, but that the other important node of Calvinism holds as a fundamental tenet the notion of the importance of freedom from domination. Insofar as classical liberalism was fundamentally a critique of tyranny, Calvinism and liberalism are not incompatible and indeed share this fundamental element of negative liberty. The Calvinistic tradition, according to De Klerk, also places a premium on the testability of politics in terms of truth and humaneness:

Afrikaner resistance to the style and policy of the NP regime stems from this root. In important Afrikaner circles there is a solidarity sense of guilt about injustice, moral protests about white National partydomination and

inequality, disillusionment with apartheid and its consequences, anger about distorted ideology and identification with the objectives of a post-apartheid democracy and representative government.

Thus the wave of Afrikaner disaffection and protest was less an identification with a fundamental conversion to liberalism, but rather an awakening of the primordial impulses of Calvinism.

The second strand of De Klerk's exposition lay in the principle of communal self-preservation. This was an important insight and admission as the motivation for Afrikaner involvement in protest and struggle politics was predicated on the realisation that white interests were being threatened by the reality of the South African demographic dynamic and that a fundamental shift from exclusive to inclusive politics was required for its survival. This reality demanded some form of political condominium which would include the entrenchment of the right to linguistic, cultural and educational autonomy:

The result is that large-scale Afrikaner support for the post-apartheid democracy and the transitional phase in between, will only be achieved if he feels that he remains a political partner and entrenched cultural entity. This attitude is probably a long way away from classical liberalism, but it is the essence of "Afrikaner liberalism" today.

The third ingredient of Afrikaner liberalism, according to De Klerk, was that of pragmatism. It was characterised by a preparedness to sacrifice exclusivity for integration if freedom of association would lead to the retention of a broader South Africanism. It would accept black majority rule as long as its role in the new government was acknowledged. It would also accept forms of socialism as long as capitalism remained the bedrock of the economy. The pragmatist, although identifying with system and power politics, acknowledged struggle politics and anticipated that such politics would be incorporated into the system.

If common ground could be found, then at the programmatic level, De Klerk contended, Afrikaners would be far more action-orientated than liberals and that their input into a

future liberal movement would serve to give it a considerable boost. De Klerk predicted that due to their action-orientated approach they would demand a united front in liberal politics, would organise towards the formation of nationwide organisations in order to form a united liberal party, and would infiltrate and influence wherever they could.

An integrated interplay of power, struggle and process politics in order to make the essential political breakthrough was required to break the political logjam besetting the country. For De Klerk it remained an open question as to whether Afrikaners would become involved in broad liberal political formations and that much depended on whether the National Party shifted left or right, and also how the ANC/UDF positioned themselves, and finally whether or not a suitable 'liberal' home could be found for the New Afrikaner.<sup>11</sup>

#### Fissures within the core of the ruling bloc

Together with the structural and philosophical antecedents of the Independent phenomenon, further evidence of restructuring was given by the publication of survey data as early as 1985 that indicated a high degree of crisis awareness amongst 26% of Afrikaners. In 1986 the Afrikaner Broederbond circulated a 'Working Paper' on the future survival which *inter alia* called for:

(P)articipation on all levels of decision-making and in all processes (sic) which affect their interests. This means that everyone must be able to serve on the highest legislative and executive levels, whatever the future system may be. This can also in fact mean that in some models the head of government does not necessarily have to be white...Should the Afrikaner not succeed through his own creative power to bring about negotiated structures which are strong and flexible enough to accommodate the conflicting powers in the country, it is inevitable that structures will be forced upon him in which he has no share at all.<sup>12</sup>

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11 . Willem de Klerk, 'Word Afrikaners nou Liberaliste?', Die Suid-Afrikaan, Number 19, February 1989.

12 . Afrikaner Broederbond undated Working Paper.

It is also of importance to note that prior to the 1987 election some 50 members of the Afrikaner Broederbond publicly distanced themselves from the National Party.<sup>13</sup>

Further disquiet was evidenced by two 1986 *Mark en Menings* and *Rapport* surveys indicating that 42% of Afrikaners favoured the release of ANC leader Nelson Mandela and that 48% were in favour of negotiations with the ANC on the proviso that the organisation foreswore violence. By early 1987 surveys were clearly indicating that within Afrikanerdom the ethnic bonding which traditionally held Nationalists together was falling apart, this time to the left. In one survey 51% of staunch Nationalists believed that enforced racial segregation in the form of the Group Areas Act should be scrapped, whilst a full 61% of "Weak Nationalists" favoured its removal.<sup>14</sup>

Afrikanerdom was undergoing a process of "*afskilfering*" or "flaking off". These "New Nats" or "*Twyfelaars*" were evincing a readiness to jettison the National Party in order to form broad alliances. Central to their decision had been a cognisance of the series of polls suggesting disaffection on the part of many young and professional Afrikaners with the pace and direction of NP government.<sup>15</sup>

Thus reserch began to indicate that a definable group of Afrikaners was emerging who were prepared to move from group-based identity to individual identity. These were people with particular ethnographic and class characteristics. They were generally aged between 25 and 40, with tertiary education, enjoyed broad horizons, and were confident of themselves as individuals rather than gaining identity through the group, although they do not reject Afrikanerdom *per se*.

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13 . Weekend Argus, 2 May 1987.

14 . See also Stanley Uys, 'The Afrikaner Establishment', in Shaun Johnson (Ed), South Africa, No Turning Back, London, Macmillan, 1988.

15 . The term "*Twyfelaars*" was coined by Professor Nina Overton in her research into "New Afrikaners" in 1987. All data is taken from her papers, 'Die Ontwikkeling van 'n Kommunikasie-strategie vir die Bereiking van Afrikaner "Twyfelaars" in die Nasionale Party, as 'n teikenmark vir die Progressiewe Federale Party, February 1987 and 'The New Afrikaner' SAMRA, 1989.

At the political level the February 1986 resignation of PFP leader Van Zyl Slabbert gave rise to revelations that the PFP had been in discussion with a number of *verligte* National Party MPs and that a new political re-alignment had been mooted. This would not have constituted a merger with the PFP, but some 30 NP MPs were reportedly gravely disillusioned by the National Party's semantic departure from the prescripts of apartheid whilst failing to deal with the materiality of apartheid legislation, and the resultant conflict. The major issues of concern for the ultra-*verligte* was the government's failure to engage the ANC in dialogue. At the time of his resignation Slabbert revealed that in his view these *verligte* Nationalists belonged with the PFP, and that some of the *verligtes* were more enlightened than their PFP counterparts.<sup>16</sup>

These were some of the important issues and dynamics preparing the way for the emergence and public acceptance of the Independent Movement, and the possible convergence of a more broadly defined political liberalism.

#### The emergence of the Independent movement

Although the emergence of the Independent Movement in anticipation of the 1987 House of Assembly election traces its philosophical roots to deep within *verligte* Afrikanerdom, its appearance in institutional form heralded the politically significant distinction of Afrikaners breaking with the ruling party and challenging it from without.<sup>17</sup> The symbolic break with the National Party made by Wynand Malan and Denis Worrall marked the outward manifestation of considerable forces which had, as has been demonstrated, been operating at the subterranean level for some time in white politics.

The Independent phenomenon was derivative of, rather than foreshadowed the tectonic restructuring of white politics during the decade of the 1980's. The emergence of the Independents at one level signalled a dissatisfaction with and response to the turgidity of white party politics. At another level, however, the Independents materialized as

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16 *Star*, 9 February 1986.

17 . Ethnically Dr Denis Worrall does not fall into this ascriptive categorisation. However, his political philosophy and outlook was strongly informed by N.P. van Wyk Louw's *Liberale Nasionalisme*. Personal interview with Dr Denis Worrall MP, 9 July 1993.

members of nominally politically disparate constituencies responding to the violent impasse between “system” and “struggle” politics during the period of organic crisis.

It was noted earlier that, leading from Gramsci, the fracturing of the ruling bloc is signalled by the breaking up and reconstruction of class alliances and strategic political alliances. The emergence of the Independent phenomenon in 1987 heralded the clearest example of this fracturing. The Independents represented in politically powerful form the moment in South African politics when structural forces operated to the point of animating individual praxis from within the heart of the ruling bloc. Structurally, the emergence of the Independents gave the clearest indication that reformers within the National Party had been thwarted in their attempts to urge reform via the traditional channels previously available to them within the party.

It is also important to note that whilst the break with the National Party was made necessary by circumstances derived from the political crisis under the state of emergency, it was also made possible by the vacuum left by the crisis in traditional liberal politics.

#### Credentials and credibility

The Independents attempted to lay claim to the white political middle ground which had lost form and content in part due to the structural political forces that had created a more acute polarisation of opinion and belief, and the related weakening of the traditional institutional occupants of the political middle ground in the white South African politics, namely the New Republic Party and the Progressive Federal Party. The potency of the appeal of the Independent movement lay essentially in its credibility in the eyes of that section of the white electorate which converged around a moderate or centrist position. This political terrain was increasingly fluid and contested, and was shared by enlightened Afrikaners, on the one hand, and the drifting English-speaking voter who voted “yes” in the 1983 referendum, but by conviction, history and background was an opposition voter.

The leading personalities of the Independent movement carried impeccable Afrikaner credentials, and in the case of Dr Denis Worrall, impeccable National Party credentials. Worrall and Malan had constituted part of the *verligte* wing of the National Party. Both

had served on the NP Constitutional Planning Committee under Prime Minister Vorster in the 1970's, and had been part of a loose grouping within the NP caucus which had urged the scrapping of petty apartheid legislation, and the acceleration of constitutional reform.<sup>18</sup>

Worrall's own membership of the National Party had lapsed in 1983 during his sojourn into the diplomatic corps,<sup>19</sup> whereas Malan and the third member of the original Independent Movement, Dr Esther Lategan, resigned their NP membership in January and February of 1987, respectively.

Worrall's political odyssey began as member of the United Party, but later joined the Progressive Party. Thereafter he became a member of the National Party and was appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Vorster in 1974. In 1977 he was elected NP MP for Gardens. 1980 saw Worrall appointed to the President's Council as Chairman of its Constitutional Committee where he was largely responsible for the political architecture of the tricameral constitution. Worrall's stature in the South African white community, and indeed the international conservative community, had been buttressed by his competence in explaining government policy both during his ambassadorial postings to Canberra, and more importantly to the Court of St James. Worrall held an appeal to white South Africans across ethnic divisions as an English-speaking patriot.

The corollary of Worrall's credibility in the conservative and moderate white community, however, was its absence in liberal circles, and in particular with his political opponents within the PFP. As became evident later, Worrall was also hamstrung by his lack of credibility in the black community. This scepticism towards Worrall on the part of black activists was further informed by his support for the Indaba proposals and his affinity to Chief Buthelezi.

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18 . Interview with Kobus Jordaan MP (20 May 1993) who, as a National Party Senator, also formed part of the *verligte* movement within the NP caucus from the 1970's.

19 . Argus, 14 February 1987.

Malan's Afrikaner and National Party credentials were blue chip. His political career began as leader of the NP Youth Movement in the Transvaal, and the *Nasionale Jeugbond* from 1972 to 1974. He was Chairman of the *Rapportryers* from 1974 to 1976 and later became a member of the Afrikaner Broederbond. He was elected National Party MP for Randburg in 1977 and held the seat against a strong showing by the PFP with a slim majority of 698 in 1981. At the time of his resignation Malan was also a member of the Commission for Co-operation and Development and Secretary of the Nationalist Parliamentary study group on Constitutional Development and Planning.

The third Independent, Dr Esther Lategan, was a successful businesswoman and had lectured at Stellenbosch University. She was the daughter of a former Paarl NP MP and prominent wine farmer Wynand Malan, and wife of Stellenbosch University Biblical Studies lecturer Dr Bernard Malan. Lategan's candidacy and credibility was buttressed by the support of her candidacy by 19 prominent Afrikaner academics and business people in Stellenbosch.

#### Factors leading to the break

Whilst the timing of the stand taken by the Independents was an individual response to the perceived need to meet the challenge of the pending white election in May 1987, the three candidates exhibited a commonality of experience which afforded their respective electoral planks and strategies a degree of complementarity. The government's mishandling of a number of core issues led to their decision to split from the NP. Each of the issues serves to highlight the low-points in Botha's repressive reform policy.

A series of indefensible actions by the South African government with acute international and personal implications led to Worrall's resignation. The former ambassador had first tendered his resignation to Foreign Minister Botha in protest at the scuppering of the Commonwealth Eminent Person's Group initiative by the launching of a series of SADF raids on neighbouring states in May 1986. Worrall was also unhappy with the decision

not to repatriate the “Coventry Four” to Britain to stand trial on arms dealing charges.<sup>20</sup> In the same year he had told ASSOCOM’s annual Congress that South Africa was perceived as “the great international moral problem of the last quarter of this century”.<sup>21</sup> Worrall had also previously expressed unhappiness about the rising tide of violence in South Africa and the failure of the government to deliver reform, stating:

Many of us are frustrated that the government does not spell out more clearly the far-reaching changes that are taking place.<sup>22</sup>

Whilst still Ambassador to London, Worrall had also voiced support for the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba proposals and had declared them to be a potential model for a future national constitutional dispensation. His personal disenchantment was further deepened by Natal NP leader Stoffel Botha’s outright rejection of the proposals within 48 hours of their publication.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of Wynand Malan, a number of precipitative issues triggered his decision to leave the National Party. At a personal level Malan held deep religious convictions which brought him increasingly into a dissonant position with National Party orthodoxy:

[Whilst in the US on a Christian Mission], one of my colleagues said to me, “You know you are going to have to go back and stand on a platform and defend those [National Party] policies in a couple of months time?”, and I knew that I could not.<sup>24</sup>

Politically, Malan found he could no longer accept Botha’s “closed door” attitude to reform and his hardening of position in terms of the principles underpinning the Group Areas Act.<sup>25</sup> Thirdly, the government’s handling of the “security situation” left him both politically and morally ambivalent. Malan had been summoned by PW Botha on a

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20 . Worrall noted in a personal interview that important businessmen in Britain told him that whereas they could argue against sanctions against South Africa, this action was indefensible.

21 . Rapport, 8 February 1987.

22 . Argus, 30 January 1987.

23 . Sunday Star, 1 February 1987.

24 . Personal interview with Wynand Malan, 20 July 1993.

25 . Personal interview with Wynand Malan, 20 July 1993.

number of occasions as his name had appeared on security reports that had indicated he had been holding discussions with “undesirable” political elements.<sup>26</sup> But the final personal moral imperative forcing Malan over the edge was the detention and treatment of a publicly prominent friend by the security police. At the time Malan remarked:

He is actively involved in a process of trying to negotiate, albeit in the limited field in which he is active. I find it very difficult to live with detentions when you know the specific person. And there are others where I really cannot believe that it is in the interest of a process of negotiation and a future united South Africa to detain these people.<sup>27</sup>

Esther Lategan’s candidacy came as a result of lengthy discussions amongst a group of leading *verligte* Stellenbosch academics and businessmen which had grown out of Philosophy Professor Johan Degenaar’s discussion group and the *Besprekingsgroep* ’85. This group had crystallised as “the group of 28” who had confronted PW Botha in 1986. Lategan stated that her candidature was as a result of a process which had occurred in other areas:

We have lost faith in the determination and credibility of the NP to be an instrument of meaningful reform in South Africa. ... The only way for us to find solutions for South Africa is on a local level. It will not come from grand schemes and grand theories.<sup>28</sup>

### The political market of the Independents

The confidence of the Independents in breaking with the National Party was predicated not only on “insider” knowledge and understanding of NP divisions, but also by the perceived opportunity to exploit a burgeoning and fertile niche in the white political market that had been highlighted by the aforementioned series of opinion polls. PFP research had indicated that some 37% of White South Africans preferred its constitutional model of a non-racial geographic federation underpinned by a justiciable Bill of Rights, to those offered by the National Party or the CP. Despite this the party had never won more than 18% of the popular white vote. Significantly for Independent candidates, PFP

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26 . Personal interview with Wynand Malan, 20 July 1993.

27 . *Business Day*, 27 January 1987.

28 . *Argus*, 28 February 1987.

research also showed that 20% to 25% of Afrikaners supported the broad principles of the PFP.<sup>29</sup> Estimates of the depth and extent of National Party disaffection represented by Malan and Worrall ranged from 20% to 30%. But, more broadly, there were increasingly visible signs of Afrikaner discontent which translated into opportunities for political gains to be made by an Independent non-PFP/NRP political formation.

Worrall made his primary appeal both to the disaffected NP supporters and the drifting vote which abandoned the PFP *en masse* in the 1983 referendum, together with the significant numbers of hapless ex-United Party NRP supporters searching for a new “white hope”. The public sentiment into which the Independents tapped was captured by Hermann Giliomee who noted:

Most reform minded white South Africans feel cheated by the constitution; virtually all are tired of Mr Heunis’s obfuscation. A defeat for Mr Heunis would somehow be seen as settling the score with the architect of a constitution which changed almost everything except the way the National Party leadership thinks.<sup>30</sup>

Worrall had earlier observed:

There is a fluidity in politics and party loyalties are very loose. Millions of South Africans in all political parties in all communities are looking for a sense of direction and vision. Quite frankly this election will have served no purpose whatsoever unless it expresses itself clearly on two fundamental issues: ending apartheid and black political rights.<sup>31</sup>

### The impact of the Independents

The announcement of the candidacy of the Independents for the 1987 election immediately captured the imagination of the opposition white voting public and the media. What was not then public knowledge was the degree of interest shown by the Mass Democratic Movement in the stance taken by Malan and Lategan, which materialised in the holding of a series of private meetings.<sup>32</sup> The political excitement

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29 . Argus, 17 February 1987.

30 . Cape Times, 7 March 1987.

31 . Sunday Tribune, 15 February 1987.

32 . Interview with Dr Esther Lategan, 15 June 1993.

generated by the Independents lay in the fact that for the first time, credible, high profile, Nationalists had broken with the Party and moved towards a progressive political position.

Malan's immediate support came from prominent academics, journalists, business people and professionals. Several so-called "New Nats" close to the central NP leadership also contacted Malan with messages of support. Malan's move set Afrikaner intellectual circles abuzz with anticipation, Potchefstroom University Professor Lourens du Plessis captured the essence of Malan's market appeal:

Wynand represents a very important school of thought in Afrikanerdom ... The reaction in my circles has been very positive and one of excitement ... Perhaps we are not talking of large numbers of people, but the best intellectual power of the NP is represented in this group. They took the NP's promises of reform seriously, and nothing happened. They are unhappy about things like the Group Areas Act, the refusal to talk and negotiate with blacks in organisations such as the ANC and about the authoritarian attitude emanating from the offices of power.<sup>33</sup>

Malan's resignation led to the defection of most of the Randburg constituency committee, but despite considerable media speculation no further defections from the NP caucus followed.<sup>34</sup> National Party MP for Bellville André van der Walt and the outspoken NP member for Innesdal Albert Nothnagel MP were sympathetic to Malan's position, but later announced they were personally not yet ready to leave the National Party.<sup>35</sup> One of the major reasons for the failure of other disenchanted National Party MP's to follow suit lay in the fact that Randburg was arguably the only constituency in the country that an Independent could possibly win - and then only if the PFP did not stand.

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33 . Citizen, 28 January 1987.

34 . National Party MP Sakkie Louw was reportedly close to joining Malan at the time of his departure, but was "baby-sat" by the Transvaal NP hierarchy and persuaded to stay. Interview with Dr Jan Hofmeyr, 10 June 1993.

35 . Business Day, 23 January 1987.

Worrall's resignation received international attention and served to further highlight PW Botha's alienation from the international community. The initial response of the British press was as loud as that of its South African counterpart.

The editorial comment of the London *Independent* is illustrative:

Not only has South Africa lost the most eloquent advocate it has ever had in Britain, but the foremost English-speaking member of President Botha's National Party is now in opposition.<sup>36</sup>

Domestically, the response amongst white moderates was potent. Despite misgivings by some newspapers that South Africa had lost its diplomatic "buffer" in Britain,<sup>37</sup> the English-language press gave wide coverage to Worrall's return. *Sunday Times* editor Tertius Myburgh also played a facilitative role upon Worrall's return to South Africa<sup>38</sup> and continued to support the Independents throughout the 1987 campaign. Worrall's return also received support from leading Afrikaner intellectuals including Professor Willie Esterhuyse and then Deputy Chairman of the SABC, Professor Sampie Terreblanche, who stated that:

(I)f Dr Worrall aimed to break the logjam on reform he would receive my whole hearted support.<sup>39</sup>

Terreblanche's reported support for Worrall incensed Constitutional Development Minister Chris Heunis for whom the Stellenbosch academic had written numerous speeches and was a close confidant.<sup>40</sup>

Stellenbosch Professor of Development Administration Julius Jeppe articulated a burgeoning sentiment when commenting:

I have a high regard for Denis Worrall. With his experience abroad he can contribute much in the present stage of SA's political life. I have

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36 . *Argus*, 30 January 1987.

37 . *Argus*, 30 January 1987.

38 . Personal interview with Jan Momberg MP, 3 June 1993.

39 . *Cape Times*, 31 January 1987.

40 . Personal interview with Professor Sampie Terreblanche, 8 July 1993.

sympathy with people like Dr Worrall and Mr Wynand Malan who want to speed up the reform process.<sup>41</sup>

In March 1987 another 301 academics signed a petition in support of the original 28 who rejected the NP's race thinking.<sup>42</sup>

In a further challenge to PW Botha and the National Party, Labour Party leader Allan Hendrickse also welcomed Worrall's candidacy.<sup>43</sup> In a publicly embarrassing development for the National Party, Ms Dene Smuts editor of the Nasionale Pers-controlled magazine *Fair Lady* resigned her position in protest after management attempted to suppress a feature article on Worrall. Worrall's formal candidacy was given a fillip by the announcement of Stellenbosch NP chairman Jannie Momberg that he had resigned from the National Party and would support Worrall on a "scrap group areas" campaign. This was an important symbolic blow to the National Party in the Cape as Momberg had a long and distinguished NP pedigree, and was the recipient of the FC Erasmus award for 25 years loyal service. Momberg's own resignation from the NP came as a result both of a clash with PW Botha over his retention of the Group Areas Act, and the realisation that after his address to the President's Council in 1986, Botha had turned his back on reform. Momberg had also regarded Botha's handling of the Hendrickse swimming affair as "nauseating", and had come to regard the NP leader as "South Africa's greatest political liability".<sup>44</sup>

Coming as it did on the day PW Botha announced the date of the white election, Worrall's resignation also evoked widespread speculation that the former ambassador could emerge as the focal point of a new reformist alliance.

In an important development respected Afrikaner Advocate "Lang Dawid" de Villiers and retired head of Nasionale Pers, and came out in support of Dr Esther Lategan and the Independents. De Villiers's commitment was particularly telling given his own heritage

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41 . Argus, 17 February 1987.

42 . Argus 29 March 1987.

43 . Sunday Tribune, 1 March 1987.

44 . Argus, 21 February 1987.

within the establishment. Even more remarkable in the public eye was De Villiers's later call that to demand the government's demand that ANC foreswear violence and give up the armed struggle before negotiations was "ludicrous" as it was the sole bargaining chip possessed by the liberation movement.<sup>45</sup>

Such was the wave of sentiment generated by the Independent phenomenon that Stellenbosch University SRC executive member Hennie Bester (and one of the students who had been prevented from meeting the ANC in October 1985) stated that support for the NP in Stellenbosch in the forthcoming election was no longer a foregone conclusion.

#### Independent identity and strategy

In its origin the general thrust and tenor of the Independent movement was one of "*lojale verzet*" (loyal opposition), a brand of patriotism articulated by NP van Wyk Louw and much revered in the Afrikaner ethos.<sup>46</sup> But the Independents viewed themselves principally as catalysts for change.

The first priority for the Independents was to forge an identity independent of their previous affiliations. Whilst acknowledging the important role played by formations such as IDASA, the Independents affirmed the relevance of Parliament by committing themselves to pursuing their beliefs within its formalised political structures. Malan, Worrall and Lategan were forced to distinguish themselves as truly independent and as having something unique to offer the voting public rather than warmed over *verligte* National Party policy.

The Independents were faced with a number of challenges *vis-a-vis* their previous political affiliations. The Independents would be required to attack the NP in order to undermine it electorally rather than trying to rejuvenate *verligte* sentiment. In so doing, the Independents needed to explode some *verligte* myths, such as the "no alternative fallacy" which reasoned that Afrikaners would not vote for any other party, therefore the NP had to be reformed; that reform was possible within the tricameral structures - "the

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45 . *Argus*, 2 May 1987.

46 . Martie Meiring.

hope springs eternal myth”; or that the NP merely needed new leadership to realize its great reform potential. The Independents needed to convey the message to the white electorate that the failed tricameral system was in fact, a product of *verligte* reform and that nothing short of the full eradication of apartheid would suffice.<sup>47</sup>

#### Unity of purpose and vision?

The Independents shared a common commitment to the elimination of all apartheid legislation and to the granting of full citizenship to all South Africans. Collectively they called on the government to scrap the remnants of apartheid, address the central issue of political rights for blacks, and challenged it present a programme of action to deal with fundamental problems and to suggest solutions. The Independents also affirmed the need for the involvement of the ANC together with other black organizations in seeking political solutions, provided there was an acceptable process through which this could be achieved.<sup>48</sup> But despite the shared vision of the Independents, it is misleading to collapse the constitutive elements of the movement into one, or to depict them as enjoying a homogeneity of interest as differences of approach existed from an early stage.

The Independent movement was itself Janus-faced. The distinctions were often deliberately blurred due to political expediency and basic conceptual confusion on the part of the major protagonists. Having made the political and emotional break with the NP, each of the Independents experienced a degree of political and social alienation, as well as liberation.

The Independents operated in new and relatively uncharted political waters and were forced to seek new personal and political alliances. Having jettisoned themselves from the broad “church” of the NP, the Independents moved steadily away from their previously held positions both as a matter of conviction and belief, but also in an effort to forge a new and “independent” identity. The experience of contact and interaction with new potential allies and former adversaries impacted profoundly on the Independents, and in particular Malan and Lategan.

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47 . Willem van Vuuren Argus, 4 March 1987.

48 . Sunday Star, 15 February 1987.

Malan later stated:

It was difficult to leave, but looking back I wonder why I agonized such a lot. We will not break the stalemate if we continue throwing models against each other's heads. We must state our ideals and start talking about it in a non-confrontationist manner. The future lies in the inclusion of all parties inside and outside of Parliament who have legitimate expectations and believe in peaceful means. Our vision is to get this going, because it is the only way to peace and prosperity.<sup>49</sup>

Whilst both Malan and Worrall were driven by a frustration with the moribund leadership and policy of PW Botha, the preferred strategy of the respective individuals differed in conception.

Worrall's political philosophy was conservative by nature. He believed strongly in the need to make for Afrikaner Nationalism, and orientated to the ideas enshrined within N.P. van Wyk Louw's form of *Liberale Nasionalisme* rather than classical or western liberalism. As an avowed reformist, he viewed transition in terms of a technocratic or "top down" approach whereby elites reform the executive and legislative structures and incorporate new alliances in an effort to stabilise and democratise the political process. Central to Worrall's political rhetoric and belief was an appeal to group identity and white security:

You cannot ask us to share political power that would mean the end of Afrikaner Nationalism - we would become a nation like the Palestinians. What is clear about South Africa is that it is a fluid society, but not a homogeneous one. Change will happen on an *ad hoc de facto* basis. What we need for that change is a greater sense of realism within the society on all sides. That means that blacks must have patience: legitimate aspirations must be held in check for a while, expectations must change and compromise has to come from everyone.<sup>50</sup>

Upon his return to South Africa, Worrall stated at a meeting in Stellenbosch that whites in South Africa were ready for democracy with the proviso of the protection of minority

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49 . Business Day, 27 March 1987.

50 . Sunday Star, 1 February 1987.

rights and white security interests:

I have the sense whites are groping out towards a shared democracy in which minority rights are protected but in which majoritarian principles apply. Just as blacks have a right to a place in the sun, so do whites, especially Afrikaners... There are those who want violence, but I am certainly not addressing myself to them... My understanding of people whose judgement I respect is that the emergency has certainly worked in reducing the levels of violence. Of course the tensions remain and that is what we have to get at... The road to black liberation lies through white African security.<sup>51</sup>

Worrall's message was simple, clear and effective. The country was beset by four problems: the existence of the right wing who represented scared white voters; the flood of emigrants with all their skills and talents; blacks even within the system did not want to negotiate with the government and the flight of capital and the lack of business confidence:

Now we have dumped apartheid as an ideology, but we have nothing in its place. We are in an ideological vacuum ... Political leaders within the system have lost the initiative.<sup>52</sup>

It was not clear at this point, however, exactly where Worrall stood strategically. Shortly after his return Worrall declared:

There are enough people in the NP to sense what must be done. The NP could return to the initiator role with a sharp cutting edge ... I disagree (with Colin Eglin's) reform alliance approach. Whether we like it or not, the NP is the major white political party ... It is the leadership that has gone astray.<sup>53</sup>

Malan's strategic position and political thrust differed from Worrall's in that he had declared himself independent from the National Party as a matter of principle. Having failed in his attempts to reform from within the formal structures of National Party politics, Malan conceptualised a broader, more holistic and inclusive political strategy.

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51 . Sunday Tribune, 15 February 1987.

52 . Die Burger, 31 January 1987.

53 . Cape Times, 27 February 1987.

From the outset Malan questioned the very structure of traditional political engagement. For him political solutions lay not in blueprints, but rather in acknowledging the legitimacy of the various competing political claims and traditions in the country and establishing a process by which these claims could be negotiated and accommodated. Malan stressed the importance of moving away from rigid party politics in favour of an approach involving negotiations on the basis of “one South Africa for all”.

Malan’s politics and discourse was messianic in nature; his religious convictions pervaded the tenor of his message and vision. Indeed Malan’s strength lay in his vision and his message, but left him light on strategy and tactics. Ideologically, Malan described himself variously as a social democrat<sup>54</sup> and a pragmatic idealist. Neither appellation is mutually exclusive, however. Malan’s approach to political transformation was populist in thrust, and contrasted with the technocratic, top-down reformism of his Independent counterpart Denis Worrall.

Malan was distinguished not only by his break with the National Party, but also by his insistence on the need for a process of non-exclusionary negotiation leading to acceptable political settlement. It became apparent that Malan had moved conceptually beyond the ambit of his past *verligte* colleagues when arguing that reform of the status quo was a mere palliative and that negotiation with credible and legitimate black leaders was essential:

The time for reform has passed. Reform measures, necessary as they may be will not contribute to solving the problem. We will have to devise strategies to negotiate with ANC politics as opposed to ANC violence.<sup>55</sup>

On the Group Areas Act Malan commented:

It is discriminatory. We will have to get rid of that. But you do not hear people in the Black community talking about the abolition of the GAA as one of their main targets. If it is abolished now or not I believe it will not contribute to the revolutionary climate in the country.<sup>56</sup>

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54 . Business Day, 27 january 1987.

55 . Business Day, 27 January 1987.

56 . Business Day, 27 January 1987.

Malan argued that South Africa's political maladies were caused by the, "destabilising thought patterns of absolutists".<sup>57</sup>

My approach is political rights for all in one SA, where the structures are not based on race with the protection of individual rights also in association with each other.

Notably too, the Malan/Lategan axis had attracted UDF interest and private support. The rhetoric and pronouncements of the Malan/Lategan axis gave a clearer indication of a more progressive approach than that of Worrall.

Despite the potentially fissiparous strands within the Independent Movement its overarching concern with breaking the political stalemate, was sufficiently binding to hold the movement together through the 1987 election and in March the three Independents issued a joint election manifesto.

#### Independent manifesto

The manifesto was a compromise between the positions and approach of Malan and Worrall. The preamble and introductory is Malanite and the "power" strategy was conceived by Worrall.<sup>58</sup> The major points of the manifesto require brief elucidation:

The programme must be free of dogma. It must demonstrate that the expectations of people who may now find themselves far apart politically can be accommodated if they are flexible and respect each other's fears and aspirations. The programme demands a conversion of the spirit in the government of the day.

The time is past when governments could unilaterally pursue reform. The time has come for all our people to reason together in order to determine their approach to reform.

And there is still time to fulfil the common vision of the moderate majority which occupies the middle ground in South African politics. This middle ground transcends colour lines. The time has come to turn

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57 . Cape Times, 19 March 1987.

58 . Personal interview with Mr Wynand Malan, 20 July 1993.

that vision into reality by starting negotiations that can be seen by all to be negotiations. It is the only way: Negotiations aimed at the common, overriding objective of one South Africa with equal rights, justice and safety for all.

NEW INITIATIVES - these starting points are needed.

1. The Chief Justice was to assemble all constitutional alternatives and make them available for public perusal and choice.
2. Black politics must be freed and state action against its protagonists stopped. Emergency powers must be retained during the transition, however. The courts and judicial procedure must be reinstated. "The State of Emergency" and the management thereof must not be aimed simply at maintaining the status quo, but at the overriding objective of stimulating the political process.
3. There must be a free flow of information to ensure that all South Africans are properly informed about the true state of affairs of the country.
4. All discriminatory laws, regulations and practices must be scrapped and a timetable for doing so must be set.
5. There must be Bill of Rights to protect liberties of the individual. Flowing from this, through freedom of association, there must also be protection for the individual's group rights, such as religion, language, culture and access to mother tongue education.
6. Regional initiatives aimed at local co-operation must be encouraged. The Natal Indaba is an example.
7. There must be deregulation and all restrictive measures must be removed. The state should undertake and deliver only those services that cannot be provided by the private sector.<sup>59</sup>

The manifesto concluded that with shared commitment, and new flexible initiatives, overseas confidence in the country would increase, resulting in a new start for the country helping to lead to a better economy.

Clearly the manifesto shared many policy features and ideas with the classical liberal beliefs enshrined in PFP policy but also encompassed elements of warmed over *verligte* rhetoric. The content of the manifesto lacked political substance and the fact that the

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59 . Election manifesto of the Independent Movement, March 1987.

Independent message was well received by the moderate white public in South Africa said more about the bearer of the message than the message itself. Given its joint authorship, the manifesto attempted to square the political circle and its contradictions were glaring. This was particularly true in terms of its position on the state of emergency and the freeing of the political process. The manifesto also wholly avoided tackling the central question of universal adult suffrage.

#### Independents keep their distance from the PFP

Whilst the splitting-off of the Independents was a serious setback for the National Party, this did not automatically translate into political gain for the PFP. Through a series of declarations it became clear that the Independents would neither join the PFP, nor would they initiate the formation of a political alliance with the Progressives. Indeed all three candidates sought to distance themselves from the PFP. Worrall had earlier turned down the offer of the Groote Schuur nomination by Colin Eglin.<sup>60</sup>

Both Malan and Lategan were particularly uncomfortable with the image of the PFP and its style of politics.<sup>61</sup> Malan also reasoned that, as an Independent, he be more effective in breaking down the traditional stasis which had characterised recent white politics:

Die probleem met die PFP en die NP is juis hul dogmaties benadering van die probleme van die land. Elk wil sy eie “oplossing” deurdruk en gee daardeur nie erkenning aan die magte wat reeds binnens - en buitelands losgemaak het. Albei kyk te veel na eie oplossings en nie genoeg na prosesse nie. Die “oplossing” lê nie in uitgewerkte planne nie - nog die PFP nog die NP spel in elk geval hul oplossings in hul volle konsekwensies aan die kiesers uit. Die “oplossing” lê in die aanvaar van ‘n proses wat mik op die breë doelwit van een Suid Afrika met gelyke regte vir almal.<sup>62</sup>

He later added:

There are too many things in the (PFP) philosophy with which I do not agree. I reject the hard line approach on specific party lines. In my perception, even if I could have joined the PFP, I would not have

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60 . Personal interview with Colin Eglin, 7 June 1993.

61 . Personal interview with Dr Esther Lategan, 15 June 1993.

62 . Die Burger, 29 January 1987.

contributed to unblocking the present stalemate that applies to our politics.<sup>63</sup>

Worrall had also declared himself as a “bridge-building Independent” upon his return and also sought to distance himself from being too closely identified with either the NP or the PFP:

Can I simply say that the PFP is not relevant to me, that the PFP is not the Government of the country ... The PFP has a very unfortunate image uncomfortable (“wat nie lekker sit nie”) to most white voters ... I do not make comparisons between the PFP and the NP because the reality of the situation is that after May 6 we are going to have a National Party government.<sup>64</sup>

#### National Party response to the Independents

Whereas the National Party had developed a crude but effective means of campaigning against Progressive liberals in previous elections, the Independents presented the NP propaganda machinery with a new and more troublesome problem with which to contend. The National Party lacked a conceptual framework with which to deal with the Independent phenomenon in 1987. For the first time the NP would be faced with a campaign in which it would be not only forced to fight the Progressives and the Conservative Party, but would also have to face up to fighting candidates on the left from the core of its own party. Malan and Worrall did not conform to the Progressive identity and pattern of politics. The NP thus was unable to demonise them in the same way. Both candidates also had the experience of being close to the NP power hierarchy and thus also knew how to counter much of the NP propaganda. The NP was, in a sense, thereby forced to fight “one of their own”. Secondly, as has been noted, all three candidates kept their political distance from the PFP both as a matter of conviction and expediency and could not be labelled by the NP as leftists and soft on security.

Worrall stressed throughout his campaign, however, that he was not standing in opposition to the National Party *per se*, but rather against its leadership and its failure to

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63 . Business Day, 27 January 1987.

64 . Argus, 3 March 1987.

deliver on its reformist rhetoric. National Party strategy was thereafter to force Worrall to pin his colours to the mast of the PFP by arguing that in standing in Helderberg he was *de facto* opposing the National Party.<sup>65</sup>

### PFP strategy

The PFP adopted a multifaceted approach towards the Independents. In early 1987 the PFP National Council was in the embryonic phase of formulating an electoral alliance strategy with the New Republican Party and viewed co-operation with the Independents as constituting the first step in the construction of an “axis of reform”.<sup>66</sup> This strategy aimed at garnering some 40 to 50 seats in the election and holding the balance of power in the House of Assembly. In keeping with this broad strategy the party adopted a tactical and pragmatic position towards the candidacy of Independents in their respective constituencies. Eglin reasoned that the Independents held an appeal for those white voters who had crossed their “racial Rubicons”, but who were not then ready to make the institutional leap of faith to supporting the PFP.<sup>67</sup> Thus despite having slashed Minister Heunis’s majority in the 1981 Helderberg election, the PFP announced it would not field candidates in either that constituency nor in Port Natal in opposition to Worrall.<sup>68</sup> PFP Cape Provincial Chairman Roger Hulley later announced the Party would place its electoral infrastructure in Helderberg at Worrall’s disposal.<sup>69</sup> In the case of Malan, the PFP’s Randburg constituency committee announced it would not field a candidate, and would encourage its supporters to support Malan against the National Party. Despite having previously announced it would field a candidate in Stellenbosch the PFP also withdrew from the contest in order to focus opposition votes in favour of Esther Lategan.

By standing back for Independents the PFP sought to create a political “safety zone” for other dissident Nationalists to split with the party thereby further strengthening the putative reformist alliance. At one level Eglin placed the broader interests of political opposition ahead of those of the narrow interests of the party, but he also realised that the

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65 . Die Burger, 19 February 1987.

66 Interview with Mr Colin Eglin, Leadership, Volume 6, Number 2, 1978, p.26.

67 . Leadership, *ibid.*

68 . Citizen, 16 February 1987.

69 . Argus, 20 February 1987.

partners of any future alliance had to be strong enough for it to be worthwhile.

Accordingly, the Independents had to be allowed to flourish. Eglin in particular was mindful of the fact that had the PFP stood against the Independents it would have wiped them off the Parliamentary political map, but he was also aware that all three candidates could do a better job of drawing out disaffected Nationalists from the party than could the PFP, given its "English" image.

Despite the formulation and logic of the alliance strategy a faction within the PFP felt that Randburg should be fought as a four-way contest in which the PFP stood a good chance of winning if the Conservative Party split the right-wing vote.<sup>70</sup> The Randburg PFP constituency committee's decision not to field a candidate was pre-emptive and taken without consultation with Malan. Malan responded to the decision as reflecting the weakness of the party, given its poor showing in two recent Municipal by-elections.<sup>71</sup> Malan added he found it:

(U)nfortunate the PFP might not field a candidate in Randburg because I see my standing as an Independent candidate as a test of SA's "spirit" and voter support for directions outside of present party politics.<sup>72</sup>

Subsequently, in similar vein, he claimed that:

For votes I am not relying on the PFP at all. My support excludes a significant amount of PFP support. The canvassing shows that about four in ten voters for me will be Nationalists.

As was earlier noted, Worrall had specifically rejected Eglin's "anti-Nationalist reform alliance approach", despite the fact that this was exactly the grounds on which the PFP had stood back for the Independents.<sup>73</sup> This series of rebuffs angered PFP supporters concerned that despite their publicly magnanimous gestures and assistance to the Independents they were being treated as pariahs in return.<sup>74</sup>

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70 . Argus, 21 February 1987.

71 . Die Burger, 29 January 1987.

72 . Business Day, 27 January 1987.

73 . Financial Mail, February 27 1987.

74 . Argus, 2 April 1987.

Importantly for the Independents, however, polls had begun to indicate a fall in the approval rating of the NP indicating the distance the Independents had placed between themselves and the PFP was likely to pay dividends. *Rapport* noted that support for the NP had fallen below the psychologically important 50% level. Thereafter Wimpie de Klerk published his assessment that up to 22% of government supporters would opt for a new political deal if they were offered it. Professor Sampie Terreblanche later estimated the figure to be closer to 30%. A further market research poll indicated that support for the NP had fallen to 34% amongst urban whites in 1987. This optimism led Worrall to hint at the formation of a new political party before the scheduled 1989 election when, in answer to a question at a Pretoria Press Club, he claimed:

But I believe in two years time I will be re-elected in Helderberg and it will not be as an Independent.<sup>75</sup>

#### The performance of the Independents in the 1987 election

From the liberal opposition's perspective, the Independent phenomenon was the seminal event of the 1987 election. In Helderberg Worrall came within 20 votes of unseating the leader of the National Party in the Cape Province and Minister of Constitutional Development, Mr Chris Heunis. Worrall's performance was all the more remarkable given Heunis's reputation as an active and committed constituency Parliamentarian. Worrall's performance also had the consequence of contributing to the early political demise of Heunis and the end of any pretensions he may have held towards the State Presidency. The closeness of the result also gave rise to considerable speculation that Worrall may have won the election and that there may have been vote rigging to swing the vote.<sup>76</sup> Worrall, however, declined to call for a re-count. The Helderberg result was a moral victory in every sense for Worrall, and indeed for the emerging political spirit he and the Independents had tapped into.

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<sup>75</sup> *Argus*, 19 March 1987.

<sup>76</sup> This was conveyed by Professor Sampie Terreblanche in a personal interview. It is of interest to note, however, that Worrall's 1987 campaign manager Jannie Momberg predicted the outcome of the election to within 50 votes.

In Stellenbosch Dr Esther Lategan improved the opposition vote by 70%. More than just the percentage of the swing, however, Lategan's performance in the heartland of the Afrikaner intelligentsia and the cradle of its culture represented a massive symbolic blow to the National Party and sent a clear signal to the party hierarchy and the Afrikaner establishment.

In winning Randburg Wynand Malan became the first Independent to win a seat in the House of Assembly since 1933. More importantly, it had been won on a democratic, non-racial, interactive ticket and laid the basis for the process of interactive politics conducted by the National Democratic Movement.

Another prominent former Nationalist Dr Johan Blignaut a former Richard's Bay Town Councillor, resigned from the NP before the 1987 election and had performed well as an Independent in the conservative Natal constituency of Umfolozi.

The table below indicates the impressive performance of the Independents in the three constituencies they contested.

<b>Election Results 1987 and 1981</b>				
	<b>1987 RESULTS</b>		<b>PREVIOUS OPPOSITION BEST (1981)</b>	
Randburg	NP	5593	NP	6143
	IM	8240	PFP	5445
Helderberg	NP	8439	NP	6287
	IM	8400	PFP	3345
Stellenbosch	NP	5296	NP	7002
	IM	3515	PFP	1380

In garnering some 27 000 votes in the three constituencies contested, the Independents won over an average of 24% of the previous National Party vote. In Randburg this figure

was estimated to be as high as 37%.<sup>77</sup> Worrall denied that the overall result of the 1987 election was a swing to the right, and that it should rather be seen as people being scared into voting on security questions. The real swing, he argued, was for the Independents who represented some 25% of Nationalist voters.

Malan, in his first post election speech in Parliament, stated that the results had shown that the electorate had rejected policies of partition, or domination of any kind, or majority rule in a highly centralised system, or white or any other kind of group control. He added:

If the existing parties don't react to this message their support countrywide will decline in favour of the Independent Movement ... this is no threat; just the truth.<sup>78</sup>

#### The Independents - an evaluation

In a post-election evaluation JCR Liebenberg of IDASA pointed out that the Independents succeeded in:

Stimulating the white Afrikaans-speaking community into political debate on "true reform". Secondly, they have succeeded in shaking the Nationalist tree and de-railed the process of overhead strategy to launch an all-out attack on the ANC, sanction supporters and radicalism.<sup>79</sup>

The major contribution of the Independents lay, however, in its ideological and political "stepping-stone" role. It was simply politically and culturally impossible in 1987 for disaffected Nationalists to support the PFP under any circumstances. The image, background and credibility of the Independents made it possible for disaffected Nationalists to give political expression and support to "liberal" policies without identifying with the "tainted Prog" opposition. The Independents offered the potential for the formation of a new political home for the 24% of frustrated and disillusioned

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77 . Figures provided by Mr Wynand Malan in a personal interview, 20 July 1993.

78 . Citizen, 22 May 1987.

79 . Argus, 14 April 1987.

Afrikaners who, market research and the 1987 election results confirmed, were in need of political accommodation.

Others remained sceptical however. Professor André du Toit argued that the Independents were a product of their own creation and had fallen into the trap of playing the white political game as whites were being duped into believing that voting Independent “would be a step in the right direction”. With the opportunities attendant on the scrapping of the Improper Political Interference Act both the PFP and the Independents had failed to grasp the nettle of non-racial politics. Du Toit urged:

Instead of looking to a quick political fix, Parliamentary as well as extra-Parliamentary opposition forces should rather begin to prepare the ground for structural change.<sup>80</sup>

The central question was whether or not the Independents could be seen to be leading disillusioned Nationalists into facing the central challenges of South Africa which was that a just, democratic settlement had to be reached with black power. In a sense, the Independents were giving articulation and form to existing fissures, and giving a symbolic lead to the disillusioned, but whether they were leading them from one crisis of identity to another remained moot. Van Zyl Slabbert’s concern about the Independent Movement was that it:

(Had) no clear vision or solid base of support and is merely a euphoric phenomenon that is diverting white thinking away from the critical issue of the day, which is the need to begin negotiating with black nationalism, into another *cul de sac* of false hopes like the tricameral constitution.

Slabbert’s concern was that this may have led to intensified efforts to co-opt blacks into a white-controlled multi-ethnic autocracy on the Namibian Turnhalle Alliance lines with a militarized Afrikaner-Zulu alliance at its core. It was clear, however, that Slabbert was directing his comments at the Worrall thrust of the Independent Movement, which in turn, served to highlight the fundamental incompatibility of the Malanite and Worrallite paradigms.

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80 . Cape Times, 28 February 1987.

### Independent fissures

To the surprise of Malan, on 23 1987 May Worrall announced that the Independents would establish a political party, but as the facade of unity for the sake of the election faded the divisions between the Independents became more apparent. Worrall's declaration was clearly a pre-emptive strategy as the following day Malan denied that a party would be formed and that rather a continuation committee would be established. The continuity committee fell under the convenorship of Advocate Dawid de Villiers and was designed to serve as the locus for the Independents to mobilise support nationally for a non-racial Independent movement. However, De Villiers had personally identified strongly with the interactive "process politics" conception of Malan and Lategan and tensions between the Malanite vision and Worrall's white *realpolitik* thrust were soon to rent the Independent Movement, as will be discussed more fully in chapter eight.

In conclusion, it was clear from the performance and public response to the Independents that a spirit of renewal was gripping important elements of white moderate politics, which was in turn beginning to lay the groundwork for the sea change in the 1989 general election. The Independents had demonstrated that there existed a potential dynamic amongst large sections of the white community for reform, but that the packaging, marketing style, identity and rhetoric of the PFP was the wrong political vessel in which to carry that message.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

After nearly a decade of uninterrupted growth, the Progressive Federal Party had entered a period of sharp reversal from 1983. The results of the 1987 white election, the impact of the public response to the Independent Movement, and the later resignations of the “Dakarites” as well as Jan van Eck, forced the PFP to re-evaluate its own political identity at a number of levels.

The PFP had become politically displaced by the dynamics thrown up by the crisis. At the level of the political environment the formative action programme of the state had shifted the political and ideological terrain of white political engagement, as had the emergence of the UDF. Relatedly, the party’s ideological and programmatic thrust had become increasingly unfocussed due to the by the contradictions thrown up by the policies of “repressive reform”, together with the challenges of the popular uprising. The party found itself increasingly at variance with elements of its traditional popular and institutional support base, which were themselves undergoing a process of deep introspection. Principles which had historically given PFP policy resonance appeared increasingly effete and detached from the harsh realities of the South African zymotic society during the period of crisis. Individual liberals who had held the line of principled opposition, human dignity and civil liberties found themselves increasingly at odds with “progressive forces” and formations within South Africa, particularly on the questions of sanctions and civil disobedience. Ideologically, the PFP had lost focus organisationally and, at the level of personnel, it had been badly damaged and, in terms of positioning and popular support, it had been acutely undermined. By 1987 the PFP was in the throes of a deep and possibly terminal “existential crisis”.

This chapter discusses the party’s process of introspection and search for relevance necessitated by this crisis and will highlight the important structural shifts within the party caused by the crisis.

Principally, two related dynamics operated to produce the shifts. Firstly, at the level of ideological identity, the departure of Slabbert, Boraine, Van Eck and the “Dakarites” had generated a dialectic, the result of which was that whilst the party had lost its most charismatic leader and a number of extremely able and committed politicians, it was now largely free of its social democratic wing and thus could set about the process of ideological reconstruction. The second principle feature operated at the level of intra-party power dynamics. The decline in fortunes of the Western Cape leadership corps due to the failed 1987 electoral strategy and Eglin’s own “loser” image, produced a loss of both ideological and leadership confidence within the party which, it will be argued, was filled principally by an emergent group of Southern Transvaal pragmatic liberals.

### Quo vadis PFP?

Research conducted by Lawrence Schlemmer indicated that support for the PFP had declined precipitously from some 20% in February 1987 to 9% in early 1988.<sup>1</sup> Support for the party had distilled to a committed “hard core” who were unlikely to leave the party even in the extremely hostile circumstances under which it was operating at the time. The research indicated that on the two sensitive points of the abolition of Group Areas and the opening of schools, a full 82% and 85% respectively of PFP voters supported the party on its position. This hard core of support had resisted the temptation to abandon the party to the right, even under the weight of NP-led demonisation, but they had equally resisted the drift into the UDF-aligned formations such as the Cape Democrats and JODAC. Schlemmer’s findings led him to conclude that the key to growth in support of the PFP was to “combine their goals with the kind of reassurances that the majority of their potential voters need”.

The question remained as to whether the party could, of itself, re-construct its image, its policies, its public appeal and its donor base, whilst neutralising the impact of the Independents and re-capturing its lost electoral support. It was clear that this could not be done in the short-term, and with a constitutionally required election looming possibly

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1 . Schlemmer, 1988.

within six months, the appropriate strategy for the achievement of these goals became the central motivation and focus of the party.

### Pragmatic liberalism

At this point a theoretical interlude is required, as the importance of the emergence of the articulation of a form of pragmatic liberalism both set the ideological tenor of the party from 1988, but also largely informed that of the Democratic Party and indeed facilitated the unification of the fragmented opposition. We have earlier noted Schlemmer's call for strategic realism, as well as Simkins's exhortation to liberals for the formulation, construction, and articulation of a pragmatic liberalism as a response to the crisis of liberal identity. For our purposes, however, a greater clarity of conceptualisation is required, as the form and content of the pragmatic liberalism that emerged from within the PFP and IP did not reflect that proffered by Simkins.

The essence of pragmatic inquiry and practice is located at the interface of a tension between belief and action. The general conception of the pragmatic method is a:

(S)heer instrumental rationality, the mutual adjustment of means and ends, resources and values.<sup>2</sup>

The origins of the pragmatic philosophical tradition are to be found in the 19th century works of C.S. Peirce, but were developed and popularised by William James, particularly through his 1907 work, *Pragmatism*. James's theorisation was fundamentally hostile to that of the Hegelian idealists, and found expression in a rejection of monism and advance of pluralism. James's enjoyment of diversity in the world shaped his dismissal of theories reducing such diversity of belief and experience to mere appearance or illusion. For James experience was reality. This belief undergirded his intellectual rejection of any conception of reality that was divorced from actual lived experience. Importantly, James viewed suspiciously the claim that philosophy was engaged principally in seeking and advancing solutions to a particular set of problems. Rather, for him, the history of

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2 . Charles W. Anderson, Pragmatic Liberalism, University of Chicago Press, 1990, p.2.

philosophy was to a great extent, “that of a certain clash of human temperaments”. For James the truth consists in a relationship between the idea and the reality of the idea:

The eternal verities which the structure of our mind lays hold of do not of themselves have a ... legislating character even for all possible experiences. They are primarily interesting only as subjective facts ... the most we can say is that we hope to discover outer realities over which the network may be flung so that the real and the ideal may coincide.<sup>3</sup>

Consequentially, James holds that the structure of the mind is not fixed, and is amenable to adjustment with experience.

The central contribution made to pragmatism by its other founding father, John Dewey, was the notion that held knowledge to be an instrument for action, rather than an object of disinterested contemplation. Dewey was also credited with “transforming the occasional dalliance” of classical liberalism. For Dewey, “criticism”, meaning the application of the sense of adaptation to the problem of conduct:

consisted in a process of inquiry by which one chooses the kind of action able to transform a troubling situation into an integrated condition.<sup>4</sup>

Thus pragmatists came to lay stress on the conventional understanding and interpretation of ideas and concepts as opposed to their intellectualism, viewed as “passive reflection of the fixed, objective structure of things”.<sup>5</sup>

Leading from the work of Peirce, James and Dewey, the typology ‘pragmatic liberalism’ was recently developed by Charles W. Anderson. It has a number of central features. Anderson concedes that on first view, pragmatism and liberalism do not hang easily together and indeed can represent point and counterpoint of traditional political argument. Pragmatism has commonly concerned itself with the art of the possible, whilst liberalism stands essentially on principle. For pragmatists, classical liberalism stands accused of

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3 . Quoted in A.J. Ayer, Philosophy in the Twentieth Century, Unwin, 1982, p.79.

4 . J.G. Merquior, Liberalism Old and New, Twayne, 1991, p.114.

5 . Bullock, Stallybrass and Trombley (Eds), The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, Fontana Press, 1988, pp.674-675.

inculcating a form of “stark individualism”, in contrast to its preferred strategy of cooperative human endeavour. For its part, classical liberalism has been dismissive of Peirce, James and Dewey’s perceived relativist and unprincipled positions. Furthermore, pragmatism had been strongly associated with a “flexible, activist, conception of law and state policy” (underpinning many social welfare programmes) whilst, as we have noted, classical liberalism provided the conceptual and political framework for the doctrine of a free-market capitalism, minimal government, and a “jurisprudence of strict interpretation of fundamental law”.<sup>6</sup>

Anderson defends the intentions of the pragmatists and argues that their essential epistemological claim, namely that the best guide for finite minds that their ideas were getting to the “underlying order of things”, was in fact their reliability and durability, has credence. Stated differently, the litmus test of our ideas was whether they “worked well” in a variety of circumstances. However, when applied to political doctrine and practice, pragmatism presents a host of moral and prudential dangers, and may easily dissolve into indeterminacy and expediency. If, however, we consider liberal principles as constituting the problematic situation to which pragmatic reasoning must respond, then pragmatic reasoning is given “essential point and purpose”, argues Anderson.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in liberal democratic societies, “liberal principles provide the normative structure for pragmatic method”.<sup>8</sup> Anderson concludes:

Pragmatism needs liberalism if it is to have moral and political significance. On the other hand, liberalism is empty and formal without pragmatic method. The abstract principles of liberalism require interpretation. The great values of freedom, equality, justice and social efficiency may be, in a certain sense, “self evident”, but what they mean when applied in diverse circumstances is not at all clear. It is not, in fact, the philosophic grounding, or the ordering, but the *application* of the fundamental principles that generates the great disputes of liberal politics. Thus, the method and the maxims are inseparable, and if we are to understand liberalism as a public philosophy, then we should understand

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6 . Anderson, p.1.

7 . *ibid*, p.2.

8 . *ibid*, p.2.

pragmatism as a conception of practical reason that complements and completes it.<sup>9</sup>

With this conceptual backdrop in mind, we are better able to make sense of the structural changes operating within the PFP in the post-1987 election period and which eventually gave rise to the formation of the Democratic Party.

### Internal criticism

The internal inquisition pursuant to the performance of the PFP in the 1987 election was brutal. The critique was particularly strident from those MP's who had lost their seats in the election. Robin Carlisle, the principal architect of the defunct "turbo-charged strategy", and who had lost the Wynberg seat, resigned his position as Secretary General, and recommended that party leader Colin Eglin, Federal Executive Chairman Ken Andrew, and Party Chairman Peter Gastrow do likewise.<sup>10</sup>

For many within the party, the problem was one of political marketing. Brian Goodall, who was defeated in Edenvale, had earlier expressed grave concern over the "image problem" suffered by the party, and in particular the paradox that many more voters supported the policies advocated by the PFP than voted Progressive. Goodall conducted his own research in Edenvale and discovered that had he resigned from the PFP and stood as an independent in 1987, he would have won his seat.<sup>11</sup> The image problem, he argued, was accounted for primarily for two reasons:

- (a) The PFP is seen as being a permanent opposition party. People do not see us as becoming the Government.
- (b) Voters, including PFP supporters, believe that the government will make those changes that are necessary to save South Africa.

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9 . *ibid*, p.3.

10 . Interview with Robin Carlisle MP, 24 May 1993.

11 . Personal interview with Brian Goodall MP, 19 July 1993.

Goodall urged the party to think seriously about how it positioned itself in the political market and how it orientated itself *vis-a-vis* its opponents.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of political marketing, if your opponent moves into your turf, you have to re-double your efforts to protect and secure that turf. After the National Party embarked on its reform programme they simply moved in on our turf and we didn't respond appropriately.<sup>13</sup>

The views of Tony Leon may not have been typical, but they did express a strong sentiment held by many in the Southern Transvaal region of the party after the 1987 Western Cape- designed campaign. In reply to Chairman of the Federal Executive Ken Andrew's post-general election questionnaire, Leon argued:

Our advertising campaign was, in my opinion, appalling. Not to put too fine a point on it, I do not understand why we attempted to convey our message in the dullest and most unappealing manner possible.<sup>14</sup>

Leon drew attention to the fact that he had been asked to draft a memo on the question of outlawing the Communist Party under a PFP government should it not comply with certain requirements above and beyond the mere adherence to the rule of law. This memo was never used in the campaign although the PFP was hammered by the government for being seen as too close to the ANC/SACP alliance.

A further debilitating problem for the PFP was that it was:

(H)ampered because we are caught to some extent between the hammer of the NP security approach and the false allure of extra-Parliamentary activity. We are no longer glamorous or fringe, but merely institutionalised and, therefore, in the minds of some at least, dull. I think the overall problem in the Party is that we spend an inordinate amount of time discussing politics and insufficient time dealing with policy...What we have to do is to somehow involve the rank and file in policy formation

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12 . Undated memo PFP archives, University of the Witwatersrand.

13 . Personal interview with Brian Goodall MP, 19 July 1993.

14 . Letter from Johannesburg City Councillor Tony Leon Chairman of PFP Federal Executive Ken Andrew, 3 June 1987, Progressive Party archives, University of the Witwatersrand.

on an on-going basis, over and above the two days a year spent deliberating such matters at Congress.<sup>15</sup>

Robin Carlisle offered a broader overview,

The Independents did extremely well, indicating a trend away from the Nats to the left, and the established party did extremely badly, which other people interpreted as a trend away from the Nats to the right which it wasn't. And that said more clearly than anything else could say, that the PFP had been demonised to the point that it had its staunch base of perhaps 60 000 members and 250 000 supporters but that was it. It had been (I don't like to use words like fatally or terminally) very seriously mauled in the public perception, and at the same time Malan and Worrall had done extremely well. There is always the temptation to say, "Yes, but they ran better campaigns", or that they were more attractive candidates, but I think that's bull. Those kinds of factors can make a 3% or 4% difference. But when the nation swings, the nation swings, or the electorate swings. And the electorate was voting for change, but not change through the PFP. In other words, in the electorate's mind we were not seen as a fit vehicle for change.<sup>16</sup>

In response to the complex dilemmas facing the party, a series of in-house "think tanks" were subsequently held to discuss its future role and identity. One of the issues discussed was that of the leadership.

### Leadership

With seven PFP MPs losing their seats in the 1987 election, attention was directed internally towards the leadership of Colin Eglin. Eglin was respected by all within the party as a shrewd political tactician with a wealth of experience who had led the party during some very difficult times. History will record that he was placed in the impossible position of having to replace Van Zyl Slabbert who, as the party's most popular leader, had stamped his own identity fully on the party in terms of policy, image and strategy. Whereas the combination of Slabbert as the public figure leading the party, supported by Eglin as the strong organisational tactician was viewed by many as the perfect

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15 . Leon, *ibid.*

16 . Personal interview with Robin Carlisle MP, 24 May 1993.

combination,<sup>17</sup> any combination with Eglin as leader was not. As such, Eglin in the post-Slabbert period was regarded by many as a *pro tempore* leader.<sup>18</sup>

A number of factors counted against Eglin. At a personal level he was English-speaking and thus unappealing to *verligte* Afrikaner voters to whom the Independents had become attractive. In contrast to the charismatic Slabbert, Eglin's public personae was bland, and as such, he was seen as no match for the bombastic style of PW Botha. Eglin was also a Western Cape leader, and it became increasingly clear that a faction within the Southern Transvaal region of the party which "hated the Western Cape Region of the party with a passion", would make a strong bid to have their man Zach de Beer replace Eglin.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the fact that Eglin was the only figure who commanded the respect and authority to hold the party together in the post-Slabbert period, he was principally viewed as an emergency stop-gap. The election of a former leader was a regressive step, which served to highlight the dearth of leadership talent within the party. Whilst it would be inaccurate to describe Eglin in the post-Slabbert period as a lame duck leader, there existed subterranean structural constraints to his leadership. As second best choice, Eglin's relatively weak position was also capitalised on within the party by younger ambitious caucus members.

In terms of the conduct and strategy of the 1987 election, for example, Eglin felt he had been swayed, and had not gone with his own convictions:

I actually believe that the party adopted the wrong tactics and I must be blamed because I was the leader, but I was also (having come back again) less sure of doing it my way. There was a great move to use public relations people and market research and in the end I actually believe the advice was wrong.<sup>20</sup>

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17 . This was certainly the view held by the overwhelming majority of MP's interviewed.

18 . Personal interview with Bobby Godsell, 19 July 1993.

19 . This is a quote from a current Democratic Party MP. The general thrust of the argument is borne out by personal interviews with a broad range of MP's and organisers.

20 . Personal interview with Colin Eglin MP, 7 June 1993.

Eglin himself was of the view that it would be inappropriate for him to lead the party into the next election, but he would not be prepared to hand over the leadership to someone like Worrall whom:

I found Denis Worrall at that stage a doubtful custodian of what I call liberal democratic values. I wasn't going to rush into deals with Denis, and so I had numerous guys saying "doing a deal with Denis can give us back our seats in the next election". I agreed that the composition of the party might have to change to accommodate Denis and Wynand, but I was not, as an old-time Prog (put it that way), for the sake of convenience, going to do a quick fix with Denis or anyone else. But, yes, there was a growing impatience to do a deal.

The crisis within the party was much deeper than the leadership issue, however. The party had reached a watershed in its history and it was faced with fundamental questions regarding its identity and future. The findings of the think tanks eventually crystallised into three core options.

Firstly, it could re-construct itself as a broadly tricameral party seeking alliances and/or amalgamations with like-minded parties in the other two houses. The reasoning behind this strategy was that the PFP ought to focus its attention on gaining greater political leverage in Parliament and was predicated on the assumption that political and executive power in South Africa was located in Parliament and that it was only through securing access to such power that effective change could be brokered. This viewpoint echoed closely Worrall's earlier contention that black liberation could only be achieved through white security and was a reworked version of the balance of power and "turbo-charged" strategy which had failed dismally in 1987. It was understood, however, that such a strategy would also result in the further straining of relations between the PFP and black progressive political formations and, in the case of attempting to secure support in the other two houses, this would require the co-operation of both the Labour Party and Solidarity.

The second option argued for a re-construction along the lines of an alliance or amalgamation with the elements of the former Independent Movement. This strategy was

informed not only by reasoned pragmatism, but also by political expediency and in response to an extant thrust within the party. With a third of the party's MP's losing their seats, PFP eyes had been cast furtively to the newly emergent "great white hopes" in the form of Wynand Malan and Denis Worrall in particular. Prominent MP's within the PFP, together with other senior members of the party, had begun working unilaterally on a strategy to bring Worrall's IP closer to the PFP and to tap into the popularity and charisma of Worrall himself. The leading proponent of this strategy, Robin Carlisle, noted:

It was very clear to us that if you were going to form a united front there had to be some appearance or semblance of energy and direction in Worrall's lot, because if you'd walked the streets you'd know that Malan had some marginal importance but Worrall was a very important political property. Worrall in my constituency was worth a thousand of the votes I got in 1989, if not more. I told Worrall I thought he was good for six seats. In the end I think he was good for twelve.<sup>21</sup>

Conceptually and hypothetically the final choice open to the PFP, was that it could continue along its historical path as a party of principled opposition and protest adhering closely to its historical pedigree, retaining its independent identity, adhering firmly to clearly defined liberal democratic principles but shedding even more drifting support to the Independents and Nationalists. It was projected that this strategy would have had the effect of reducing the PFP Parliamentary support base in the House of Assembly to some 10 to 15 seats. However, given the organisational strength and donor base of the PFP compared to that of the Independent Party and the National Democratic Movement, the net effect of such a strategy would have been the elimination of the IP and the NDM from Parliament.<sup>22</sup> This was in effect an acknowledgment that there existed acutely limited electoral space for more than one white party to the left of the government. The advantage of this strategy however, would be that it would restore a crisper focus to the party, and should it attract like-minded formations to it on an *ad hoc* and strategic basis, this would be achieved on PFP terms that therefore would not dilute the party's identity.

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21 . Personal interview with Robin Carlisle MP, 24 May 1993.

22 . Information provided by James Selfe in a personal interview.

This latter option was favoured neither by the Southern Transvaal, nor the financial backers of the PFP however.<sup>23</sup>

All three strategies involved a degree of sacrifice for uncertain gains. In the case of the white power route, it was clear that such a course of action would result in the further alienation of the PFP from the extra-Parliamentary movement. The schism which had developed between the PFP and the UDF would be sure to widen. The support of the party youth, those involved in community work and the residual elements in the social democratic wing of the party would be permanently lost to UDF-aligned organisations such as the Five Freedoms Forum, Cape Democrats, and JODAC.

If successful, the balance of power strategy would also, by definition, have positioned the PFP closer to government and would have required of it working compromises of the kind inevitably unpalatable to the principled liberals. For the pragmatists and reformists within the party, however, the balance of power strategy made perfect logical, conceptual and political sense. The pragmatists were aware of the political necessity of “second best” choices, and the need to account for and pass the so-called political “Omo” test, namely whether or not a given policy washed with the white electorate.<sup>24</sup>

Thus in November 1987 the PFP Federal Council recommended the formation of a task group to investigate the potential for co-operation between political formations sharing the broad values, principles and areas of concern with the PFP with a view to political co-operation. After preliminary discussions with the major tricameral parties, Eglin recommended the PFP's closer alignment with these parties. Following from these recommendations the Federal Executive took the historic decision at its February 1988 meeting to contest power in the other two houses. The decision was predicated on a strategy to replace the tricameral system with a representative, non-racial and democratic Parliament.<sup>25</sup> This strategy formed one dimension of the attempt to forge a broad anti-

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23 . This discussion is the outcome of interviews with participants in the think tank sessions, both MPs and consultants.

24 'Votes or credibility? Options for ailing PFP', *South*, 7 July 1988.

25 . Shandler, p.219.

apartheid party the ultimate aim of which was to challenge the National Party on a national basis.

Co-operation with the Labour Party had been facilitated by the latter's increasingly hostile position towards the National Party subsequent to President Botha's public humiliation of its leader Allan Hendrickse after he had swum at a "whites only" segregated beach. Having left the cabinet Hendrickse had also led his party out of Parliament in protest over the introduction of the government's National Council Bill. Co-operation with the Labour Party was also made more attractive by Hendrickse's overtly free-marketeer image and his popularity with the South African business community which was reflected in the prestigious *Financial Mail* 'Man of the Year' award for 1987.<sup>26</sup> However, despite the objectively defined grounds for closer relations between the PFP and the Labour Party, differences in ideological orientation, language, culture and political style inhibited the strengthening of relations beyond broad co-operation and mutual support.<sup>27</sup>

Greater success was achieved in the House of Delegates however, when the three Progressive Reform Party MP's under the leadership of Pat Poovalingam, dissolved their party and amalgamated with the PFP in March 1988.

In the same month the PFP Federal Executive expressed its concerns about the negative implications of the potential for internecine warfare amongst the fragmented white anti-apartheid opposition, and gave approval to intensified negotiations towards unity. Leading from these concerns the PFP established a three-person commission in April 1988 comprising the then leader Colin Eglin, Zach de Beer and Errol Moorcroft, to "seek ways of bringing about an understanding or unification between like-minded groups".<sup>28</sup>

Giving a clear indication of the prevailing pragmatic sentiment within the party shortly thereafter, EK Moorcroft, at a meeting of Young Progressives, indicated that he would be

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26 . Shandler, p.220.

27 . Shandler, p.222.

28 . Eastern Province Herald, 30 April 1988.

happy to be “swallowed up by a movement which held the same principles as the PFP”. Moorcroft pointed out, however, that one of the dilemmas facing the PFP at the time was the schism between those supporters and members to whom the party and its continued existence was the issue of cardinal concern and those, on the other hand, who were ideologically animated by principle and would be prepared to “sacrifice” the party for the sake of the entrenchment and protection of liberal principles.<sup>29</sup>

Detailed correspondence between the IP and the PFP in particular had been on-going since at least January 1988.<sup>30</sup>

The degree of overlapping interest and approach between many within the IP and the Southern Transvaal Region of the PFP in particular pulled these two formations closer together, however, rather than with the NDM.<sup>31</sup>

An indication of the impatience within the party was the planning of a “think tank” meeting, without leadership approval, by Robin Carlisle in February 1988 designed as an “attempt to preserve liberal values in South Africa”. The meeting was to have had a dual purpose, however, and was in fact, an attempt to bring the PFP closer to an arrangement with the Independents.<sup>32</sup>

In June 1988 IP strategists met with the PFP task group on liberal unity. During the meeting the IP delegation floated the following proposal:

For the IP the central objective of the white “creative opposition” ought to be to force a hung Parliament. In order to achieve this a “political home” had to be created in which the 24% of disillusioned NP supporters felt comfortable. The IP believed it was this natural home and that nothing ought to be done to “scare off” the 24%. For the IP this

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29 . Personal interview with EK Moorcroft MP, 26 May 1993.

30 . Various correspondence housed in the IP archive between Keith Gurney and Dr Zach de Beer.

31 . Personal interviews with Dr Zach de Beer MP 11 May 1993, and Wynand Malan 20 July 1993.

32 . Cape Times, 20 January 1988.

precluded talking with the ANC/UDF, and unification or alliance with Wynand Malan's National Democratic Movement (NDM).

Whilst the IP believed an unofficial alliance with the PFP was essential, it felt fusion would be counter-productive, as it would do nothing to attract the crucial 24%. The IP demanded an unwritten, unpublicised agreement that in the 1988/89 election whichever party enjoyed most support in each of the 61 target seats of the "white creative opposition", would be the party to contest that seat. This would be determined by scientific random samples carried out for the IP by *Mark-en-Menings* towards the end of 1988 or early in 1989. The two parties were to approach this division of effort in 1988/89 "coldly and scientifically". The IP assessment was based on figures indicated in the table below of an *M&M* poll conducted in the two Provinces in which the IP was active, namely Natal and the Cape.

	NATAL			CAPE		
	January	April	Change	January	April	Change
	%	%	%	%	%	%
NP	50,3	39,8	-10,5	48,9	46,1	-2,8
CP	11,6	11,1	-0,5	11,8	10,2	-1,6
IP	12,2	21,1	+8,9	13,6	17,5	+3,9
PFP	16,0	14,6	-1,4	7,3	8,6	+1,3
NDM	1,1	3,5	+2,4	4,2	3,5	-0,7
NRP	1,7	-	-1,7	2,4	-	-2,4
HNP	-	-	-	0,2	0,2	-
Won't vote	7,1	9,9	+2,8	11,6	13,9	+2,3

Based on a *Mark-en-Menings* survey for Rapport mid-January and mid-April 1988, reproduced in confidential IP negotiation document Objective of White creative opposition (IP and PFP) in 1988/89 Election. 16 June 1988.

The major point of interest was the growth of IP support and diminished NP support, suggesting that the IP was, in fact, cutting into the NP support base and was

demonstrating its ability to do so rather than either of the other white anti-apartheid parties. This was exactly the area of support Worrall had pitched his political platform and was now paying dividends. Also significant for Worrall's Independent Party was that it had achieved this position of popular support without the help of Wynand Malan's National Democratic Movement.

However, the IP was failing to cut into the PFP support base and after the provisional meeting the Independent Party set about establishing its own funding and constituency structures parallel to those of the PFP within PFP-held constituencies. Such overlap, and indeed challenge to traditional PFP support structures, led Eglin to accuse Worrall of political duplicity for, on the one hand, claiming to favour a "creative opposition" whilst, on the other hand, proceeding to establish alternative constituency structures in direct competition with those of the PFP.

Worrall responded to Eglin's frustration by reiterating his call for the formation of a creative opposition, but added that this must also be the home for disillusioned National Party supporters and it was on how this could be created that the IP and the PFP differed.

It should be noted that at this time it was hoped by IP strategists that, flowing from these discussions, the PFP would split at its August Congress along Eglin/De Beer, principled/strategic lines. In this event the best case scenario for the IP would have been for the PFP to have split and for the pragmatists, namely Zach de Beer and the Southern Transvaal, to have joined the IP, thus yielding it access to the PFP donor base whilst absorbing like-minded pragmatic liberals and avoiding the "contamination" of the principled liberals left as a residual element in the PFP.<sup>33</sup>

#### Structural shifts within the PFP - towards pragmatic liberalism

The failure of the PFP leadership to either curb the IP gains or to cut a clear and advantageous inter-party deal was a major source of intra-party dissatisfaction. After the series of debilitating setbacks, the "displaced" critics within the party became the most

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33 . Independent Party, 'IP/PFP Re-alignment Plan', 16 June 1988.

active in the construction of a number of ginger groups which sought to re-construct the party in an effort to regain both their own seats, but also to re-establish credibility and relevance for the party.

With the departure of Slabbert, Boraine, Van Eck and the Dakarites, together with the defensive positions adopted by the classical liberals within the party, an ideological vacuum had been created which became increasingly filled by pragmatic liberals. This group was exemplified by the emergence from the ashes of defeat of a dynamic, self-confident and young group of PFP activists and politicians based in the Southern Transvaal region of the party. It is important to note at this point that regional differences had long existed within the party organisation but intensified during the period of crisis. PFP Congresses are replete with motions for the National Head Office to move from Cape Town to Johannesburg, for example. (The rationale for keeping the NHO in Cape Town relates more to the need for the party's Head Office to be close to Parliament rather than any power play between the regions, however). More importantly, the party exhibited different tendencies and emphases within the different regions. The Southern Transvaal region has historically been the centre of the *geldmag* in the party and has promoted a clearer form of free-market liberalism over the concerns for human rights and protest. Shandler argues that Southern Transvaal exhibited a different class matrix from the Western and Eastern Cape, for example, where middle-class professionals predominated in the executive structures.<sup>34</sup> Another distinction between the two regions is the differential experience of its members in the townships of the Western and Eastern Cape as opposed to the relatively insulated perspective of Southern Transvaal. In the Western Cape there exists an intervening class of *petit bourgeois* /intelligentsia which is less closely tied to capitalist interests than their Southern Transvaal regional counterparts.

The new "Young Turks" or "Super Turks" were lead by displaced Edenvale MP and PFP Southern Transvaal Regional Chairman Brian Goodall. The PFP Young Turks collectively identified broadly with the policies, ideology, and political style of the

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34 . Shandler, 1989, p.45.

contemporary British and American new right.<sup>35</sup> This political identification also incorporated to a sympathy with Chicago School supply side economics. The Young Turks developed close relations with the media, and Ken Owen in particular, but also made use of the medium of Radio 702, by making themselves available for, and accessible to any requests for interviews and comment on a range of issues of local importance.<sup>36</sup>

Although staunchly Progressive in membership and outlook, the Southern Transvaal cabal re-evaluated PFP policy and gave it a pragmatic interpretation, relevant to both the events and issues at play during the late 1980's. The Young Turks took the challenge of the "Independents" seriously and responded by developing a class-orientated approach to group areas and public amenities in local politics. The original strategy was to rejuvenate PFP control of the Johannesburg City Council, initially by the ousting of its leader Sam Moss. Having removed Moss and secured a power base within the PFP Southern Transvaal region, the Young Turks set themselves three goals: Firstly, to improve the party's regional management. Secondly, to improve the image of the party, at local government and national level, inter alia, via the election of Zach de Beer in place of Colin Eglin. Thirdly, they set themselves the goal of transforming certain policies from perceived "wet" or "limp" positions to more assertive, pragmatic and proactive positions, particularly on the vital question of security. This latter shift was in direct response, not only to the very real scepticism with which many white voters viewed the PFP on security matters, but the inroads into PFP and floating voter support base made by Worrall and the Independents.

Leader of the "Young Turk" faction Tony Leon's experiences as a city councillor had led him to articulate the new pragmatic position thus:

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35 . Much of this discussion is informed by a series of personal interviews in April to July 1993, with Tony Leon MP, Lester Fuchs, MP, Brian Goodall MP, Douglas Gibson MP and Mr Ken Owen. And David Breir, "Superturks", Sunday Star, 14 August 1988.

36 . Personal interviews with Tony Leon MP, 14 May 1993, Ken Owen, 21 July 1993, and Brian Goodall MP, 19 July 1993.

The PFP opposition in the past was highly theoretical and detached. Now we are involved in the ordinary concerns of the voters. We are solutions orientated.<sup>37</sup>

The Young Turks re-interpreted standard PFP policy which, whilst principled, was seen to be distant, misunderstood and irrelevant. The reformulation was constructed within a pragmatic liberal programme felicitously termed “muscular liberalism” by its principle spokesperson Leon. This policy orientation materialised in the following formulations: Whilst it was standard PFP policy to oppose the Group Areas Act in toto, the Young Turks called for the opening of all group areas but also demanded that standards be maintained. Secondly, it was accepted PFP policy that all separate amenities provisions be scrapped and facilities opened to all. The Young Turks argued in favour of a colour-blind means test for the utilisation of facilities and the building of new and adequate facilities. On the question of security the liberal pragmatists called for the upgrading of the South African Police and placed a strong emphasis on the combatting of crime.

A further distinctive point of departure for the Young Turks was their confidence in challenging the UDF in areas where liberals had buckled under pressure during the 1980's.

As Lester Fuchs noted:

Opposing apartheid had brought together many people who didn't really belong together. Within the PFP there were people who would never have talked about the maintenance of standards because they were basically talking for the ANC. We decided that whereas we had always drawn the line to the right against the National Party, we now had a duty and responsibility to draw a line to the left as well.<sup>38</sup>

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37 . Sunday Star, August 1988.

38 . Personal interview with Lester Fuchs MP, 12 May 1993.

Leon had taken to heart the self-criticisms of liberals during the period of self-flagellatory introspection<sup>39</sup> and responded by stating of his political style:

If liberals are not prepared to assert themselves there (at Wits) they are trampled over by the hard left and right... Sometimes in politics you have to realise that in order to make an omelette you have to crack an egg.<sup>40</sup>

The third dimension to the Young Turks' strategy was the removal of Colin Eglin and to secure the election of Dr Zach de Beer as leader of the party at the party's August 1988 Congress.

The "Young Turks" plans to elect De Beer as leader dovetailed with the emerging dynamics within the party. De Beer had an appeal not only to the white English-speaking middle-class, but as an Anglo American Executive Director he also enjoyed the support of very potent allies in the corporate sector due to his successful track record and strong free-marketeer image.<sup>41</sup> Another important reason for de Beer's election to the leadership was that he did not carry the battle scars of Colin Eglin *vis-a-vis* Gastrow, Cronjé, Schoeman and Van Eck when it came to the unification talks of the PFP and the NDM. As has been indicated de Beer conformed far more closely to an "acceptability" figure for the IP, and as such was seen as a potentially more successful facilitator for any future unification process.

The moves to have De Beer elected leader also reflected and contributed to a policy shift in the party towards a more overt and focused free-market capitalist position. This thrust was also a response to the perceived gains made by Worrall at the expense of the PFP in capturing the ear and sympathy of big business. De Beer had also reached a point in his

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39 . In a personal interview with the author on 14 May 1993, Tony Leon declared that when he had read Jill Wentzel's 'Liberal Slide Away' thesis, it had made "perfect sense" to him.

40 Sunday Star, 11 June 1989.

41 . Brian Goodall noted in a personal interview that the corporate sector in Johannesburg were "scared stiff" by the rise of the Conservative Party and the economic implications this held, 19 July 1993.

corporate career where he had to make a decision whether or not to return to politics. In a 1988 interview De Beer declared:

(If you've been an active member of the PFP since 1959, you've persuaded a lot of people to put their resources and their lives on the line. The time comes when you have to do it too. The duty falls on you. If your children have grown up, and you've got a few bob in the bank, how do you justify not doing that?<sup>42</sup>

Thus as a result of intensive lobbying, and on the understanding that he would not stand against his long-time friend and colleague Colin Eglin, De Beer let it be known that he would be available for the leadership. In June 1988 De Beer, PFP leader Colin Eglin and PFP benefactor Harry Oppenheimer met in La Lucia to discuss the future of the PFP and its leadership.

Whilst de Beer's leadership held great prospect for many party supporters, for every response of the PFP to the threats to its own support base a decision to protect one political flank of the party held serious, albeit perhaps long-term, consequences for the party on other flanks. In this case the decision to elect De Beer was perceived by the South African trade union movement and others on the left as big business "calling the party back into line" and of the party finally and permanently pinning its political colours to those of big business in South Africa.

De Beer's election brought great consternation and condemnation from Afrikaner media circles and in particular journalists in the *Nasionale Pers* stable.<sup>43</sup>

Significantly, De Beer's election also heralded the resignation as chairman of the PFP in the OFS and Northern Cape Mrs Marlene Webber. Whilst denying that her decision had anything to do with the election of De Beer *per se* and was not a personal attack, she made it clear in a leaked memo/letter to the party's leadership that she had problems with De Beer's election because he represented mining capital, which had been allied strongly

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42 . 'Interview: Zach de Beer on the PFP's prospects', in *Leadership*, Volume 7, number 3, 1988.

43 . See Dawie in *Die Burger*, 9 July 1988.

to apartheid policies such as job reservation. Nevertheless Webber remained an active PFP member.<sup>44</sup>

### The 1988 PFP Congress

Given the subterranean manoeuvrings within the party and its crippled image, the August 1988 Federal Congress became a crucial one for the party. Amongst the 50 resolutions debated, the key areas were: The leadership transition, the image of the party with regard to its position on security matters, strategies for the consolidation of the political formations to the left of government, and the unspoken yet significant impact of Worrall and Malan on the party's support base.<sup>45</sup>

Within Congress there was a groundswell of support for the principle that the circumstances were such that it behoved the PFP to seek out like-minded people and formations with the creation of a single united liberal opposition in mind. Echoing the discourse of IP leader Denis Worrall, delegates from the Waterkloof constituency proposed a motion that:

The Waterkloof Constituency urges Congress to encourage party members at grass-roots level, throughout the country, to seek closer co-operation and working relationships with all parties, groups and movements opposed to apartheid in order to form a single creative opposition.<sup>46</sup>

The resolution was carried unanimously. But already in Congress were the seeds of the fundamental tension within the PFP and one which was to arise in acute form in the soon-to-be-formed Democratic Party. Many of the resolutions proposed at Congress urged the broadening and strengthening of ties with other democratic movements, both Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary.<sup>47</sup>

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44 . And later reconciled herself with De Beer, personal interview with Dr Zach de Beer MP, 11 May 1993.

45 . Anthony Johnson, Cape Times 27 July 1988.

46 . Resolution 36, Minutes of the Eighth Federal Congress of the Progressive Federal Party, Cape Town, 5-6 August 1988, p.15.

47 . See resolutions 35 and 37, in *ibid*, p.15.

Resolution 38 articulated what many PFP supporters had wanted to hear for some time, yet were unwilling to fully contemplate:

This Congress noting:

The present largely unnecessary disunity on the liberal-left;

Believing

- (a) that a united left-of-government opposition is in the interest of South Africa and all her people;
- (b) that there are genuine opportunities to weaken the system from within;

Resolves

- (a) to do all in her (sic) power to facilitate progressive unity;
- (b) that if circumstances so dictate the PFP declares herself (sic) willing to merge into a new united non-racial, 'progressive' party which is committed to the liberal values that the PFP has so stoutly defended in the past.

The motion was carried as amended, thus setting the constitutional and political path open to the PFP leadership to enter into negotiations to, in the face of the public imperative, establish a new liberal political party committed to the values of the PFP, but which sought to unite the disparate forces operating within the system to the left of the government.

The security question became an area of acute discussion and debate within Congress at which the findings of the party's security commission were tabled and debated.

Highlighting the deep divisions within the party on this question PFP MP for Yeoville, Harry Schwarz's denial that the SADF was the instrument of apartheid brought derision from the youth and other delegates, a number of whom had sons in the townships engaged in national service. Given the divisiveness of the security question Congress adopted a compromise resolution that the country ought to move to the establishment of a permanent non-conscript professional army supported by a voluntary reserve. Secondly,

that any person not wishing to enter the army for national service should be afforded the right to complete alternative social service. As head of the party's security committee, Helen Suzman proposed that those opting to do community service should be required to serve for a longer period, as those who entered the army often risked their lives. It was further resolved that conscripts should be used to maximise their skills and vocational / professional training.

Not only was the party riven by divisions on the question of security, but was again clear at Congress that the Youth wing of the party was drifting apart. The PFP Youth experienced a double alienation, particularly on the predominantly white liberal university campuses. On the one hand, they were active participants in student politics and were affiliated to a progressive political formation, NUSAS, on the other hand, affiliation to the PFP resulted in their being discredited by the UDF-aligned NUSAS.

A further indication of the changing dynamic within the party was the presentation at Congress by the Constitutional Committee of proposals for a new constitution. The important policy shift was a move away from prescriptive thinking on the constitution, towards the consideration of a number of models which could be the outcome of democratic negotiation. The committee had found that the PFP's constitutional proposals were too subtly nuanced and, albeit unwittingly, beyond the comprehension of too many elements of the South African population. The party's constitutional proposals had been poorly understood and misrepresented and thus required re-evaluation. However, this re-evaluation did not herald the ditching of liberal principle, and the committee laid down a number of non-negotiable principles as the basis for constitutional architecture, namely: full citizenship rights for all without discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex and religion; no domination or persecution of any group.

The constitutional committee's findings, dovetailed with those of University of Cape Town academic Professor André du Toit, who in addressing Congress highlighted the problem that PFP constitutional policy lacked the political "sex appeal" of the Freedom Charter. This is hardly surprising given that the Freedom Charter is predicated on grandiose, abstract populist claims that portray second and third generation human rights

as first. Nevertheless, Du Toit's arguments had a resonance and thus his recommendations that the answer to its image problem and lack of popular appeal lay in tackling its defensiveness and insecurity, and most fundamentally its need to offer a vision for the building of a united South African nation were taken seriously by party leadership. Du Toit concluded that rather than viewing itself as agents of conflict resolution, if the party wanted to become a relevant factor in the changing dynamic it had to present a credible political alternative.<sup>48</sup>

The election of Zach de Beer as leader of the PFP at its August 1988 Congress cleared the way for negotiations to begin in earnest towards the achievement of unity. In his first speech as leader De Beer echoed the words of DF Malan in stating he aimed to:

Bring together those who by inner conviction belong together. This is the task I am setting myself. Every South African who believes in equal rights, personal freedom and the rule of law belongs with us - nowhere else.<sup>49</sup>

De Beer later reflected:

It therefore did not come easily for me to accept, some time after the 1987 election that a new party was required. As many people asked: "Why couldn't all the democrats in the country rally to the PFP? It is my job, apart from being a principled proponent of democratic values, to be a practical politician. Even before the 1987 election it was clear that there were many South Africans who favoured liberal values but were not supporting my party. The results confirmed this dramatically and tragically ... I therefore concluded, with the support of many others in the PFP, that it was essential to bring together all who genuinely shared the democratic values I have mentioned, and that this would only be achievable through a new party.<sup>50</sup>

Of critical importance for the further advancement of unity talks of the moderate centre, was the fact that the centre of political gravity within the PFP had shifted with the election of De Beer as leader. Not only did this herald the pull and push of big business

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48 . Argus, 10 August 1988.

49 . PFP August 1988, Federal Congress Minutes. ...

50 . Sunday Times, 2 April 1989.

interests finding clearer manifestation within the party, but the ideological centre of gravity within the party had altered to address the questions which had cost it heavily in the 1987 election, and in particular that of white security. The dominant thrust within the PFP was now one of pragmatic liberalism. In practice this meant that whilst the party remained unequivocally attached to its core liberal principles, its programmes, strategies and discourse would become increasingly informed by a means/ends nexus that would be cognisant of the need for a practical focus on political realities.

This shift had already begun to manifest itself not only in the “Young Turk” and the pragmatic De Beer thrusts, but also found expression in the findings of the PFP’s security commission which were designed not only to address the challenges facing white members of the PFP in the late 1980’s, but also to re-capture the floating and “security first” votes lost in the election.

It had also not gone unnoticed that the Independent Party had set as a cardinal principle the question of white security, and had picked up some 10% of popular support in doing so. This convergence of interests had the unintended consequence of making unification between the PFP and IP more palatable to the latter and further ideological convergence was found between the conservative and libertarian wings of both the IP and the PFP, particularly the Southern Transvaal Region.<sup>51</sup>

The turning point in convergence dynamics however, was the sparkling performance of the PFP pragmatic liberals in the Johannesburg municipal elections in October 1988, together with the equally strong performance of the independent PFP-aligned candidates in the Cape Town municipal election.

The PFP’s Johannesburg Municipal election campaign had a marked impact on both PFP thinking nationally as well as that of the IP in particular. The pragmatic liberals of the Southern Transvaal launched a well-marketed and orchestrated campaign that sought to challenge and outflank the National Party at all levels.<sup>52</sup> The PFP’s election manifesto

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51 . Personal interview with Brian Goodall MP, 19 July 1993.

52 . Shandler, p.234-237.

was both a challenge to the NP, but also enshrined the middle class issues-orientated approach characteristic of the pragmatists. The central themes of the PFP manifesto were: “real security”; “community harmony”; “clean and open government”; “a ‘user friendly’ city”; “a winning partnership with business”; “creative planning”; and, “towards a post-apartheid city”.<sup>53</sup> The professional, responsible, competent, yet caring image created by the pragmatists paid dividends by increasing the PFP’s representation within the Johannesburg City Council and consolidating its power bloc.

This strong showing was in marked contrast to the complete failure of the IP candidates nationally in the Municipal elections. This sobering set-back for the IP served to focus the minds of its leadership on the reality of fighting a national campaign as opposed to riding the crest of the waves of opinion polls or high-profile, single constituency campaigns with its most appealing candidate, Denis Worrall.

Buoyed by its local government successes, newly-elected PFP leader Zach de Beer argued that the municipal elections:

(I)ndicated a new viability for liberal politics. Negotiations have been taking place with the IP and the NDM and there is every prospect that the three groups will enter a general election as a cohesive team. We will cooperate. It has always been my view that the ideal form of unity will be a full merger of these parties.<sup>54</sup>

Subsequent to his party’s municipal setbacks Worrall declared with new found enthusiasm, “It is urgent that members of the creative opposition find a basis of co-operation”.<sup>55</sup>

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53 . Shandler, p.237.

54 . *Argus*, 29 October 1988.

55 . *ibid.*

Shortly thereafter the leader of the National Democratic Movement Wynand Malan declared that there was:

(A) need to achieve convergence ... including Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary groupings. The ground has now been prepared for a shift and real transformation and reconstruction of South African society.<sup>56</sup>

Thus by late October 1988 clear signs of a general convergence of interests were beginning to emerge between the three and thereafter talk of a united opposition to the left of the government grew apace. The following chapter details the dynamics giving rise to the unification of the fragmented opposition and laying the foundation of the Democratic Party.

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56 . *ibid.*

## CHAPTER EIGHT

This chapter seeks to explain the immediate circumstances giving rise to the formation of the Democratic Party and the protracted struggle for its leadership and identity. The attempts to establish the Democratic Party were particularly significant in that they heralded the first time in thirty years that the Parliamentary opposition to the left of the National Party would stand united. It will also be argued that the unification process was of vital importance in that it denoted the first time since the ascendancy of the National Party to power that important fractions of the ruling bloc joined forces with the liberal opposition for the removal of apartheid rule.

The impulses towards the formation of the Democratic Party represented the convergence of the aggregation of white political and economic interests opposing racial legislation in general, and the National Party in particular. These impulses were directly informed by the peculiar circumstances marking the broad structural crisis in South Africa and which had driven the country into a condition of violent stalemate.

### Fission to unity

Liberal disunity reached its nadir in October 1987. The latent ideological and strategic tensions within the Independent Movement burst open when its co-leader Wynand Malan unilaterally declared the launch of the National Democratic Movement. In doing so Malan also announced that two PFP MP's, Party Chairman Peter Gastrow, Greytown MP Pierre Cronjé, and President's Councillor Pieter Schoeman had resigned from the beleaguered party and had joined the NDM.<sup>1</sup> In preparatory discussions over a period of months it emerged that as a precondition for joining the NDM the three former PFP members had insisted that Independent Movement leader Denis Worrall not be part of the leadership structure of the new formation. Worrall was perceived by the PFP breakaway group as lacking credibility with non-system political formations and being too closely aligned to Inkatha to play the bridge-building and interactive role<sup>2</sup> conceptualised for the

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1 . Argus, 8 October 1988.

2 . "Interactive" may be understood as that political activity aimed at breaking down the artificiality of the barriers between both political formations and communities. Malan

NDM.<sup>3</sup> Worrall was also viewed as having an exclusive affinity with and focus on white politics and of being “uncomfortable” in dealing with the style, rhetoric, and programmes of non-system black formations, Inkatha notwithstanding.<sup>4</sup>

Humiliated by the palace revolution from within the movement he had founded, Worrall immediately split with the NDM, but legally inherited the Independent name and body corporate.<sup>5</sup>

### The NDM

In Worrall’s departure the National Democratic Movement established political history in South Africa by splitting before it was formally constituted. A further setback to the new formation and a major shortcoming of its avowed strategy, was its failure to attract a number of National Party MP’s it had been courting. It was later revealed that the NP had drafted a resignation agreement with all its MP’s in the Cape, and that considerable pressure had been placed on at least two NP MP’s to remain in the party, one of whom later retired from politics before the 1989 election.<sup>6</sup>

Organisationally the NDM comprised the loose Parliamentary grouping, together with Dr Esther Lategan, Advocate Dawid de Villiers and elements of the nascent ‘Fourth Force’. The movement stopped short of forming a political party as this was in conflict with the non-institutionalised, non-dogmatic, non-prescriptive orientation it had set as its *raison d’etre*.

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used the metaphor of whites existing in one “fish tank” and blacks in another. The need existed, he believed, for the “fish tanks” to be joined at the bottom, as the “big sharks” guarding the system and struggle tanks were preventing this confluence.

- 3 . This opinion was also informed by the fact that Gastrow and Cronjé in particular had been involved in interactive work in Natal for years.
- 4 . Personal interviews with Mr Jannie Momberg MP, 3 June 1993 and Mr Pierre Cronjé MP, 8 June 1993.
- 5 . Written correspondence between Dr Denis Worrall and Mr Keith Gurney, 19 October - 25 November 1987.
- 6 . Sunday Times, 11 October 1987, personal interviews with Mr Wynand Malan, 20 July 1993, Dr Jannie Hofmeyr, 10 June 1993, and Mr André van der Walt, June 1989.

Freed to some degree “system politics” discreditation the NDM set about designing and formulating its role as an interactive grouping, whose activities were termed “political terrorism” by former member Jannie Hofmeyr:

The political terrorism I am talking about was strategically placed activity that unlocked the logjam.<sup>7</sup>

The object of the NDM was to:

(S)ecure the fundamental reconstruction of South African society, forging all its political and other constituencies into a single nation in an undivided country; the ending of the era of apartheid and its replacement with a democratic order.<sup>8</sup>

This was to be achieved by straddling racial and political divides inside and outside of Parliament in order to bridge the broader divisions of South African society. The NDM approach to politics was democratically-driven. It adopted a “bottom up” approach as opposed to the top down technocratic, leadership-driven strategies characterising the conservative wing of the Independent Movement, arguing that:

The people of South Africa in their diversity should start the negotiation process, with government acting only as a regulator once accord is reached.<sup>9</sup>

Malan rejected the dichotomous power paradigm that pervaded South African politics whereby the parameters of engagement were determined by the conflict for hegemony between “system” and “struggle”. On this view the leadership of both protagonists were locked into a mutually destructive process which prevented them from seeking solutions. Thus the central focus of the NDM was on finding a process whereby common ground could be found and firmly established in order to construct a peaceful political settlement.

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7 . Personal interview with Dr Jannie Hofmeyr, 10 June 1993.

8 . Constitution of the National Democratic Movement, clause 2. p.1.

9 . Weekend Argus, 10 October 1987.

As Wynand Malan explained:

Process politics is an attempt to move away from the concept of an old style party which is defined as left or right. We are not just a party, it is a new approach to politics, a new dimension to South African politics intended to breach the divide between extra-Parliamentary and Parliamentary politics. The aim of process politics will be to get people involved in talks and moving towards negotiations thereby moving away from dogma, rigidity and ideology. The NDM intends taking the idea of process politics to the other two houses and to the ANC so that the ANC must be drawn into talks that would bring violence to an end.<sup>10</sup>

In that the NDM was a party without formal or fixed policy, its ideological identity must be deduced from the public pronouncements of its leadership. Malan was conceptually uneasy with the PFP's emphasis on a "Western liberal tradition" and had difficulty with its commitment to "the individual as the touchstone of value in society".<sup>11</sup> However, despite the apparent vacuousness of the NDM message, Malan's philosophy was undergirded by a number of classical liberal democratic principles, upon which were grafted a range of social democratic political prescriptions, thus:

We believe that South Africans should be welded into one nation in one country, where no discrimination on any basis should be allowed. There must be equality of citizenship, as well as recognised human rights and freedoms for all the people of our country.<sup>12</sup>

The principal distinction between the NDM and the other two formations of the fragmented opposition was that it saw its mission as the longer-term programme of nation-building, rather than the contestation of elections. Its central focus was not Parliamentary, but rather national, holistic and incorporationist. The major problem for the NDM as a loose formation of white predominantly Afrikaner Parliamentarians and intellectuals, however, was to engender an understanding of its mission and to explain how this would rid the country of the the main obstacle to nation building, namely the National Party government. What appeared to be a strategy understood by its protagonists, presented to the white public as rarefied political nihilism. The NDM was

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10 . Cape Times, 9 October 1987.

11 . Cape Times, 19 October 1989.

12 . Weekend Argus, 10 October 1987.

not an organisation driven by ambition to gain influence and power within the Parliamentary system, but rather one with a mission that was pursued with evangelical zeal. Its message, which was novel in the South African experience, was not clearly understood by the electorate nor was it fully understood by black political formations.<sup>13</sup> The NDM did, however, display a strong commitment to its democratic goals, which in time, were well-received by elements of the Mass Democratic Movement and earned it credibility in non-system political formations. The real dilemma facing the NDM a year after its formation was between pursuing its beliefs and strategies outside of Parliament or campaigning for re-election on an identifiable ticket against those of the PFP and the IP.

### The Independent Party

The Independent Party's Deed of Foundation was signed at the Somerset West Town Hall on 17 March 1988. In sharp contrast to the abstract, higher level political praxis enshrined within the NDM, the IP developed an identity and clarity of purpose unmatched by any previous moderate or liberal party. Its avowed character was one of a "non-racial party of realists and pragmatists".<sup>14</sup>

The IP does not deal in empty political rhetoric or unattainable Utopian dreams. We believe in facing South Africans with the facts, however uncomfortable these may be, and presenting them with viable political programmes to deal with the problems challenges and opportunities which these facts reveal.<sup>15</sup>

The constitution of the Independent Party affirmed:

The objective of the party shall be the bringing about of a process of genuine and open-ended negotiation leading to a new South African constitution that:

- Provides for political participation by all South Africans at all levels of government.

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13 . Personal interview with Wynand Malan, 20 July 1993.

14 . The Independent Party, Background to the Party's objective, principles and policies, August 1988, p.1.

15 . Independent Party, p.1.

- Enjoys the support of the majority of South Africans of all major background groups.
- By implication addresses the fears of white South Africans in general and the Afrikaner background group in particular, about a post-apartheid society and their role in such a society.
- By implication meets the aspirations of all other major background groups.<sup>16</sup>

The IP affirmed three clear and cardinal principles which served to anchor all its policies and to which its national leadership could refer to on any given question.<sup>17</sup> These were: Non-racial, democratic, free-market.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of its free-market orientation, it located itself firmly within the Thatcherist neo-conservative school and adopted a minimalist position *vis-a-vis* the role of the state. It espoused a policy of maximum devolution of power in a federal system, and indeed advocated a cantonal form of federalism for South Africa, that was influenced by the prescriptions of Leon Louw and Frances Kendall.<sup>19</sup> Within its own mission statement the IP embraced and incorporated that of Inkatha. It also identified itself strongly with the “incrementalist” typology of Bernstein and Godsell,<sup>20</sup> and sought out like-minded political allies such as Alan Hendrickse, Dr JN Reddy, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Enos Mabuza, Tom Boya and Nelson Ramodike.<sup>21</sup>

The Independent Party aimed its policies at a spectrum of voters whom market research had shown to be essentially conservative in attitude, but who desired a genuine end to apartheid and its replacement with a non-racial democracy. The research had indicated that this group of voters was prepared for transition but wanted this process to take place

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16 . Constitution of the Independent Party article 2, 31 August 1988.

17 . Personal interview with Mr Keith Gurney, 15 August 1993.

18 . The Independent Party, “Building the New South Africa”: A statement of intent, 1988, p.2

19 . See Leon Louw and Frances Kendall, South Africa: The Solution, Amasi, 1986.

20 . See, Ann Bernstein and Bobby Godsell, ‘The Incrementalists’, in Berger and Godsell (Eds), A Future South Africa - Visions, Strategies and Realities, Human and Rousseau, 1988, pp.164-198.

21 . IP planning document, 24 July 1988.

under the guidance of strong and essentially conservative leaders.<sup>22</sup> The party political affiliation of this nascent group was historically drawn from the left wing of the National Party and the right wing of the PFP. The emergence of the Independent Movement, and the IP in particular, had also provided beleaguered NRP supporters with a non-Nationalist alternative. Worrall had been asked to stand as an Independent in Natal in 1987 where a groundswell of support had translated into considerable monies being raised for a campaign.<sup>23</sup> Worrall had also strongly supported the KwaZulu-Natal Indaba proposals as had the New Republic Party. Consequently, in March 1988 the Independent Party officially inherited the rump of the New Republic Party at the time of its demise.<sup>24</sup>

#### IP objectives, principles and strategies:

Prior to its launch IP strategists formulated a two-year 'business' plan for the party which was designed to map its political development, objects, aims and strategies in the short- to medium-term. The objective of the overall plan was to "build a new South Africa that is non-racial, democratic and free-market". The strategies to be employed for achieving these objectives were to be two-fold. Firstly, in terms of "power politics" the party would seek the acquisition of Parliamentary power. It would also seek power at the local government level in the October 1988 elections. The second strategy to the overall objective was the engagement of extra-Parliamentary formations, including, *inter alia* support for the Indaba initiatives and similar regional negotiations, and including "community action".<sup>25</sup>

In terms of its two-year short-term objective, the IP sought to acquire the balance of power in the House of Assembly. It targeted a minimum of 22 NP seats and a maximum of 42, whilst aiming to capture up to 11 PFP-winnable seats.

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22 . Unpublished document IP archives "Proposed political product for the Independent Movement", 1988.

23 . Personal interview with Dr Denis Worrall MP, 9 July 1993.

24 . Argus, 28 March 1988.

25 . IP archives The Independent Party Confidential two-year 'business' plan for the Independent Party: April 1988-April 1990., May 1988, p.1.

The strategy was based on four assumptions: Firstly, that the Independent candidates had won between 24% and 30% of the NP vote in the 1987 election in the constituencies in which they stood and would hold this support.<sup>26</sup> The second assumption made was that the PFP would, in turn, hold all its seats. The third assumption was that the Conservative Party would grow in support by 10%. The fourth, was that the white moderate liberal vote would not be split. Leading from these assumptions maximum and minimum scenarios were projected for the following general election:

Minimum scenario		Maximum scenario	
NP	82	NP	40
CP	43	CP	65
IP	22	IP	42
PFP	19	PFP	19

IP Two-Year 'Business Plan', 12 May 1988, p.2.

Given these optimistic projections IP strategists felt confident of drawing sufficient support to warrant the launch of an Independent Party that could 'go it alone' in the competition for political power. Despite its perceived potential at its launch, however, the IP's single greatest asset was Worrall in whom the party enjoyed the best political communicator in white South African politics. Indeed, former NRP candidate in Amanzimtoti Duncan McGregor noted at the time of the amalgamation talks, "What Denis Worrall says, sells".<sup>27</sup> Worrall was the second most popular political leader in Natal with a 52% rating after Buthelezi's 73%, which was far higher than that of the PFP's Ray Swart at 27%. In terms of national support, in August 1987 the IM enjoyed 11,9% support compared to the 10,4% of the PFP.<sup>28</sup> However, the IP had not developed a strong membership or organisational infrastructure, and as at July 1988 (before the IP

26 . Wynand Malan claimed to have won some 37% of the former NP vote in Randburg in 1987. Figures supplied by Mr Wynand Malan during a personal interview, 20 July 1993.

27 . Meeting notes 25 March 1988, IP archives.

28 . IP archives, "The Party with the Potential", 17 March 1988.

Congress), its membership stood at: Natal 403, Western Cape 168, Eastern Cape 50, Border 55, Helderberg, 376 and Transvaal 195.<sup>29</sup>

#### The balance sheet of the liberal opposition

In terms of white political dynamics the three disparate elements displayed a spectrum of strengths which required harnessing, and weaknesses that demanded amelioration.

The Progressive Federal Party's strengths *vis-a-vis* the other two formations lay in its 16-seat Parliamentary representation, supported by a well-established national party infrastructure which had fought elections on a national basis and enjoyed exclusive access to a number of major financial donors. Its established track record and policies had drawn to it a hard core of faithful support unlikely to be persuaded to vote for the National Party or either of the other two formations in the foreseeable future. Its beliefs, principles and policies had been honed over a period of 30 years and had been widely publicised and understood as broadly liberal democratic. The party had tapped into a system of international support via the Liberal International and by its contacts established through years of international lobbying and shadow diplomacy. Through her pioneering human rights work Helen Suzman had become, after Nelson Mandela, South Africa's best known politician internationally, which had facilitated a considerable degree of sympathy for the PFP world-wide. The party, despite its beleaguered position, clearly remained the main repository for the voting sentiments of white reformist English-speaking South Africans.

On the debit side of the political balance sheet, the PFP had extremely limited appeal to white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, even under the leadership of van Zyl Slabbert. Thus its growth potential was limited. The party was perceived by the majority of white voters as a permanent opposition and was not viewed as a viable alternative government that could be trusted with the transition to a new South Africa. The party's 'soft on security' and 'soft on the ANC' image further limited its growth potential when seen against white attitudes to the Dakar initiative - 63,3% disapproved of it and only 19,6%

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29 . IP national planning document, 25 July 1988.

approved.<sup>30</sup> It was, from 1986, a party lacking in charismatic leadership which, with the increasing utility of television in national politicking, was a major weakness. Finally, and most damning of all, the PFP was perceived to be a party, like the NRP in the 1970's and 1980's, 'on the way out' after five years of almost uninterrupted decline.

### National Democratic Movement

The strengths of the NDM lay in the fact that they had inherited two MPs and a President's Councillor which, together with Malan, gave it a 'caucus' in Parliament. Its leadership was also predominantly young and Afrikaans-speaking. The movement held an appeal for the young professional Afrikaans middle-class, but it had also developed useful contacts and credentials with elements of the MDM. The NDM was a new 'product' in the political marketplace, and assuming it could effectively convey its message, held a degree of potential for national growth.

However, as a result of its interactive work and 'Dakar' links it was also subject to the 'soft on the ANC' and 'soft on security' epithets. Like the PFP, its leadership was not perceived as a viable government that could conduct hard-nosed bargaining with the ANC in the democratic transition-phase. 'Process politics' was not understood by the majority of the white electorate nor did it address the immediate key issue of (white) power politics. A further weakness for the NDM and a contributory factor to its enigmatic status was that it lacked access to newspapers and the mass media. Finally, the political 'bottom line' was that it had no major source of funds.

### Independent Party

The IP's single greatest asset in terms of the vagaries of white politics was its charismatic ex-NP establishment leader Denis Worrall. Besides his appeal to a broad band of English and Afrikaner political sentiment, Worrall also commanded the attention and respect of a number of western international leaders. In his speeches Worrall had developed a smooth and persuasive delivery, which had been used to great effect via the medium of television. His ambassadorial skills had earned him the reputation of being a hard-nosed

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30 . *Mark-en-Menings* survey of August 1987, as reported in Rapport of 18 October 1987.

politician which had translated into a perception of trustworthiness amongst many whites. This was a potential asset in any future democratic negotiations. The IP occupied a political position to the left of the NP and right of the PFP that had the potential to attract support from the 24% of National Party supporters seeking an immediate end to apartheid and genuine power-sharing, as evidenced in the Helderberg campaign. That the IP had the potential to mine a rich seam of white opinion was evidenced by the political overtures made to the IP by both the NRP and the PFP. IP relations with Inkatha, elements of Solidarity and the Labour Party, were such that it had also demonstrated that it had credibility with system black formations.

The IP exhibited profound weaknesses, however. It was a party without Parliamentary representation and lacked leadership depth. Despite its avowed appeal to enlightened Nationalists it was a largely English party with little trans-ethnic representation as it had been robbed of this when splitting with the NDM. The IP had no major source of funding which, in turn, hampered its marketing and the establishment of a national infrastructure. By virtue of its narrow donor base it had no full-time executive, nor any paid party organisers. The party had never fought a national campaign and was clearly in no financial position to do so. Unlike the PFP, the IP lacked a reservoir of acceptable candidates to conduct a national campaign.

In terms of overall white support, Worrall's Independent Party had drawn more ambivalent support away from the PFP, as well as disenchanted and "floating" voter support from the National Party.

Malan's National Democratic Movement enjoyed some 4% of white national support, largely amongst the Afrikaans middle- and professional- classes, and some of it at the expense of the left-wing of the PFP. To a lesser degree it drew support from the small number of *verligte* Afrikaners who were sufficiently disillusioned with the National Party that they were prepared to break with the establishment. This number was far short of the some 20% to 30% of Afrikaners of which the so-called "Fourth Force" spoke. Thus an ambivalent group of white voters had been drawn into the IP and NDM fold. Whilst they were clear on the need for racial declassification and racial desegregation in principle,

some 40% of both parties' support base favoured the government position on residential areas and schools.

Whilst PFP support had, after the erosion from left and right during the 1980's, crystallised into a hard core of committed party liberals, the Progressives demonstrated zero growth potential. The danger also existed that under election conditions even hard core PFP support *could* be persuaded, cajoled or frightened into voting against the burgeoning right-wing CP or for an IP/NDM candidate, depending on the personal, local and regional peculiarities of the constituency.

### Dangers of fratricide

As formations of a fluid and mercurial political centre, the PFP, IP, and NDM were acutely aware that as separate political entities, the calling of an early general election would have resulted in a fratricidal zero-sum political game which would have left the PFP further weakened, but almost certainly would have erased the IP and the NDM from the Parliamentary map. Questions of political expediency aside, many principled liberals realised that under such a scenario the cause of liberal democracy amongst the white electorate would have been set back years. There was also a degree of irritation at what appeared to be the needless bickering among the opposition parties. There thus developed a public imperative towards unity. This was underscored at the time by Van Zyl Slabbert who commented, "It has to be done. This could be the last chance".<sup>31</sup> Before unity, however, the three opposition parties faced a set of unique challenges.

### Issues dividing the three

Despite the powerful public imperative to unite, a number of key issues divided the three; some of them at the level of policy and strategy, others at the level of personal animosity and political perception and identity. In terms of policy, the areas of disagreement hinged on questions of economics, security, and relations with extra-Parliamentary groups and, in particular, contact with the African National Congress.

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31 . Financial Mail, 25 November 1988.

### Economic policy

The IP had located itself at the purist end of the free-market spectrum and a clear pro-business orientation pervaded IP policy and thinking. This strong free-marketeterism was derived not only of reason and conviction, but also by virtue of the very close ties Worrall had cultivated domestically and internationally as ambassador in London and during his 1987 Helderberg campaign.

PFP policy differed from that of the IP in its emphasis on the need for economic and social justice, leading it to propound a “mixed economy” policy. Whilst the party remained firmly wedded to the prescripts of a market-driven economy and the fundamental requirement of economic growth, in recognition of both its founding principles and the gross inequities of the South Africa social order, the PFP also acknowledged the need for economic and social justice. Thus it identified the important role the state had to play in terms of economic regulation and the provision of a social welfare net.<sup>32</sup> A further point of conflict was that as the perceived party of big business, the PFP was criticised by a number of Worrall’s financial backers as being implicitly supportive of economic monopolies within the country. The PFP had also been the subject of close scrutiny and criticism from the mouthpiece of English business, the *Financial Mail*, which railed against De Beer for his perceived economic limpness. Nevertheless, both the IP and the PFP were clear in their commitment to a market economy, and despite the social democratic sympathies of PFP economic affairs spokesperson, Harry Schwarz, De Beer’s economic viewpoint remained firmly O’Dowdian in outlook. Notably, throughout the negotiation process, the clearest agreement was that between the IP and the Southern Transvaal PFP on the desirability of a strong free-market policy for the new party.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to both the otehr two formations, the NDM propounded a form of social democracy informed not only by a reasoned criticism of the operation of capitalism in

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32 . ‘Economic Democracy - The PFP’s Charter for Social and Economic Progress in South Africa’, PFP, 1986.

33 . Personal interviews with Lester Fuchs MP, Tony Leon MP, Douglas Gibson MP, Brian Goodall MP.

South Africa, and its role in the buttressing of apartheid, but also as a legacy of Afrikaner corporatism and the clear benefits the form of ethnic social democracy had played in the upliftment of Afrikaners from the 1930's. By extension the NDM believed that a form of social democracy would be the most appropriate economic mix in achieving the goals of post-apartheid development and reconstruction.<sup>34</sup>

### Personality

At the level of personality the divisions were perhaps deepest. Whereas rational discussion may lead to policy adjustment, personal grudges and resentments tend to linger and play an important role in the often egotistical positions adopted by politicians. Such was the case *in extremis* during the discussions towards unity of the three opposition formations.

Those with a long pedigree in the PFP held a belief that they had suffered long and occasionally hard for their principles, whilst both the leadership and prominent membership of the IP and the NDM had either formulated NP policy, or had been elected to power on the basis of their furtherance of the aims of NP policy. As such, the PFP "old guard" simply did not trust the ex-Nationalists in both the IP and the NDM. The cardinal role Worrall had played in the design of the tricameral constitution, which had caused the PFP structural damage during and after the 1983 referendum, together with his stinging comments regarding the irrelevance of the PFP in the 1987 campaign left many in the party unable and unwilling to accept, let alone embrace the IP leader. Those with longer memories recalled the particularly aggressive campaign conducted against the Progressives by Worrall in 1977 when winning the Gardens seat. The antipathy and outright suspicion with which many PFP stalwarts viewed Worrall was further aggravated by the former ambassador's perceived acute political opportunism as amongst other things it had been widely rumoured that Worrall had originally sought a safe NP seat in the 1987 election and a portfolio in the cabinet.<sup>35</sup>

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34 . Personal interview with Wynand Malan, 20 July 1993.

35 . In January 1987 Worrall did discuss a seat with NP Cape leader Chris Heunis, but had no intention of standing for the National Party and the matter was never pursued by either party. Personal interview with Dr Denis Worrall MP, 9 July 1993.

In terms of personal distrust Wynand Malan's continued membership of the *Afrikaner Broederbond* also gave rise to both suspicions and reasoned critique from within the PFP.<sup>36</sup>

A further complication was the bitterness felt towards Peter Gastrow, Pierre Cronjé, and Pieter Schoeman following their sojourn to Dakar and subsequent resignation from the PFP to join the NDM. Relations were particularly tense between Gastrow and the PFP, as in his capacity as Party Chairman, he had been part of the confidential strategy group of the party after the 1987 set-back whilst, at the same time, planning the formation of the NDM with Malan. PFP Defence spokesperson, Harry Schwarz had also been incensed at Gastrow's handling of his resignation in that Gastrow had been privy to confidential SADF security briefings on the very morning of his resignation.<sup>37</sup>

The *bittereinders* of the PFP were not alone, however.

In June 1988 IP Chairman David Gant had expressed his misgivings regarding an amalgamation as opposed to an electoral alliance with the PFP. The IP Chairman reasoned:

In order to get the negotiation process going the Independent Party needs power... This requires Parliamentary power which evolves as a result of major voter support at the polls. In the South African context this means attracting traditional Nationalist and Conservative Party voters and combining their votes with as many as possible of the votes currently supporting minority parties to the left of the government. ...it is from that reservoir that the Independent Party must seek support in order for it to get into power. The question is - can that reservoir be tapped through the process of establishing an opposition through the unification of the PFP, the IP and the NDM? I believe the answer is "no".

The perception of opposition politics to the left of the Government in South Africa (even amongst the opposition's own voters) is one of failure, inconsistency and political "has-beenism". There are good and bad reasons for this perception, but it is the perception and perception is more

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36 . Personal interview with Rupert Lorimer MP, 22 June 1993.

37 . Personal interview with David Dalling MP, 8 June 1993.

important than reality. Perhaps the perceptions of the PFP have been aggravated by:- Van Zyl Slabbert's actions, the Dakar mission, Cronje's black power salute, recycled leadership, Gastrow/Cronje's defections, unsuccessful PFP/NRP alliance, English-speaking orientation, Houghton, Yeoville, Sea Point image, Anglo American-perceived relationship and other factors. The NRP is a total negative because it failed and disbanded. It is doubtful whether the NDM will ever be a pivotal point around which the Nationalist and Conservative Party voters will revolve and its leadership style, recent associations with Van Zyl Slabbert and the ANC lacklustre Congress and lack of organisation does not seem to make it a serious contender for political power in the short term. The polls' indication of no growth of that party proves the point.

We have, therefore, to create a NEW PERCEPTION of opposition politics (even if many of the standards and values remain) and in the main that change of perception must be generated amongst dissatisfied traditional Nationalist or even Conservative Party supporters. For them to break, they must be able to break towards something which is not tainted - something which is not associated with a political "no-no" in their minds, something that is not personalised around Helen Suzman (as the PFP is) and, quite frankly, for which they don't need too much moral courage because they are certainly aware of the disdain of their own society of leftist opposition politics.

The unification of white opposition politics, therefore, if it is its intention to attract sufficient voters to overthrow the government, cannot be PFP-driven, PFP-led or be so structured as to provide for the extended lifetime of that party. It has to stem from something new. It will have to be led by new faces, be supported by differently presented policies and appeal through new initiatives. It is going to have to have an image of freshness.

Regrettably, this requires either the demise of the PFP *a la* the NRP and the low-key absorption of it by the IP (with the exclusion of former PFP high profile leaders from the IP executive) or preferably, in my opinion, major defections from the PFP to the IP, leaving only a few loyal hard-line PFP MP's to continue to carry the PFP flag. This would be great as it would emphasise the non-association of the new "unified" opposition (the IP) with the PFP.

In summary, I don't believe opposition "unification" is wise if it means a simple merger or association between the two parties because the final concoction will still have all the negatives attached to it and will not attract the targeted Nationalist voters. Let us abandon the negatives (and I repeat that I am aware that some of the negatives are present because of the wrong reasons) and let us simply continue with our new party that invites

moderate voters to the left of, right of, and within, the Nationalist Party to join together under a new banner.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the mutual hostility of the so-called “true blue” liberals and the purists within the IP there existed a more flexible, pragmatic and accommodationist majority within the PFP (and indeed keenest to get into or get back into Parliament) which had come to Parliament after the 1977 and 1981 elections, which was willing to compromise in terms of the strategy, name and image of the party. Although no less liberal than the founders of the party, this group did not carry as many battle scars as their political elders. Largely without access to the inner sanctum of the party, the pragmatists could nevertheless still hold numerical sway on matters of importance within caucus.<sup>39</sup> By definition their constituencies were also more marginal than those held by the “true blues” (who had won their seats even in the days of Verwoerd and Vorster) and were therefore keener to “do a deal” with Worrall in particular.

In contrast to the territoriality of some in the liberal camp, the pragmatists emphasised the political significance of former NP adversaries crossing sides or converted to the cause for which they had fought over decades. The pragmatists acknowledged the role Worrall had played as ambassador to the Court of St James, and saw in him a significant potential asset as a politician who had held a high profile within the National Party and was a strong political operator.

It is hard to demonstrate, but probable, that many PFP supporters also held grudging respect for the charismatic power and confidence of leading Nationalists, both of which qualities were sorely missing within the PFP, particularly after the resignation of Van Zyl Slabbert. Worrall, as a powerful orator, and Malan who spoke with Afrikaner earnestness, possessed an image and appeal the PFP was simply unable to generate internally. Thus despite the existence of subterranean antipathy towards the other two formations, a majority within the PFP caucus saw clear merit in unity. As a party of

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38 . David Gant, internal memo to Independent Party Executive, June 1988.

39 . Personal interview with Roger Burrows MP, 14 June 1993.

avowed pragmatists, the IP also had a preponderance of leadership ready to do the right deal.

A further sticking point dividing the formations was their relationship to, and contact with, extra-Parliamentary formations and the ANC. The table below indicates the range of views held by the supporters of all the major white political players on the question of discussions with the ANC.

	CP	NP	IP	NDM	PFP	Total
Intensified action against ANC						
- Important	93	93	79	56	52	85
- Unimportant	2	-	7	27	29	
Negotiations with the ANC						
- Important	16	23	57	87	75	34
- Unimportant	65	54	17	2	9	44

Adopted from Giliomee and Schlemmer, From Apartheid to Nation-Building, Oxford, 1989, p.196.

Both the IP and elements of the PFP were acutely sensitive to the timing and publicity given to discussions with the extra-Parliamentary movement and the ANC. Within both movements there was unanimous hostility to the ANC's socialist affiliations, its alliance with the SACP and the armed struggle. A position paper by former PFP Southern Transvaal Regional Chairman Brian Goodall highlights the point:

The ANC is a multi-faceted organisation. It consists of those who are ideologically committed to violent change. All we can negotiate with them is the terms on which we would surrender. Our objective should be to destroy them. It (also) consists of those who resorted to violence because they felt there was no other alternative. We should try to win these people over to the (PFP) viewpoint...<sup>40</sup>

40 . Brian Goodall, 'Countering the revolutionary threat'. Undated position paper post-1987 election.

Political conviction aside, the IP had made it the central focus of their political programme that any position at variance with the party's achievement of a hung Parliament in the House of Assembly was dysfunctional and therefore to be avoided. Thus, given the prevailing the previously discussed white political sentiment during the successive states of emergency, the IP sought to distance itself from contact with both the ANC and the MDM.<sup>41</sup>

In contrast to the majority view within the PFP and the IP the NDM had made it a cardinal principle to talk to all formations inside and outside of the formal political structures and this included most importantly the ANC and the MDM. In fact, discussions with extremes of political opinion in South Africa was a central plank of the NDM's *raison d'être*.

Despite these deep cleavages, by late 1988 a critical dynamic threshold had been reached, which served to focus the collective attention of the IP and the NDM on the need for political condominium.

Opposition inter-party talks towards amalgamation were given an added sense of urgency by widespread speculation that the 1989 election was to be held as early as March and that the National Party intended catching the divided opposition "off guard". The more strategically-minded amongst the three formations, and largely those members of the embryonic so-called fourth force, but including Worrall, reasoned that disaffected Nationalists were unlikely to leave the National Party whilst the liberal opposition was weak and divided. If nothing else, Nationalists had experienced and understood the realities of Parliamentary power, and expected focus and discipline from a political party. In their disparate form none of the three opposition parties offered a comfortable home to disaffected Nationalists, and particularly not to those who had held high governmental office. Thus it was a singularly unattractive option for a Nationalist MP to have left the party before opposition unity had been achieved, unless for reasons of acute personal dissatisfaction or a clash with Botha or if his/her seat was threatened by the opposition to

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41 . Personal interview with Keith Gurney, 15 August 1993.

the left. Conversely, the establishment of a united, pragmatic anti-apartheid party would serve as strong incentive for disillusioned National Party MPs.

The IP and NDM were also faced with the fact that, despite their strong showing in the polls, neither was equipped to translate this into a well-funded and successful national election campaign; the PFP, however, was. Despite its weakened position, the PFP retained a membership of some 40 000, a well-developed national infrastructure and was able to fight a national campaign. Both the IP and the NDM in particular had little membership and were effectively financially insolvent.

The brutal reality of the status of the two minor liberal formations was that, at that point in history, there existed neither the political and financial support, nor the public tolerance to accept disunity. As one leading industrialist put it:

Had they not got their act together they would not have received a cent. Big business would have just turned the tap off.<sup>42</sup>

As far as the PFP was concerned, De Beer had set as his mission the unification of the fragmented opposition, but his view reflected a range of rational and expedient considerations. It was clear that despite its structural weaknesses the IP had shaken the PFP's tree. This emerged in a 1988 memo to the PFP leadership from Natal Inland Regional Chair Mike Tarr:

(My) views seem to be shared to a greater or lesser degree by a wide range of people within the PFP and also by persons in other political parties, business and industry ... The PFP should, as matter of urgency enter into an agreement with other parties in the House of Assembly ... that provides for... the dissolution of all Parties involved and amalgamation into one party. There already is a strong movement towards the establishment of such an agreement ... and the likelihood is that it will take place with or without the PFP. Speaking from my position as Chairman of the Natal

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42 . Personal interview with Dr Louis Luyt, 22 July 1993. It should be noted, however, that in an interview with Bobby Godsell of Anglo American Corporation held on 19 July 1993 he argued that it was not AAC policy to interfere in the internal operations of political parties and, further, that AAC had not placed financial pressure on the PFP to amalgamate with the IP and the NDM.

Inland Region, I am extremely pessimistic of our chances in this Region should we go it alone. I am aware of similar feelings in other Regions ... (The Indaba) is keen that some political force come into being in Natal that can roll the NP back and their research leads them to believe that the PFP cannot do this.<sup>43</sup>

Added to the PFP's defensive and expedient motivation was a more pro-active and co-optive strategy. An internal PFP memo explains that in the reconstruction of the fragmented opposition, the PFP could:

1. Sell the value of Worrall to the NDM because of his demonstrated ability to win votes. The only provisos would have to be that he does so in a way which does not alienate blacks and that he accepts that what it is about is indicating to blacks that whites are prepared to negotiate.
2. Sell the NDM to both Worrall and the PFP because, if the NDM is left out then there is a real danger that they would be identified by the ANC, for example as the group representing truly liberated whites. It would give the ANC a foothold in legitimate white politics.<sup>44</sup>

Thus reluctantly and despite their acute personal and lesser ideological and strategic differences, the three formations were compelled to focus on the potential synergy of an amalgamation.<sup>45</sup> The PFP needed a new image, new political packaging and new blood. The IP and NDM needed funding and a national party infrastructure, the potential symbiosis could not have been clearer. Reduced to its Newtonian essence, the forces impelling the three parties together simply grew stronger than the centripetal forces keeping them apart.

But despite the political, financial and public imperative to amalgamate, the catalyst required to initiate the process of unification was still missing. It arrived timeously in the form of fertiliser magnate and rugby administrator Dr Louis Luyt.

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43 . Mike Tarr MP, memo to PFP leadership, National Chairman, Members of Federal Council and MPs, 1988. Progressive Party archives, University of the Witwatersrand.

44 . Unsigned, undated memo to Robin Carlisle MP, Progressive Party archives, University of the Witwatersrand.

45 . David Welsh, South African Foundation Review, Number Four, April 1989, p.2.

### Dr Louis Luyt's intervention

Luyt's political odyssey symbolised the schisms wracking the Afrikaner middle class and elite in the late 1980's writ large. Until 1987, Luyt had been a major backer of the National Party and enjoyed close relations with a number of cabinet Ministers.<sup>46</sup> He had been a strong proponent of the tricameral system and had lent his name to an NP-sponsored "Yes" vote advertisement before the 1983 referendum.<sup>47</sup>

Like many *verligte* elements working within the National Party Luyt had come to realise that after PW Botha's 1985 "Rubicon" speech, reform had come to a grinding halt and that:

The National Party under PW Botha had lost its way. As for the reformers within the cabinet, I had tried with them for a long time, they were useless. The country was sliding away and as a businessman with considerable investments in this country I had nowhere else to go. I felt I had to make a stand.<sup>48</sup>

Luyt broke with the establishment before the May 1987 election and publicly stated his regret at having supported the NP in the referendum. Thereafter he had met the ANC together with South Africa Rugby Football Union President Dr Danie Craven in Harare. Upon his return Luyt was accused by Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok of giving credibility to the ANC. He had thereafter been humiliated by NP Transvaal leader FW de Klerk.<sup>49</sup> This had prompted Luyt to give a speech at the Rostrum at the Yard, a businessman's forum, in which he urged:

I think this country is ready for a new approach - we're ready to take sides. I want a unified opposition to them (the National Party) and I want a South Africa where I can live and be proud of.<sup>50</sup>

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46 . Personal interview with Dr Louis Luyt, 22 July 1993.

47 . Financial Mail, 18 November 1988.

48 . Personal interview with Dr Louis Luyt, 22 July 1993.

49 . Personal interview with Dr Louis Luyt, 22 July 1993.

50 . Cape Times, 17 November 1988.

### The Zoo Lake Meeting

These concerns led the former Citizen newspaper 'frontman' to organise an Indaba-type meeting between the three leaders of the left of centre opposition parties, as well as a small group of concerned Afrikaners, later to become known as the Fourth Force. As a personal commitment to the process, Luyt also declared that should the parties create a united opposition he would quit rugby and stand for Parliament.

The Zoo Lake meeting organised by Luyt was originally intended to be exploratory but took on a much larger life. That the three leaders attended the first meeting at all indicated that a form of electoral arrangement would be necessary for 1989, and this was in keeping with both the logic of the PFP's alliance politics and that of the new vision for a creative opposition of which Worrall had spoken in 1987. Before the meeting De Beer had also commented that the opposition could not go into the forthcoming election without "an arrangement at the very least".

Thus on 18 November 1988 the three parties met under the chairmanship of *ex-Rapport* editor Dr Willem de Klerk, together with some twenty delegates. The discussion was heated and often acrimonious and it became clear that the parties were not yet ready to yield the material compromises required in order to bring a new party into reality. This was not a question of dilution of principles, but rather agreement on fundamentals in order to proceed from a common starting point.

Frustrated at the internecine squabbling Luyt, at one point in the meeting, castigated the participants adding:

Julle's net soos 'n klomp kinders. You know why PW Botha rules this country? Because he's got opposition like you!<sup>51</sup>

Apart from cajoling the protagonists, Luyt had devised a well-orchestrated strategy to force progress which included calling the media to meet at his home in the expectation of

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51 . Personal interview with Dr Louis Luyt, 22 July 1993.

an important announcement on opposition unity.<sup>52</sup> After locking the negotiators in a room, and hours of straight talking, Luyt warned that not only was the media awaiting a positive outcome from the meeting, but so too was the country. Despite the rancour, during the course of the meeting it became clear that the parties shared more in common than that which divided them and they were thereby able to issue a joint statement at its conclusion recording that:

It was agreed that the three parties would endeavour urgently to bring about the formation of a new political party, which is felt to be essential. The objective of the new party will be to promote the broad principles of a non-racial, multi-party democratic order which is to be achieved through negotiation and agreement.<sup>53</sup>

Senior representatives from all three parties were given responsibility for the promotion of unity within each party. A committee comprising representatives of the three was to prepare a joint declaration of intent and a joint statement of principles and to determine strategies and structures. The committee was scheduled to meet on 14 December.

### Reserved optimism

Subsequent comments by leaders of the three parties were no more than guardedly optimistic, with Worrall warning that no IP principle would be sacrificed in forging the merger. Malan stated that he was “not totally optimistic as there was still a lot of work to be done”.<sup>54</sup> Stressing the need for a new approach to the creative opposition and one which included a broad non-racial opposition, both Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary, Malan told a public meeting in Durban that it would be pointless for the three parties to form another liberal opposition party if it left out of account structures and parties such as the UDF and Inkatha. He also said that parties in the Houses of Representatives and Delegates should be consulted. Malan acknowledged the importance of a “creative opposition” but believed it was equally important to establish a new political force which should be able to demonstrate the future of South Africa. The PFP took a more sanguine view of the developments, with its Federal Executive giving the

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52 . This pre-emptive tactic met with strong opposition from the NDM and the Fourth Force. IP meeting notes 18 November 1988.

53 . Minutes of the first Zoo Lake meeting 18 November 1988, IP archives.

54 . Sunday Tribune, 20 November 1988.

unification proposals effectively blanket approval and thanking those working towards the formation of a new party “along the lines and principles for which the PFP had always stood and fought”.<sup>55</sup>

#### The potential for alliances building

The important potential synergy in unity and the difficulties that lay ahead in reaching this state were demonstrated shortly after the preliminary talks when the three leaders first appeared together on a public platform at the IDASA *Strategies for Change* conference.<sup>56</sup> The invitation and acceptance by all three held the potential to herald the beginnings of a new approach to joint strategies between “system” and “struggle” politics.

At the conference former PFP leader and IDASA executive director Van Zyl Slabbert argued that it was time for a re-thinking of anti-apartheid strategies including that of participation in system structures. Significantly, Slabbert emphasised that his decision to quit Parliament in 1986 was a tactical one rather than one of principle, thereby appearing to hint at his possible re-entry into the Parliamentary sphere. The view was expressed within the conference that the time was propitious to rethink the more isolationist, boycottist and violent strategies of the left. Alliance politics and the politics of a broad united front demanded serious investigation. Such debate served as a harbinger of new opportunities for the new party to form strategic alliances with the extra-Parliamentary or struggle formations as well as other potential allies from within the tricameral system. No doubt these observations were also a legitimate effort by key individuals and formations within IDASA and the MDM, respectively, to influence the identity and orientation of the new party. This potential “system/struggle” linkage was highlighted by Van Zyl Slabbert who observed:

Those who govern are poor in vision and rich in strategy, and those who oppose are rich in vision and poor in strategy.<sup>57</sup>

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55 . *ibid.*

56 . See, Stephen Fourie (Ed), *Strategies for Change*, IDASA, 1989.

57 . Van Zyl Slabbert, ‘Opening Address’, in *Strategies for Change*, Stephen Fourie, (Ed), p.7.

Delegates to the IDASA conference extended an olive branch to the “system leaders” by voicing support for the idea of a united liberal opposition, but others still expressed grave misgivings about participation in Parliament.

The differences in strategy and potential for future conflict between Malan and Worrall were, however, also highlighted by the conference. The IP leader was accused of aiming his speech at “white South Africa” and was jeered for commending Chief Buthelezi for his non-violent political approach. In the same forum Worrall also rejected the Freedom Charter as a political blueprint, but acknowledged it as an important document which could provide the basis for political action. Worrall reasoned that whilst his approach may not have had the support of the majority of blacks, it could be justified on the grounds that it was aimed at the centre of de facto political power, namely that enshrined in the sovereign Parliament.<sup>58</sup>

The degree of political parallax hampering ideological and strategic harmony is highlighted when the above view of Worrall is contrasted with that of Malan who had recently attended a conference of South African academics and the ANC. After the conference, which was attended by SACP Secretary General Joe Slovo, Malan had argued that SACP was fully integrated within the ANC and that government attempts to divide socialists from nationalists within the ANC/SACP alliance were doomed to failure as they sought the same outcome, namely a democratic and socialist South Africa. The festering divisions between the NDM and IP were further highlighted by IP executive member Jannie Momberg’s insistence on the inclusion of Inkatha in a new creative opposition. The new party, he argued:

(M)ust be able to reach across the colour line and the Independent Party is therefore adamant that Chief Minister Buthelezi is a key player in the new policy. Chief Minister Buthelezi is the one Black leader who has widespread support and must be part of the new party. Any new party

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58 . Denis Worrall, ‘Strategy for a Particular Electorate’, in Strategies for Change, IDASA, 1989, pp.14-17.

must be also be able to attract those disenchanted Nationalists and those English-speaking voters who voted NP in the last election.<sup>59</sup>

As will be demonstrated later, these divisions were never resolved, but rather accommodated and subordinated for the sake of unity and the looming election.

#### The materialisation of the 'Fourth Force'

Whereas the disparate party political elements to the negotiations had difficulty finding one another ideologically, one of the important non-party elements that helped facilitate the process of negotiation was a loose grouping of Afrikaner intellectuals and businessmen who became known as the "Fourth Force". The organisational antecedents of this grouping can be traced to the fracturing of the National Party intelligentsia in 1986/87 which had found political expression in support of the Independent Movement. The Fourth Force elements had broken with the National Party and ruling establishment, but had continued to operate as a distinctively *Afrikaner* cabal. After the split within the Independent Movement leading elements of the Fourth Force had also been instrumental in the founding and strategising of the National Democratic Movement.

Without a firm political constituency this grouping was able to operate as facilitators and mediators both between the negotiating parties and between the parties and the estimated 22% of disillusioned National Party-supporting Afrikaners who had been shown to be interested in the formation of a new opposition. The leadership corps of this group comprised of Dr Willem de Klerk, Professor Sampie Terreblanche, Professor Marinus Wiechers, Dr Louis Luyt and Advocate Dawid de Villiers. The putative party was given a further boost by the Fourth Force in December 1988 when an unaligned group of influential Stellenbosch academics and professionals threw its weight behind efforts to form the new party to the left of the NP. Academics from the Transvaal later also joined the movement.

Leader of the Fourth Force in the Cape, and senior *Afrikaner Broederbond* member Professor Sampie Terreblanche gave significant publicity to the political thrust of the

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59 . Citizen, 24 November 1988.

group and in so doing became a vitriolic critic of the National Party. As an Afrikaner academic formerly deeply entrenched within the establishment, his alignment with the Democratic Party and his stinging critique of government corruption and profligacy struck a particularly resonant chord.<sup>60</sup> Terreblanche noted that the Nationalist press had reacted to the moves to form a new party with “hysterical nervousness” as they recognised that such a party would expose the racism of the NP and become a real threat to its power, particularly if it could force a hung Parliament.

Dr Willem “Wimpie” de Klerk, brother of Transvaal National Party leader and President-in-waiting FW de Klerk, commanded respect from within powerful sections of Afrikanerdom, including the *Afrikaner Broederbond* of which he was a senior member, as well as from the three leaders. At key strategic moments De Klerk’s interventions oiled the process of negotiation and served to publicise the ideals enshrined in the party-in-waiting. De Klerk also applied sustained constructive pressure on the disparate forces to keep the negotiation process on track.<sup>61</sup> After the initial meeting he warned that there was:

(N)o turning back for the three; should the process falter this will leave the two smaller parties in tatters and the PFP in its impasse.<sup>62</sup>

De Klerk stressed the importance of the construction of a party totally distinct from any of the previous entities and one that would be greater than the aggregation of its parts. The party would aim to capture a secure power base from which to challenge the government. De Klerk also stressed that the estimated 22% disaffected NP voters could support the new party if they saw it making progress in efforts to negotiate with extra-Parliamentary forces.<sup>63</sup>

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60 . See, SJ Terreblanche, *Corruption and the National Party*, Paper read at an IDASA lecture at the University of Cape Town, 12 April 1989.

61 . Personal interview with Professor Willem de Klerk, 20 July 1993.

62 . *Sunday Star*, 27 November 1988.

63 . *Rapport*, 18 December 1988.

Whilst De Klerk made important strategic interventions in the facilitation and the marketing of the new formation, he appeared less cognisant of the conceptual and practical contradictions his own prescriptions held for the new party. De Klerk argued that the greatest marketing potential for the new party lay in the left wing of the National Party. At least 15% of the NP voters could have realistically been recruited, he argued, but to get them involved required compromise on questions of group protection. These drifters or “*twyfelaars*”<sup>64</sup> had abandoned the concept of race as the basis of any future political dispensation, but remained wary of the concept of universal adult suffrage.<sup>65</sup> At the same time he acknowledged that:

The new party will have to succeed in mustering black and brown support in a significant way. The people of the system and the people of the struggle will have to be involved ... The party will be able to recruit white support strongly if it can be seen and heard that the other population groups associate themselves within the new party to a greater or lesser extent.<sup>66</sup>

These two imperatives, as outlined by De Klerk, capture the central challenge for the new party. In a nutshell, this was the bridging of a political chasm between the construction of a party that could be simultaneously attractive to a broader white constituency while generating credibility with the extra-Parliamentary movement. The two demands were practically and politically contradictory and indeed mutually exclusive. This was a challenge which the future would show the Democratic Party was unable to meet.

### Brinkmanship

Despite all the positive support and indeed pressure impelling the parties towards a merger it was clear that, apart from the problems of personality, the three stemmed from and were addressing different constituencies, and each was intent on cutting the best possible deal for its own particular core constituency. Divisions between the IP and the NDM were constantly strained. Positions hardened during negotiations around the IP and

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64 . Professor Nina Overton, The New Afrikaner, South African Marketing Research Association, July 1989.

65 . In reality De Klerk was describing his own dilemma at the time. Personal interview with Professor Willem de Klerk, 20 July 1993.

66 . Sunday Star, 27 November 1988.

the NDM's interpretation of the place of extra-Parliamentary/Parliamentary commitment and engagement. The IP view was spelled out by executive member Jannie Momberg when, speaking on the East Rand in December 1988, he argued:

Any new party must regard the establishment of a strong presence in Parliament and in municipal councils as a priority. We believe this is necessary with a view to influence the balance of power, to provide a catalyst for fundamental change ... and to encourage and support the left wing factions within the National Party.<sup>67</sup>

Another IP executive member pointedly added:

Some parties have stronger feelings about extra-Parliamentary contact. We believe Parliament is the place where things are done.<sup>68</sup>

Momberg created further friction between the IP and the NDM at an IP meeting at Uvongo on the Natal South Coast, when repeating his warning that the IP would make it a condition of the merger that Buthelezi should be part of the new party. This declaration also broke an agreement between the leaders not to mention matters of policy or procedure to do with the new formation other than the sanctioned press release at the end of the meeting.

For Malan, however, the main obstacle to political progress in South Africa was the absence of an agreed framework for conducting politics, as political debate had been reduced to the destructive sterility of 'system' versus 'struggle' and vice versa. Talks aimed at unity of the left Parliamentary forces, he believed, should be aimed not merely at the creation of a new party but a new style of conducting politics in which the extra-Parliamentary forces are brought in to decision-making via consultation:

We will be holding discussions outside Parliament. We don't believe we can take decisions without consulting those organisations.<sup>69</sup>

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67 . Financial Mail, 9 December 1988.

68 . *ibid.*

69 . Sunday Tribune, 27 November 1988.

These tensions led to a series of sharp exchanges among the negotiators through the pages of the press, and ultimately to progressive waves of damaging brinkmanship. Shortly after the November meeting, for example, Worrall informed a group of business leaders that if the new party was not formed by 14 December, the IP would “go it alone” and prepare for the forthcoming general election. Playing his ace card Worrall reminded his audience that despite the fact that the party was the youngest of the three potential allies it had shown “extraordinary growth” and enjoyed the second largest support in both Natal and the Cape behind the NP.<sup>70</sup>

#### Leadership of the new party

At this time the leadership question of the new party also took on a larger than life quality. White South African politics had historically been characterised by authoritarian Afrikaner leadership. The PFP itself had twice in its history been led by an Afrikaans-speaker. Language requirements aside, any leader of the new party would also need to be possessed of the appropriate credentials to overcome the doubts of the white electorate about perceived “soft” liberal positions on white security. In terms of the principles and guidelines set out for itself by the new party’s leadership, the leader would need to appeal both to disaffected National Party supporters (the so-called 22%) whilst engaging extra-Parliamentary leadership of the Mass Democratic Movement. Accordingly, a leader with a “broad South Africanism” was called for. The differing principles and strategies of the leadership of the three formative parties made the search for such a leader an impossible task, however. The political figure closest to this brief was Van Zyl Slabbert. As an urbane, confident, Afrikaner he was more than a match for National Party front-benchers and had developed extensive and valuable credentials and contacts with the UDF and the ANC. Nevertheless, Slabbert was precluded as a choice for leader by both his own reservations about rejoining a Parliamentary political party and his unacceptability to many within the PFP.

The leadership issue was more than just a question of personality and power, however. Negotiators and their allies were beset by a clear dilemma, the choice of leader would

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70 . Die Burger, 24 November 1988.

cast the mould for the identity and policy thrust of the party and no single leader was acceptable to the other two, nor to the disparate constituencies and formations to which they respectively made an appeal. This paradox was demonstrated by a series of polls amongst white voters which indicated that Worrall enjoyed more support amongst National Party supporters than the other two leaders. Worrall had also shown up well in Indaba and Argus polls in 1988. A survey of National Party supporters by *Mark en Menings Opnames* also indicated that the IP had made some inroads amongst National Party supporters. Of a representative sample, 33% said that they would vote for another party if the NP did not put up a candidate in their constituency. Of these 4% would have voted for the PFP, 5% for the NDM, 8% for the CP and 16% for the IP.<sup>71</sup> The survey of NP voters indicated that support for Worrall to be elected leader of the new party stood at 32%, Malan 20%, Slabbert 13%, and De Beer a mere 3%. The results clearly indicated that were the new party to have based its policy and appeal on expanding its support base amongst disaffected NP supporters, this would best be achieved under a Worrall leadership. A similar argument would apply to re-attracting the floating English-speaking vote that abandoned the PFP in the 1987 election on the security question. Logically, these were the only areas in which the new formation could grow in relation to its existing power bases, but a white power orientation was contradictory to the NDM insistence that the identity and orientation of the party should include close consultation and co-operation with the extra-Parliamentary movement.

### The challenge to the PFP

The disputes between the IP and the NDM reached an intensity which threatened to vaporise any common ground the two parties may have shared, and it was at this critical juncture that the unification process took a dramatic turn. At the conclusion of a particularly heated meeting in Cape Town, Chairman of the negotiating committee Colin Eglin served the IP and NDM factions with an ultimatum:

My role was not to have the values for which I had fought destroyed. So I felt we'd do any deal so long as these values were protected. I said, "These are certain bottom lines which are not negotiable". And they said they could live with these bottom lines. I said, "Then if you can live with those

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71 . Sunday Tribune, 11 December 1988.

bottom lines, then there's a deal". But I then said, "What I can't live with is Denis and Wynand, because they hate each other!"<sup>72</sup>

At this point it is important to note that, despite the institutional strength of the PFP *vis-a-vis* the other two formations, the direction and outcome of negotiations took a dramatic turn against the PFP due to the tactical skill of the respective IP and NDM negotiators. After Eglin's ultimatum, IP and NDM negotiators held a critical meeting at which, as the two minor parties, they collectively strategised to bury their respective differences, unite against a "common foe", and present the PFP with an audacious proposal that Malan and Worrall should jointly lead the new party with De Beer as its first chairman. Having "found each other" and united in a common front, IP Chairman David Gant faxed a message to PFP leader Zach de Beer containing *inter alia* the following message:

We affirm our commitment to creating a unified political party from within the creative opposition capable of providing a credible alternative to the NP and its government...

We recognise that the new party must be able to make progress in developing relations with black Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary groupings, in order to enhance the achievement of a power base in Parliament. With respect to extra-Parliamentary activity we believe we have successfully reached a compromise with the NDM in so far as the conduct, nature, style and public perception of that activity is concerned. The IP confirms that this is an area of weakness within the IP and that the NDM has a particular strength in this area which is crucial contributor to the overall strength of the new party. The IP believes that a new party will be doomed to continued impotence and failure if it is seen through these structures (leadership and organisational) and strategies to be simply: (a) recycled opposition; (b) the PFP in drag; (c) a mechanism for retaining suspect opposition seats.<sup>73</sup>

Further proposals were made which included, *inter alia*, that an executive be created including leaders of all three parties plus representatives from the so-called Fourth Force. It should be noted that given the propinquity between the Fourth Force and the NDM in particular, its inclusion in executive decisions would serve simultaneously to dilute the decision-making power of the PFP in joint decisions and strengthen that of the two minor

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72 . Personal interview with Colin Eglin MP, 7 June 1993.

73 . Independent Party archives, December 1988.

parties. Gant further recommended that talks should be suspended if no agreement could be reached on the leadership question by 14 December.<sup>74</sup>

The joint IP/NDM proposals and brinkmanship came close to scuppering the unification process. Negotiators determined that the process could move no further without calling in their patrons and a meeting was held between the three leaders. In discussion with De Beer, Malan informed him that he would not make it a pre-requisite of unity that Worrall and he should lead the party, but that an acceptable compromise on the leadership question was vital.<sup>75</sup> From the perspective of the PFP the determination of the IP and the NDM not to have De Beer as leader of the party required further internal debate and strategising.

Despite these quite fundamental antagonisms at the leadership level, the process of unification was beginning to develop its own momentum and the earlier setting of the 14 December deadline saw the three locked into a situation from which no party could escape without causing itself enormous, and perhaps irreparable damage. Thus the meeting went ahead as scheduled with the leadership question placed in temporary abeyance.

### Agreement

At the 14 December meeting the three parties reached agreement on the formation of a new united opposition party. A steering committee comprising the three leaders, party representatives and Willem de Klerk was constituted with De Beer as convenor. This committee was tasked with drawing up a new constitution for the party, a name for the party and resolving the question of leadership. The steering committee was to appoint regional committees comprising members of all three parties and other persons committed to the principles of the party (namely the Fourth Force) at provincial and regional levels. De Klerk would also, as had the other three leaders, nominate three members to the steering committee.

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74 . Cape Times, 12 December 1988.

75 . Personal interview with Wynand Malan, 20 July 1993.

A communique issued after the 14 December meeting outlined the core identity, philosophy and strategies that the new party would represent and pursue. The parties would maximise their respective strengths, including the institutional and financial capacity of the PFP with the marketing appeal of the IP. The NDM would assist the party in bridging the gap between Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary politics. The major guiding principles of the party were drafted by PFP delegates and reflected a strong commitment to representative government and liberal democracy.<sup>76</sup> In terms of the guiding economic principles a hybrid social market policy was espoused including, *inter alia*:

A system of private ownership, private initiative, with conditions conducive to a high rate of growth and with recognition that the state has important functions of human development and upliftment.<sup>77</sup>

The party would (by conviction and in deference to the fears and concerns of the Fourth Force) seek to protect cultural, language and religious rights. The major point of convergence was found in the accommodation of the differing parties' strategic commitments. The question of the form and sites of political engagement were too fundamental to be diluted or jettisoned by any of the parties, thus a compromise was struck that sought to weld the views and style of political conduct of all three together into tripartite strategy. The resultant joint declaration affirmed that:

Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary politics cannot, nor should be divided and that the party would strive for: The development of the strongest possible power base in Parliament and other representative bodies with a view to gaining control (IP). The development of interaction with groups and individuals, whether or not they share in the stated mission and goals, to promote negotiation, settlement and agreement (NDM/PFP), and the development of a broad front of co-operation, relationships alliances and joint strategies with organisations and individuals inside and outside Parliament who are striving to achieve the same goals as the party (NDM). It was further affirmed that the party would seek to achieve these goals by free and open negotiation with parties across the political spectrum.<sup>78</sup>

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76 . Personal interview with Pierre Cronjé, 8 June 1993.

77 . *Citizen*, 15 December 1988.

78 . *Argus*, 15 December 1988.

From this point forward the IP and NDM factions to the negotiations made a concerted effort to bury their differences and to present a united front both to the PFP and to an expectant electorate. Publicly this required a compromise on discourse with the respective leaders adopting the style, rhetoric and programmatic themes of the other. The clearest example of this interchange was demonstrated by Malan when declaring that the new party would win majority white support in an election and that:

The new party will signal that it will be the next government of the country, because our main aim is not to become an official opposition party, but to take over power. This has become possible because of the broader commitment of all South Africans to share the future and to find suitable arrangements for effective and non-discriminatory participation in running the country.<sup>79</sup>

The prominence and importance of the Fourth Force in terms of the new party's strategising was underscored by the decision to grant it equal status to the three parties at the talks and allowing it to nominate three members to the steering committee. De Klerk, Terreblanche and Luyt were tasked with bringing into the party those disgruntled NP supporters searching for a viable political home.<sup>80</sup>

### Resistance from the PFP

The public declaration of commitment to the founding of a new party led to increased disquiet and mobilisation by important elements in the PFP, however. Despite the public imperative and the dangers of disunity, this group was prepared to see the PFP continue as a leaner formation closely committed to clear liberal democratic principle and to the issues and style the party had adhered to for thirty years. On this issue the "true blues" or so-called "59's" (in recognition of their Progressive pedigree) were *ad idem* with the views of ex-Reformer Harry Schwarz. Schwarz argued that if members of the IP and the NDM were in agreement with the PFP on matters of principle they ought simply to join it. Ultimately the deep suspicions and mistrust felt by founding members of the PFP such as Ray Swart and Helen Suzman towards the former NP leaders could not be assuaged.

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79 . Sunday Times, 18 December 1988.

80 . IP archival notes.

They resisted both the loss of the name “Progressive” for the new party and attempts to force PFP representation to rank *pari passu* with the other two formations within the party structures.<sup>81</sup> After Gant’s proposal of joint Worrall/Malan leadership, positions within the PFP further hardened against the IP and NDM “trojan horses”, who were viewed as being without real commitment to liberal democracy. This led to elements within the PFP articulating what became known as a “Zach or die” position. PFP member of the interim steering committee Roger Hulley informed all other members of the interim committee in a memorandum after the 14 December meeting that:

I reject the notion that a leader from the PFP would irretrievably taint the new Party and limit its prospects. The latter notion is a deep affront to all members of the PFP in that it would imply that we are to be less than equal partners in the new Party - that we from the PFP must be content with contributing our memberships, our troops, our money, our hard won Parliamentary seats, our name and our identity and thirty years of sweat equity, in return for second class status in the back seat of the new party! I fear that if it became widely known within the ranks of the PFP that some of our prospective partners within the new Party were attempting to veto Zach de Beer’s candidacy for Leader, then the grass roots reaction of the troops could be so negative as to endanger the whole unity process.

(T)he suggestion that the new Leader should be a pre-agreed outsider, and that no PFP person should be eligible for the job has been met with a degree of outrage and outright rejection. At this stage I would say that the mood of the PFP troops in the Cape Province would be quite simply that if our leader is not endorsed in advance, then nothing less than a democratic election at the Founding Congress would be acceptable.<sup>82</sup>

There was room for compromise from the PFP, however, as Hulley noted:

The only pre-agreed package deal on the Leadership which would receive widespread and enthusiastic support from them and which would avoid a leadership election bun fight at the Founding Congress, would be the concept of a four-man/four-element top leadership team with De Beer as leader, backed up by three high profile deputies and a four-element leadership council of say 8-12 persons... Personally I would say that the top leadership team of De Beer backed up by Worrall and Malan as

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81 . Telephonic interview with Mrs Helen Suzman, 21 July 1993.

82 . New Party Memorandum No. RH.1., Roger Hulley MP, 28 December 1989.

deputies and with De Klerk as Party Chairman, would be a “dream ticket” for the new Party.<sup>83</sup>

The deeper philosophical concerns regarding the amalgamation hinged on questions of strategy versus principle and the dangers of reconstructing the PFP’s image in order to make it attractive to NP supporters. At one level it was argued that such a strategy was deceitful to traditional PFP supporters and to the electorate in general. Rather, it was reasoned, the new party ought boldly to acknowledge its PFP heritage and pre-eminence, precisely because it had been a party of principle. For Helen Suzman, the Progressive Federal Party had no “image problem”, and was more likely to acquire one as a result of the amalgamation.

Both Worrall’s and De Klerk’s concern with the question of group, that is principally Afrikaner, interests, were also politically and philosophically untenable to the classical liberals in the PFP. To this group the insistence on some form of policy and constitutional genuflection to group rights was practically indistinguishable from NP Deputy Minister Dr Stoffel van der Merwe’s call for a “more flexible concept of groups”.<sup>84</sup>

At a more analytical level it was argued that South Africa was undergoing profound structural changes and for the PFP now to begin orientating itself towards antediluvian principles of “white” politics was running contrary to the broad tide of change. The only reason this realisation had not dawned on the majority of whites, was due to vulgar manipulation by the media and the intrusive pervasiveness of the total strategy.<sup>85</sup>

PFP liberals were not alone in their reservations. The *Financial Mail* and *Business Day* were scathing in their criticisms of the absence of a clear statement of classical rights-based and free-market liberal principle in the communique’s issued by the leadership.<sup>86</sup>

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83 . Roger Hulley New Party Memorandum No. RH.1. p.2.

84 . Business Day, 26 January 1989.

85 . Hugh Robertson, Argus 5 January 1989.

86 . See the Financial Mail 13 January 1989 and Business Day

These reservations and the hardening of PFP attitudes further complicated the leadership question which had reached gridlock by the 14 December meeting. By 19 December Worrall and Malan announced they had taken themselves out of the leadership battle and collectively nominated Dr Willem de Klerk as leader. Under such an arrangement De Klerk would have played an elder statesman's role, mapping out broad policy principles and attempting to unite the fractious elements of the party, as well as a setting an example to other disillusioned Afrikaners. De Klerk's elevation to leader would also have given the new party a considerable degree of status and publicity, not only due to his own impeccable Afrikaner and intellectual credentials, but also as the brother of the Transvaal leader of the NP and the person likely to become PW Botha's successor.<sup>87</sup>

Despite the strong "Zach or die" thrust there also existed divisions within the PFP itself over the leadership question. De Beer enjoyed most support in the Transvaal and the Southern Transvaal region in particular. The Cape was divided, with Provincial leader Roger Hulley giving full and open support to De Beer, whilst Tiaan van der Merwe (MP for Green Point) gave support to him with the caveat that should a compromise be required to save the unity talks this should be found. Opposed to De Beer's leadership of the new party was the Northern Transvaal, Natal and the Eastern Cape.<sup>88</sup> At a joint meeting of the Natal executives of the PFP and IP held on 9 January 1989 it was resolved that:

1. As members are in complete harmony on basic principles we strongly urge the leadership of all three parties to finalise the negotiations for the formation of a single unified new party without further delay.
2. A leader outside of the three parties be chosen.
3. The success of the new party depends on the choice of an outside leader.
4. A joint approach by all three parties be made to Dr Willem de Klerk to lead this new Party.<sup>89</sup>

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87 . Cape Times, 20 December 1988.

88 . Vrye Weekblad, 27 January 1989.

89 . IP archives facsimile message from Natal Executives of IP and PFP to Dr Denis Worrall, undated.

Ultimately it was these divisions, together with a change in PFP strategy, which led to a compromise being found.

Given the divisiveness of the issue the leaders of the three parties began to play down the leadership dispute as it would have had the effect of deterring voters from a party rent by divisions even before it was formally constituted. The 12 January meeting under the chairmanship of interim chairman De Beer, failed to finally resolve the leadership question, but concluded that no leader would be elected at the founding Congress of the party and such a leader would only be elected after the party had *de facto* and *de jure* been established. This would also give the individual contenders the opportunity to prove themselves in the interim.<sup>90</sup>

The strategy adopted at the 12 January meeting was that closer working co-operation at the grass-roots and local level would have the dual effect of pulling the disparate forces together, whilst at the same time deferring the leadership question before it became so divisive an issue that it threatened to de-rail the process of unification. The final decision on leadership was postponed until 4 February in order give the PFP the opportunity to decide at its Federal Executive meeting on 28 January on the intractability of its “Zach or die” position.<sup>91</sup>

At this point the PFP long-term strategic view came into operation. Given the PFP preponderance in terms of organisational strength and individual loyalty, De Beer reasoned that rather than threaten the unification process he would allow the question of leadership to be postponed until the party Congress whereby he would be in a strong position to win the electoral contest. Firing a broadside at his leadership adversaries De Beer thus publicly declared that the future leader of the party must be:

Someone of mental and moral and physical strength, someone of unquestionable loyalty to the principles we are fighting for. ... As the British Conservatives say: “Trust the People”. I am confident that every

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90 . IP archive notes of Steering Committee meeting, 12 January 1989.

91 . IP archives notes on Steering Committee meeting, 12 January 1989.

aspiring leader who truly cares for the principles we are fighting for will be willing to submit himself or herself to the test of a normal democratic election of this kind.<sup>92</sup>

Subsequent to De Beer's announcement IP and NDM's compromise leadership choice Willem de Klerk indicated that he did not wish to be considered as a candidate for the leadership of the party. Shortly thereafter doubts were expressed about the willingness of De Klerk to become involved full-time in politics let alone as leader.

Despite this deadlock the steering committee had made considerable progress on a number of other key issues. The three parties agreed to the appointment of a committee to examine their resources with a view to maximising their use. The establishment of nationwide steering committees, draft constitutional committee, and the institution of discussions with all significant political organisations to discuss matters of mutual concern and to establish areas of possible future co-operation was also agreed to. A draft manifesto would be prepared subsequent to the meeting.

At the 26 January meeting of the interim steering committee it was announced that all parties had agreed to the arrangement whereby De Beer, Worrall and Malan would jointly lead the party and De Klerk would act as Chairman. This arrangement particularly suited the NDM in that it accorded with their belief in collective leadership, but it also afforded it a disproportionate input into policy and strategy. However the draft agreement still had to be agreed to by the PFP's Federal Council meeting of 28 January where resistance was certain.

#### The PFP agrees

At the 28 January Federal Council meeting approval was given for the formation of the new political party. Agreement was reached for the three to meet as a single caucus and for the consolidation of joint national structures. In effect the PFP had given approval to

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92 . Die Burger, 16 January 1989.

its own demise, and made no prescription of De Beer as leader of the new party. A resolution passed by the Federal Council stated that it:

Looks forward to the formation of the new party in the near future and to the impact the party will make in bringing peace, justice and prosperity to South Africa.<sup>93</sup>

Although the Federal Council gave its full support to the establishment of the new party, a number of earlier drafts of the press statement indicated disagreement amongst Council members regarding the final text. The earlier draft made no mention of the role played by the PFP in the past in upholding the values which the new party agreed were cardinal. The final draft, however, locates the PFP's role in the furtherance of these values as central. The second area of change lay in the addition of the assertion of the belief in a peaceful process of change and the establishment of a "Western style constitutional and economic dispensation". The latter aimed at Malan and his emphasis on a home grown dispensation possibly with elements of a watered-down socialism within the constitution. Significantly, other points of discussion at the Federal Council meeting concerned the political status of "group rights" as understood by Fourth Force leader Willem de Klerk. It was agreed that serious consideration be given to these concepts and fears insofar as they reflect cultural interests, as distinct from racial or ethnic privilege and prejudice.

The strategy adopted by Council to the leadership question became clear when after the meeting De Beer declared:

Ultimately there is only one way a party leader is elected, and that is by means of a party Congress. I am a democrat, and this is how the issue will eventually be resolved.<sup>94</sup>

De Beer assured disgruntled PFP supporters that the IP and the NDM only had a membership of one tenth of the PFP and that they would not therefore have a majority say in the new party. Thus, having been duly mandated by his Federal Council, Zach de Beer was the first to announce that the new party would be founded in April 1989.

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93 Citizen, 30 January 1989.

94 . Citizen, 30 January 1989.

### Accomplished fact

The leaders of the four constituent elements of the new Democratic Party announced after a meeting in Cape Town in the first weekend of February 1989 that, although it would take two months for the Democratic Party to be officially established, they regarded the new party as an “accomplished fact” as from that time. A steering committee of the DP was announced and that it would transfer all memberships of the three political formations to that of the DP.

After the announcement of the intention to form a new party and the *fait accompli* statement, Worrall held a press conference proclaiming:

The Democratic Party will combine the IP’s ability to cut into the NP power base; the PFP’s organisational strength, and the NDM’s extra-Parliamentary credibility. At the moment we have support from about 24% of the electorate and some believe it could be as high as 30%. The question of co-leadership was a political necessity, given the need to consolidate our support. To have tried to elect one person would have been a mistake. Each of us has our different strengths and combined we make a formidable team. It enables us to give full expression to our individual talents. Our commitment is to the establishment of a new political party with a personality which is distinctive from the PFP, the IP and the NDM. Towards this end our immediate objectives are: the consolidation of existing membership; the recruitment of those many South Africans who share our values and who are looking for a new political home; and the achievement of support and credibility across the political spectrum.<sup>95</sup>

A further unifying compromise was the announcement that during the first year of the new party’s existence there would be a national executive committee equally representative of the four constituent elements of the party. Having clinched the deal Worrall argued that it was wrong to see the joint leadership as an interim arrangement as it had come about as the parties had held discussions and melded and had grown out of

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95 . Minutes of the new party steering committee meeting, 4 February 1989.

alliance politics. Malan added that “it might well be that a culture of broader leadership could develop in South Africa.”<sup>96</sup>

The short-term goal of the DP was to be electoral success in the forthcoming general election, resulting in a so-called hung Parliament, to remove the NP’s overall majority, and for the party to become the official opposition.

The surprise announcement of the day was that Van Zyl Slabbert had agreed to become a special advisor to the party. Malan informed an expectant public that Slabbert’s agreement to serve as an advisor to the DP was a “turn around by Dr Slabbert, a recognition that electoral politics is one of the actors in the total process”.<sup>97</sup> Slabbert was charged with advising the party on strategy to expand its support base and interaction with the extra-Parliamentary movement.

The other advisors were Dr Willem “Wimpie” de Klerk (Policy Formulation and Development), Professor Marinus Wiechers (Constitutional Planning) and Professor Sampie Terreblanche (Economic Analysis and Policy Planning).

Thus the organisational structure of a new pragmatic liberal party had begun to take shape. The following chapter will deal in detail with the formal founding of the Democratic Party, the challenges it faced, and the struggle for its political identity.

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96 . Argus, 6 February 1989.

97 Sunday Times, 4 February 1989

## CHAPTER NINE

As was traditional in marriage the DP had found something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue. Slabbert was the old, something new in the form of Worrall, something borrowed in the form of Theo Gerdners' old Democratic Party name, and something blue in the form of the DP's prospects in the forthcoming election.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter the formal establishment of the Democratic Party is discussed. The chapter also seeks to detail the contestation between the constituent elements and forces within the new party for both its political identity, its ideological orientation and strategic positioning prior to the 1989 general election.

### The struggle for the soul of the Democratic Party

Just as the courtship of the three opposition parties was tumultuous, the progeny conceived of the political marriage was the subject of an almost infanticidal custody battle. Prior to the formal and constitutional establishment of the Democratic Party the struggle for its political "heart and soul" was to be waged.

Whilst in the embryonic stage of its development, the Democratic Party was subject to acute internal conflict regarding the appropriate strategies for the achievement of the objectives of its tripartite action programme. For newly appointed strategic advisor Van Zyl Slabbert, the critical issue was for the young party not to become a second-line defence for white privilege and the politics of symbolism. He warned:

White liberal parties still feel that they have to play the white political game first, get significant enough power to affect a leverage and then move toward majoritarian politics. I don't think that is possible. So the Independents and certain elements in the Progressive Party (sic) may regroup liberals, but that is no longer going to be all that effective.<sup>2</sup>

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1 . NP Publicity Secretary Con Botha, Cape Times, 11 February 1989.

2 . Cape Times, 9 February 1989.

As strategic advisor, Slabbert envisioned a broader identity for the party and located its formation and import in a broad international, regional and local context. Internationally the most important recent development had been the convergence in some areas of “Third World” foreign policy between the United States, the USSR and Europe. This had had a direct impact on the Southern African region. These global and regional changes had brought the white South African state into contact and negotiations with its traditional political and ideological enemies such as Cuba, the USSR, MPLA, Frelimo and SWAPO. *Glasnost, perestroika* and the resultant global retrenchment of Soviet Third World policy had also impacted on the thinking of the ANC and had resulted in increased contact with groups from within South Africa. As was noted earlier, there had also been greater flexibility in the thinking of the extra-Parliamentary movement inside the country on issues of strategy and tactics.

The nature and scope of the changes had the potential to give rise to a new political phase in domestic politics, argued Slabbert. Local political dynamics were set to follow the international and regional trend towards negotiated settlement, but the NP, through its policies, legacy, and indoctrination, appeared to be incapable of leading and conducting this process as it was in a phase of ideological retreat, while searching for a formula to break the violent stalemate. It was in this context that Slabbert believed the new DP could fill the breach. It needed to bridge the gap between Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary politics in the country. The new party had the potential to become part of new and imaginative alliances and strategies to promote the politics of negotiation. Accordingly, it would have to show white voters that it could become part of a much broader struggle to establish democracy. In order to achieve this the DP would have to take the initiative from inside Parliament, as extra-Parliamentary forces were precluded from operating on that terrain. Thus the DP had the potential to make Parliament a “site of struggle” and negotiation.

Slabbert warned, however, that should the DP play “safe” white politics, placating prejudice and ignorance in order to acquire incremental gains in government-held marginal seats, and falling victim to the government’s demonisation of the extra-Parliamentary movement, then it would “drift into a well-deserved political obscurity”.

The dynamic set in motion by the international, regional and local correlation of forces led Slabbert to warn the DP leadership that it might find itself in the position where the government itself embarked on tentative negotiations, thereby leaving the DP behind.<sup>3</sup>

### Talking to the ANC

Slabbert's strategic scenario received a mixed response. A commitment to engaging extra-Parliamentary and liberation movements was the hallmark of the earliest pronouncements of the Democratic Party's pre-formation phase. This indicated not only a real commitment from the authors of the interactive policy, but also the period in which the particular personalities involved with this work in the DP were in the ascendancy.

Slabbert's views dovetailed closely with those of Wynand Malan, and it was the former NP member for Randburg who spearheaded the offensive strategy against his old party on the question of talking to the liberation movements. It was here that one of the important gains of the formation emerged. The unity negotiations had drawn in many former NP leaders and members of the Afrikaner establishment who came to the party with highly respectable credentials, and who were thereby immune from the "limp-wristed liberal" epithet used to demonise the old PFP. Thus Malan was able to attack the government for its policy of "not talking to terrorists" by reminding it that it had been talking to SWAPO for ten years and had co-authored an agreement for Namibia which would lead to a SWAPO government. He called on the government to talk to the ANC and release Nelson Mandela in order to arrive at the country's "appointment with the future".

Malan successfully walked the political tightrope between explanation and advocacy by unequivocally condemning violence and by pointing out that in discussions with the ANC he had rebuked them for their "soft target" campaign. There was *prima facie* evidence, he argued, that the ANC had indeed called off its campaign of targeting civil targets such as Ellis Park and shopping centres after he had told the ANC that it was not good enough for it to state that it was not ANC policy to target civil sites, but that it had to take active steps to prevent this from happening on the ground and to control its cadres.<sup>4</sup>

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3 . Argus, 18 February 1989.

4 . Personal interview with Wynand Malan, 20 July 1993.

Malan was also still privy to National Party political sentiment. He challenged the Party that were a secret ballot of NP MP's to be taken at the time, almost 100% would have voted in favour of holding discussions with the ANC. In so arguing, Malan played an invaluable role in laying to rest the NP-created perception held by a majority of whites, that the opposition to the left of the government was soft on security and terrorism. Malan's position had an important demonstration effect on both the white electorate and people engaged in extra-Parliamentary politics. Malan also played an important educative role in demythologising the ANC by arguing that all parties had their extremists and anomalies, such as Albert Nothnagel in the NP. So too did the ANC exhibit these tendencies as shown by the differences between Chris Hani and Thabo Mbeki.<sup>5</sup>

Malan's reasoning was that whites had been conditioned into turning to other whites to offer them guarantees and security, but in any future dispensation only a black leader could provide this. It was thus futile to talk only to groupings felt to be "safe", he reasoned, as these were not the people whites feared. For Malan the DP had to talk to those of whom whites were scared, and this obviously meant the ANC.

Malan's democratic credentials were demonstrated by the application of his "mindshift" thesis to the strategy of the DP action programme. He argued, logically, that the minority could not guarantee the rights of the minority under a democracy: only the majority could do that. The more the NP advocated the idea of minority rights, the more they were likely to paint themselves into a white minority corner. By equating one's political identity with "whiteness", he argued, the more this would guarantee a condition of permanent minority and permanent insecurity. For Malan there existed an urgent need to "fray the edges between system and struggle politics", in order to get the support of the 60% of people who supported a non-racial democracy for South Africa.<sup>6</sup>

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5 . Vrye Weekblad, 17 February 1989.

6 . Argus, 4 July 1989.

Whilst the former NDM leadership asserted the centrality of the second and third planks of the action programme, they did so against a groundswell of resistance and dissatisfaction from important IP and PFP factions. Far from courting the extra-Parliamentary movement, conservative elements within the DP, such as Harry Schwarz and Denis Worrall, shunned too close an identification of the new party with the MDM, on the grounds of ideological and tactical differences, as well as the fact that this was perceived to be inimical to garnering white voter support. Consequently, in the following months Malan's commitment to bridging political cleavages was to be severely tested.

### Resistance and rebellion

As was earlier noted, during the period of the formation negotiations, the NDM/Fourth Force, and to a lesser degree the IP delegates, had frequently controlled the agenda and yielded a number of concessions from the PFP, but in the period leading up to the formation Congress and after, the weight of PFP experience, support and institutionalised strength *vis-a-vis* the other formations began to hold sway. In particular the view held by many within the IP and NDM that the PFP was internally moribund and would accept practically any deal was soon to be shown to be a misreading of the mindset of a hard core of opinion within the party.<sup>7</sup> Despite being wounded by the events of the previous five years, the leadership of the PFP believed they had gone into the negotiations with a spirit of "supreme generosity"<sup>8</sup> and in so doing, the party had made important compromises in order to forge a party with a new identity and leadership structure. The degree of compromise resulted in the feeling amongst many MPs and rank-and-file in the party that the "family jewels had been sold",<sup>9</sup> and they were not going to give in without a fight to get them back.

Whilst access to the national infrastructure and donor base of the PFP as a vehicle for their own political agendas was sufficient rationale for both the IP and the NDM to enter the amalgamation, the gains for the PFP were more opaque and uncertain. Concerns

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7. Personal interview with Rupert Lorimer MP, 22 June 1993.

8. Personal interview with Mr James Selfe. This was also a view shared by Zach de Beer.

9. Personal interview with Peter Soal MP, 14 June 1993.

were expressed that should the DP not have gained a significantly broader support base, more would have been sacrificed by the PFP than was gained.<sup>10</sup> For the liberal stalwarts of the PFP the choice facing the new party was one of the adherence to principle versus the tactical and strategic *realpolitik* advanced by the IP. The view of Helen Suzman typified this scepticism:

The so-called “public imperative” for the merger of the PFP, into the new DP is, I think, something which very many people believe to be necessary. Whether the merger will bear the fruits optimists hope to obtain, of course, remains to be seen.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed these doubts led to some resignations. PFP Sandton Town Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Clogg resigned on the grounds that the new party’s policy document was far too vague about the question of voting rights, federalism, and a bill of rights. For Clogg the new party simply wasn’t liberal enough and spoke more to concerns with group rights than individual rights.

On the question of political principles, however, the political Sadducees of the PFP were not alone in fighting to protect the values and identity of their party. The emergence of a rebel, “Concerned IP” lobby further complicated the equation. This group’s view was that core principles and policies of the Independent Party had, for a number of reasons, been “unceremoniously and unjustifiably jettisoned”.<sup>12</sup> The IP lobby argued that the party had developed an identifiable and “independent” character and a set of policies which, on a number of occasions, Worrall had promised would not be sacrificed. They had been assured by Worrall that the IP would not be simply absorbed by other parties and there would be no mere recycling of the opposition. The conservatives and libertarians within the IP lobby were concerned in particular with the perception that, “maximum devolution and decentralisation of political power”, “a free-market or free-enterprise economy” and a “small and non-interfering government with maximum deregulation and privatisation” be clearly and unequivocally entrenched in DP policy

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10 . Weekly Mail, 17 February 1989.

11 . Argus, 27 June 1989.

12 . Citizen, 9 March 1989.

documents.<sup>13</sup> Support for the lobby's ideological viewpoint also came from a number of PFP MP's in the Transvaal.<sup>14</sup> Transvaal PFP leader Douglas Gibson subsequently declared that the soon-to-be-launched party would pursue a strong free-enterprise, private-ownership economic policy.

These concerns led to the question of economic policy becoming one of the major nodes of intra-party conflict. Although the subject of passionate, behind-the-scenes debate, the struggle percolated into the public arena and was played out in a polemic between *Business Day* editor Ken Owen and Fourth Force strategic advisor Professor Sampie Terreblanche. The debate was essentially between advocates of supply-side, free-market economics and those sympathetic to social democratic prescripts. The economic debate continued until the formation Congress and was intensified when the PFP's John Josling criticised the elevation of Terreblanche to the DP's National Board. Josling accused Terreblanche of attacking the free-market economic system and warned that Terreblanche could not continue as economic advisor as he would, "put the backs of people in business circles in Johannesburg up". Further polemical shafts were launched by Harry Schwarz's insistence that the DP economic policy should resemble that of the PFP's policy of economic democracy as drafted by the party's commission five years earlier. Schwarz described the PFP policy as a market-oriented economy, but also a caring economy. Schwarz warned that he had "grave differences with people who wanted to throw this policy overboard".

De Beer was forced to move swiftly to assuage these fears and to defend Terreblanche's participation in economic policy formulation. In doing so, De Beer was forced to clarify his own position and to locate the DP as a:

(F)ree-market party which accepts that the state has a legitimate but minimalist role to play in the economy in terms of the provision of education, housing and pensions (with the rider that it can afford to do so). The DP will be a liberal party and not a party of the left.<sup>15</sup>

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13 . *Citizen*, 14 March 1989.

14 . *Business Day*, 8 March 1989.

15 . *Business Day*, 22 February 1989.

At the same time, a clear philosophical and political challenge was also issued to both the social democrats of the former NDM and the UDF by the leader of the PFP Young Turk faction Tony Leon. In addressing a Pretoria meeting of the Young Progressives Leon warned that liberal and “radical chic” views and analyses were at considerable variance. Leon charged that, principally, the radical chic view was that the views of the majority or the oppressed should prevail under given circumstances. Liberals, on the other hand, he argued, were animated by adherence to principles and would judge a situation according to those merits:

According to this (radical) school of thought, whether or not an act offends against principles of justice and fairness is irrelevant and is subordinated to the fact that any decision is legitimate because of its origin. The nub of our objection to this invitation to totalitarian excess is simple. Torture does not become acceptable simply because those currently being tortured become the torturers. A belief in the individual was the only guard against the dangers of collectivism. The DP needs to take an unequivocal stand against moral relativism. This is a disease which seems to afflict certain clerics, and some self-proclaimed leaders of the mass democratic movements.

We must not allow the economy nor the economic debate to present a swamp in which many people of the liberal persuasion become mired. A form of compassionate capitalism is needed to move all people forward and to leave no-one behind, but only very limited state intervention should be permitted, to ensure a form of social security safety net.<sup>16</sup>

In an attempt to stamp the tone of the pragmatic liberals on the DP youth, Leon asserted that new party had to demonstrate that it was not a “hands up and surrender” organisation.<sup>17</sup>

#### Dissolution and the closing of a chapter of political history

Shortly after the outbreak of these disagreements a group of PFP MP's, including Chief Whip John Malcomess, Natal leader Ray Swart and Bryanston MP Rupert Lorimer, were reported to be intending to break away from the proposed DP before the formation of the

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16 . Citizen, 25 February 1989.

17 . Citizen, 25 February 1989.

party on 6 April. For this group the major strategic issue was the question of participation in the other two houses and the perception that they were being dictated to by the NDM who, in turn, they believed, took instructions from the ANC in Lusaka.<sup>18</sup> These clashes were also strongly exacerbated by the reluctance of leading figures in the PFP to share policy-making functions.

These differences came to a head at the PFP dissolution Congress on 6 April 1989. The Southern Transvaal and old-guard rebel group factions found common cause at Congress when two controversial motions were tabled by Tony Leon and Finance spokesperson Harry Schwarz, respectively. The Leon motion called for the DP to elect a single leader as soon as the election was called, adding that, "A bird cannot fly with three heads in the long term". The Schwarz motion called for the PFP's policy of economic democracy to be the foundation of the DP economic policy until a more complete document was agreed upon.<sup>19</sup> Much of the prevailing sentiment at the dissolution Congress held that the policy documents of the DP had been slapped together for the sake of unity and compromise, whereas PFP policy had been formulated and matured for a period of thirty years.

There was natural resistance to the loss of identity and an uncomfortableness amongst many that more may have been lost than gained. But it was at the dissolution Congress that the wisdom of De Beer's election as leader became apparent. As a founding member of the Progressive Party, De Beer enjoyed "true blue" credentials, but at the same time had been brought to power by the pragmatic liberal ginger group within the party. As such, De Beer was able to carry the party with him at this critical moment in a way no other PFP leader could have done. De Beer reassured his party that he would put his "head on a block" that not a single PFP principle had been sacrificed by the unification process, nor had a single principle been damaged:

It was absolutely untrue that we jettisoned any policy or principle of the PFP ... I know this because I was getting the third degree from Helen Suzman every night. She was going to jump at the very first sign that we had abandoned a comma of our principles or our policies, and she never

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18 . Sunday Times, 26 March 1989.

19 . Cape Times, 7 April 1989.

did jump. She stayed with the DP, grumbling a bit, but nevertheless she stayed. And her grumbling was about personnel. I don't think you can get a better watch-dog than Helen.<sup>20</sup>

De Beer acknowledged, however, that the merger was causing more difficulty in the Southern Transvaal region than anywhere else in the country. He called on delegates to avoid clique-forming and to foster a spirit of unity in the new party and added that he saw no reason why a bird with three heads that was alive and well could not fly.<sup>21</sup>

Thus on Saturday 7 April, having temporarily smoothed the troubled waters, Zach de Beer closed the third chapter of the Progressive Party odyssey and the following day opened its fourth.

At this point it is useful to summarise the central problems facing the DP at its formation Congress. The following issues required careful and collective attention and would test the strength of the buckles strapping the young party together. They were:

1. The leadership question.
2. The relationship between the DP and the extra-Parliamentary groups.
3. Relations with the other two Houses.
4. DP economic policy - free-market vs social democratic.
5. The constitutional status and protection of minorities.
6. Security questions.
7. Reconciling past antagonism before the general election campaign.
8. The creation of a new party image.<sup>22</sup>

It will be argued later that the young party dealt with these issues with varying degrees of success, but that the degree of success would relate directly to the issues's importance in the forthcoming election.

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20 . Personal interview with Dr Zach de Beer MP, 11 May 1993.

21 . Cape Times, 8 April 1989.

22 . South, 13 April 1989.

### The DP Founding Congress

The formation Congress of the Democratic Party took place in Johannesburg on 7 April 1989. The events of the founding Congress foreshadowed the future successes, strains and contradictions of the new party and require brief elucidation.

At the American-style launch the new party colours, logo, theme song and video were presented to the South African public for the first time. In contrast to the sombre mood of the previous day's dissolution Congress, the formation Congress was marked by unprecedented optimism, enthusiasm and political "bullishness" from both DP delegates and rank-and-file membership. At the end of the day's proceedings there was little doubt amongst delegates that the public imperative had given rise to a formation, which, in terms of its own support base, had created a new party with a new image and new opportunities. Congress also set the tone for the division of labour of the "*Troika*" leadership of the party. Both De Beer and Worrall were publicly ebullient about the new formation. Having drawn lots for speaking order, the three leaders sketched the broad issues each would be tackling in their informal leadership portfolios.

De Beer enthused, "Today I feel the earth moving beneath my feet. This is a day of destiny, a time of great decision". The former PFP leader launched his and the party's election campaign by asserting the independent identity of the party and attacking the National Party head-on. De Beer labelled the National Party "our political enemy" as long as it pursued race-based politics. De Beer highlighted the destructive role the National Party government had played in producing the economic chaos and the chronic corruption endemic to any polity lacking legitimacy and popular sanction. He asserted the Democratic Party's strong commitment to a free-market with a "responsible role" for the state in the provision of services.<sup>23</sup>

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23 . Personal notes, DP founding Congress, 7 April 1989.

For Worrall, the courting of both the drifting English-speaking voter and the *verligte* Afrikaner vote was his immediate task. His enthusiastically received message was, the DP was “going for power”:

It is not pie in the sky to think of this party as the official opposition after September or as part of the government of this country in five years. It is more than just a question of winning seats. We must encourage *verligte* factions in the National Party.

Malan, however, remained reserved. In contrast, to the positions adopted by De Beer and Worrall, Malan argued that the party’s goals “can’t be measured in terms of the number of seats we are going to win in the next election”. The former NDM leader set himself the challenge of establishing and developing alliances and strategies with the extra-Parliamentary forces, whilst stressing the need to consult with all political groups, both right and left.

Congress was also marked by a number of important substantive and symbolic concessions. Former IP Chairman Jan Momberg announced that as a result of discussions at an earlier steering committee, the DP’s troubled economic policy was “being taken back to the drawing board”. This compromise was the outcome of a deal cut with Harry Schwarz whereby, if the proposed economic document were redrafted, he would agree to stand on the party’s interim governing body, the National Board, thereby committing some of the more obdurate and fractious elements to the fledgling party.<sup>24</sup> The irony of this position was that the DP was then forced to live with Schwarz’s manoeuvrings as a party member.

A significant, but controversial, dimension of the Congress was the prominence given to the membership of the new party of former military and security establishment personnel. These figures included the former Head of the George Army College for Girls Colonel Hilda Burnett and former Chief of the South African Air Force General Bob Rogers. The platform given to these leading establishment figures was a clear signal to the electorate

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24 . Cape Times, 8 April 1989.

and indeed in keeping with the convictions of many in the DP leadership, that the new party would be seen to be firm on security matters.

The launch also drew observers and representatives of the MDM, the Natal Indian Congress, Inkatha, the Labour Party and a number of homeland leaders.<sup>25</sup>

The most important symbolic achievement of the Congress, however, was the presentation of the changed ethnic profile of the party *vis-a-vis* its predecessors. The new party evinced a clear shift from the old anglophone PFP (with at best a genuflection to Afrikaans) to a more representative bilingualism. This marked not only a broader diversity of leadership and membership of the new party in comparison with the PFP, but also sent a strong signal to disaffected Afrikaners that they could find a new political home in the DP.

A degree of leadership reconciliation was cemented by the appointment of a “multi-party” National Board which would serve as the supreme governing body of the new party until its first Congress in October. The composition of the board gave equal representation to the PFP with equal representation for the Fourth Force. The National Board was constituted as follows: Eight former PFP members, five former IP members, five ex-NDM members, and four fourth-force representatives. The first elected chairman of the National Board was former NDM member advocate “Lang Dawid” de Villiers.<sup>26</sup> The degree of party and ethnic integration led political commentator Anton Harber to note:

The Prog English-speaker in a pin-striped suit has given way to the DP Afrikaans-speaker in a pin-striped suit.<sup>27</sup>

From Congress it was clear that political liberalism in South Africa was undergoing a protozoic change. By its inclusion of a political *pot pourri* of social democrats to political conservatives the new party spanned the widest ideological spectrum of any

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25 . Minutes of the Formation Congress of the Democratic Party, 7 April 1989.

26 . Minutes of the Formation Congress of the Democratic Party, 7 April 1989.

27 . Weekly Mail, 14 April 1989.

party since the Liberal Party. Importantly, however, the DP was also distinguished by its broad ethnic composition.

The extremes of political tradition comprising the young Democratic Party were graphically illustrated by the enthusiastic speculation of some ex-Independent Party and NRP members concerning the possibility of former Western Cape Administration Board chief Mr Timo Bezuidenhout joining the Democratic Party and standing for Parliament, whilst in the same forum, members of the PFP's Unrest Monitoring Action Committee discussed the problems and successes experienced in forging links with the squatter communities on the Cape Flats.<sup>28</sup>

The formation Congress failed, however, to deal with any policy matter of substance as the shelving of DP economic policy bore testimony. No issues single issue was debated, nor were any scheduled to be debated. This was political marketing *par excellence* and led to one commentator terming the spectacle "designer liberalism". Nevertheless, the event achieved its main purpose, namely to galvanise leadership and rank-and-file, revitalise flagging liberal spirits, and to put the DP on the political map.

Beneath the glitz and emotion of the political circus lay a number of thorny issues, however. Whereas the party could claim a breakthrough in terms of English and Afrikaner liberal unity, the party remained overwhelmingly white in composition and identity. The DP had a long way to go before it could become attractive to and meld with black liberals. Secondly, the sometimes paradoxical and contradictory nature of both political liberalism in South Africa, and more specifically, that inherent in the party's programme of action, began to emerge at the formation Congress. The location of the Democratic Party on the broad political spectrum was still indeterminate and contested. In his opening speech De Beer castigated the National Party, yet also distanced the DP from the ANC. The treatment of the NP and the ANC as equal enemies to the DP would bring to a spectacular halt any attempts to forge meaningful alliances with the extra-Parliamentary movement as determined by the third leg of the action programme. Whilst

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28 . This is a personal record of events from my own attendance at the dissolution and founding congresses.

Malan before, during, and after the formation Congress stressed that the DP would talk to any party, even those who did not share its goals and objectives, De Beer was at pains to emphasise:

We don't want to talk to everyone ... we will only co-operate with those who share our objectives.<sup>29</sup>

At a time of national protest against detention without trial, the DP leadership also failed to seize the opportunity to forge links with the extra-Parliamentary Movement on this basic human rights issue, even though observers from a number of MDM organizations were present at Congress. A further danger signal was issued by Pat Poovalingam, MP for Reservoir Hills in the House of Delegates, that his interpretation of DP policy was that it intended contesting the forthcoming general election in all three Houses of Parliament. Such a policy would have scuttled any potential alliance between the DP and the democratic movement, particularly should such a decision be taken without at least consultation with the leadership of the democratic movement.

A further disappointment of the Congress, and one that was to portend future developments, was the independent stance adopted by Dr Willem de Klerk who had earlier been strongly favoured to lead the party. A conspicuous absentee from the Congress was van Zyl Slabbert, who failed to forward a message of support to the party. The low profile of Helen Suzman also heralded the changing of the liberal old guard and the nearing of the end of a political generation.

A further matter of concern for the DP at Congress was the issuing of certain demands by the Congress of South African Trade Unions and UDF affiliates in order for the DP to become a 'recognised' movement outside Parliament. These included, *inter alia*:

To contribute to a solution the DP will have to not only call for, but be seen to be working towards achieving, an end to the state of emergency, an end to arbitrary detentions, the removal of troops from the townships, the unconditional release of all political prisoners and the unbanning of the ANC and other banned organisations. Also the unconditional return of all

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29 . Financial Mail, 14 April 1989.

exiles with guarantees for their safety, and the immediate end of all forms of apartheid, and free political activity with the right of freedom of speech, assembly, movement and association for all South Africans.<sup>30</sup>

Given its diffuse nature, and the differences in philosophy and strategy of its leadership, these demands obviously placed the DP leadership in an acute predicament. Even had it wanted to, the DP leadership could not have sold this set of demands to its white constituency at the time. That it had been served with demands further alienated many DP supporters from the Mass Democratic Movement. Whereas Malan had no problem with these demands, Worrall and De Beer both represented recognised constituencies, and could not be seen to be buckling to demands of the extra-Parliamentary movement. The party also came under fire from its critics on the left for its failure to consult the “people” in the formulation of its policies. The party’s formation, it was argued, had been conducted in an undemocratic manner, and was marked by secretive, top-down negotiations in “smoke-filled rooms”. An added criticism of the party was that its free-market orientation was interpreted by the black youth of South Africa as synonymous with racial capitalism and thus was an anathema.<sup>31</sup>

Noticeably, however, the DP leadership did not respond to the MDM’s demands and did not at any time actively or surreptitiously commit itself to meeting them in part or in full. Henceforth the focus of the party was to fight the looming election.

### The DP in Parliament

The egalitarian composition of the DP National Board, whilst representing the diversity of political opinion within the new party, disguised the relevant organisational strengths of the constituent elements of the young party. Whilst the affirmative action exercised in constructing the National Board was an important symbolic gesture to galvanise the centripetal forces and to convince the white voting public that, indeed, a new political party had been formed, former PFP stalwarts were incensed by the relegation of the party to rank equally with the four members of the Fourth Force, some of whom were to take their leave of the party within months. In order to counter the imbalance in the new

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30 . South, 11 May 1989.

31 . Leonard Suransky, 21 May 1989.

party's executive composition, ex-PFP MP's moved to re-capture control via the existing Parliamentary and organisational structures. Thus all Parliamentary leadership positions were filled by ex-PFP MP's at the first DP caucus meeting. None went to former NDM members and Worrall was excluded ostensibly because he was not yet a member of Parliament. Within a week of its formation these tensions threatened to rupture the party.

#### The National Board and exclusions

In April the DP caucus met to discuss the application for membership of three House of Representatives MP's, Charles Redcliffe and Cecil Kippen together with that of Jan van Eck. The events surrounding the treatment of the applications for membership proved acutely divisive, and emphasised the fractious nature of the new formation.

Apart from Slabbert, the principal figure to have remained aloof even from the NDM, after having left the PFP, was Jan van Eck. During the unification talks Van Eck had submitted an application to join the party, but the PFP's Chief Whip John Malcomess, who was "inches away from bringing down the axe on Van Eck"<sup>32</sup> just before he left the PFP, announced that, as far as his party was concerned, Van Eck would not get a nomination anywhere in the country. In Malcomess's view, Van Eck's political future was "non-existent".<sup>33</sup> Van Eck had responded with cautious optimism to the formation of the DP when expressing his interest in joining the party:

'n Party met die visie van 'n nie-rassige, demokratiese Suid Afrika is dringend nodig om mense te verenig wat ook die visie het. Dit lyk baie gunstig. Dit is 'n positiewe stap - veral nou dat dr. van Zyl Slabbert ook hierby ingeskakel is - wat 'n breë spektrum van die politiek, binne en buite die Parlement, dek.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, when received, Van Eck's application to join the party was an acutely sensitive one. The issues were complex and layered, but the DP's strategists and leadership as well as political observers and activists were cognisant that the handling of the Van Eck question would serve as a good indicator of the future direction of the party. The Van

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32 . Personal interview with David Dalling MP, 8 June 1993.

33 . Cape Times, 8 February 1989.

34 . Transvaler, 7 February 1989.

Eck issue thus took on a symbolic significance beyond the mere acceptance or otherwise of an independent MP into the party.

The dynamic operated at a number of levels and served to display in clear terms the numerous contradictions within the DP at its birth. At a personal level the ill-feeling amongst the former PFP leadership towards Van Eck for abandoning the party after winning the safe Claremont seat was deep. His outspokenness and extra-Parliamentary affiliations as a member of the UDF-affiliated Cape Democrats was also viewed as a potential threat to the delicate balance within the fledgling party. The primary consideration in the back of others' minds in dealing with the question was their own prospects of contesting the highly prized safe liberal seat of Claremont, occupied by Van Eck. The Van Eck issue also raised important questions about the degree of commitment the party would show to bridging the gap between political parties and formations of differing persuasions. To have excluded Van Eck would have sent a clear signal to the extra-Parliamentary movement. Indeed the paradox of a liberal democratic party, on the one hand, excluding Van Eck, whilst elevating the principal architect of the tricameral system to its leadership, would have indicated in the clearest terms that it was paying lip service to its avowed position of bridging the extra-Parliamentary/system politics cleavage. Clearly the image thereby created would have been of a party more concerned with the short-term and narrow interests of white politics than the longer term strategy of nation-building. Furthermore, the exclusion of Van Eck from the party, after Slabbert had been embraced as an advisor, would have been viewed as illogical. Should both Slabbert and Van Eck have been given a high profile in the party, however, the message to the extra-Parliamentary movement would have been quite different and encouraging.

For Van Eck, the question was less one of his membership of the DP *per se*, but rather:

It is more about the extent to which participation can be used to gain certain results for the democratic movement. My understanding is that with increased state repression and the narrowing scope of political activity, there is a general re-evaluation of Parliament and the extent it can be used to promote the cause of the democratic movement. The DP could become the rallying point for white democrats, and it would be desirable

for a party representing white democrats to link up with black democrats.<sup>35</sup>

UDF Publicity Secretary Murphy Morobe stated that Van Eck was one of the few MP's who had:

(B)uilt strong practical bonds with oppressed communities. For him to be denied participation in the new party would be highly revealing of those who cannot reconcile themselves to Van Eck's hands-on approach to questions of repression.<sup>36</sup>

In the case of the House of Representatives MP's the caucus vote was unanimously in favour of acceptance with one abstention. In Van Eck's case the vote was 12-6 in favour, with the rider that Van Eck was to be canvassed in order to ascertain whether or not he was prepared to abide by party discipline and policy and to inform him that acceptance into the party did not automatically mean his nomination as DP candidate for Claremont. Likewise, the three HoR MP's were to be told that their acceptance into the party did not mean that the party would support them in their candidature for the House of Representatives as no final decision had been taken on the party's participation in the these elections. This latter decision was influenced by the perceived desirability of alliance-building with the Labour Party.<sup>37</sup> However, at its 15 April 1989 meeting the DP National Board split along old party lines on the question of the applications. The former NDM members, backed by the Fourth Force voted against the acceptance of the coloured MP's because this ran contrary to the wishes of those involved in the struggle, and in favour of the admission of Van Eck into the party. The ex-IP elements opposed Van Eck and demanded that he apologise to Inkatha for comments he had made to a meeting of Cape Democrats that week, but were happy to admit the Coloured MP's. A compromise deal was struck between Worrall and Malan to keep out both Van Eck and the Coloured MP's in defiance of the caucus decision to accept them.<sup>38</sup> This compromise satisfied both Malan and Worrall but totally dissatisfied the ex-PFP MP's. The decision to reject

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35 . South, 16 March 1989.

36 . Weekly Mail, 31 March 1989.

37 . Argus, 18 April 1989.

38 . Cape Times, 19 April 1989.

all applications was justified by the National Board on the spurious grounds that Parliament was about to dissolve, and that it would be inappropriate to accept MP's at that stage.<sup>39</sup>

Van Eck responded that:

Their decision shows a lack of sensitivity for the large support for my membership amongst DP members and potential supporters in the Western Cape. The National Board's decision would put a stumbling block in the way of building greater unity amongst democrats to the left of the government. The DP appears to have become another conservative exclusive party.<sup>40</sup>

The National Board decision to exclude Van Eck produced a revolt in the ranks of the party's youth and amongst many in the Western Cape. The protest action included threats to resign from the party, refusals to collect or canvas for the party, and the cancellation of debit orders and pledges for the R20 million Democratic Future Fund.<sup>41</sup>

The tensions in the DP deepened when former PFP members made it clear that they believed the party had been hijacked by the former NDM and that "Lusaka was effectively dictating the terms". One former PFP MP called the decision an "act of chicanery" and apologised to Redcliffe for the events.<sup>42</sup>

This policy "defeat" at the hands of the National Board led the ex-PFP rebels to present the National Board meeting on 1 May with the final resolution taken by the PFP before its dissolution, that the DP elect a single leader before the general election. Had the motion succeeded, the resultant election of De Beer to the leadership of the party would have had the effect of sealing the re-ascendency of the PFP faction over the other three. The resignations, threat of resignations and the groundswell feeling opposing the National

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39 . Cape Times, 18 April 1989.

40 . Cape Times, 17 April 1989.

41 . Cape Times, 19 April 1989, personal interview with Jan van Eck MP, 7 June 1993 and Robin Carlisle MP, 24 May 1993.

42 . Business Day 19 April 1989.

Board decision caught Malan and Worrall off guard and led to a reconsideration of the deal.

At the following meeting of the National Board of the DP held on 1 May 1989, the decision not to accept the application for membership of the DP was overturned on a unanimous proposal of the three leaders. All four were accepted after lengthy discussions and on the condition that they accept party policy, discipline and that their acceptance in no way obliged the party to nominate them or support their candidature for election. The decision to accept the three Labour Party MP's was roundly condemned by the Labour Party which called the three political nonentities. Redcliffe, they warned, would become an albatross around the neck of the DP.

Not only did the events of the National Board fiasco serve to alienate membership and supporters but the MDM signalled its own dissatisfaction:

Obviously many of us are watching them (the DP) closely and are concerned about what is happening, specially the way they handled the Van Eck affair, and their duplicity with the Houses of Representatives and Delegates. They have now decided to accept Van Eck, but this is still not enough, we will have to wait and see.<sup>43</sup>

Thus a clear dichotomy emerged within the DP in its earliest days. For the sake of unity, the PFP had allowed the National Board to be loaded with NDM, Fourth Force and IP members who, in turn, colluded against the former PFP faction. On the other hand, the former PFP cabal retained its vast superiority in terms of party faithful and access to funding. The "PFP" retained three of the five most important nodes of power in the party, namely caucus, finance, and grass roots support. The revolt against the National Board indicated the relatively weak position of a body which retained authority, but little power. The fifth locus of party power, namely leadership, was forced onto the agenda of the 1 May National Board meeting but was temporarily defused by referring it to the six-

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43 . South, 11 May 1989.

person National Board Executive Committee for discussion. The signal from the “PFP” cabal was clear, however, it was serious about recapturing control of the party.<sup>44</sup>

At its subsequent meeting the National Board agreed to retain the *troika* leadership structure until the first party Congress in October. The decision was taken in the light of the apparent public acceptance of the arrangement and as an insurance against further internecine divisions. De Beer commented that there had been great enthusiasm for what the triumvirate had achieved and that “most” board members felt things should remain this way. Worrall added:

The triumvirate was originally adopted as a way of consolidating membership, and has clearly worked. People who have come to our meetings will have seen that the three of us supplement each other very well. I believe it will win us votes.<sup>45</sup>

A further reason for the postponement of the leadership question was that neither of the contenders, Worrall and De Beer, felt completely confident of winning a one-to-one contest.<sup>46</sup>

#### De Klerk abandons the Democratic Party

The events of the National Board were a fiasco and a month after its formation the young party suffered another humiliating set-back when Professor Willem de Klerk announced that he would no longer act as an advisor to the Democratic Party. De Klerk assured an anxious leadership that he had no differences with the DP on matters of policy, but wished to retain his independence in order to conduct persuasive discussions (*oorredende gesprek*) with political parties, which could not be achieved whilst attached to a single political party.<sup>47</sup> The root of his decision lay in the election of his brother FW de Klerk to the leadership of the National Party and the impression he had gained from private discussions leading him to declare:

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44 . Sunday Tribune, 7 May 1989.

45 . Business Day, 1 June 1989.

46 . Argus, 1 June 1989.

47 . Die Burger, 12 May 1989.

I believe he (FW de Klerk) deserves a chance. He is a good negotiator. But this has to be coupled with a move away from the criterion of a race as a cornerstone of a new constitution. It must also be accompanied by "meaningful reform".<sup>48</sup>

With the new NP leader in place and the promise of meaningful reform, Willem De Klerk also scaled down his earlier estimates of the DP winning 22% of the frustrated Nat vote, to some 6% to 8%. Although never formally a member of the Democratic Party, De Klerk's withdrawal of support was both a symbolic and substantive setback for the party. The much-heralded Fourth Force had lost its figurehead and the DP's access to an important Afrikaner constituency had been weakened.

Shortly thereafter the fledgling Democratic Party suffered a further loss, this time at the other end of its broad ideological and ethnic spectrum, when, at the age of 71, the "Cricket in the Thorn Tree", Helen Suzman, announced her retirement on 15 May 1989. Parliament's longest serving MP by 13 years at the time, explained her retirement was motivated by a belief that her:

(C)ontinued presence in the DP might be a liability for the party, because it wanted to expunge the image of the old PFP, which I epitomise to some extent. Not that I am being a martyr to the cause. I am not being drummed out. It is my decision alone. There comes a time when one must move on...As one of the founders of the Progressive Party clearly I am sad at the disappearance of the PFP which stood for a great deal that many people held in high regard. But they tell me there is a public imperative and who am I to buck the public imperative?<sup>49</sup>

Suzman's retirement was not unexpected, but still represented a symbolic blow to the DP and, together with the resignations of Ray Swart, Marius Barnard and John Malcomess, had the effect of vastly diminishing the weight of principled liberal discourse and opinion within the new party, thereby leaving an ideological vacuum. Henceforth the ideological tenor of the liberal wing of the party would be characterised by an uncomfortable clash between principled and pragmatic discourses yielding the party an amorphous catch-all ideological identity, which occasionally descended into ideological schizophrenia.

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48 . Business Day, 15 May 1989.

49 . Argus, 25 May 1989.

### Gains and positive dimensions of the formation of the DP

Nevertheless, despite acute labour pains and the best efforts of some to stifle the child in its birth, the new-born party had broken new political ground. The DP had made South African political history in becoming the first party with significant white support to stand for universal adult suffrage from its inception. It had also become the first party to have membership of all three houses of Parliament. The Democratic Party, both in its leadership corps and more importantly, in its membership structure, evinced an influx of Afrikaners who were young, upwardly-mobile middle-class members of the professions and the intelligentsia in a way that the PFP was simply unable to.<sup>50</sup> The degree of new Afrikaner support was also evidenced by the Democratic Party receiving guarded support from a number of prominent political journalists within the traditionally NP-supporting Afrikaans press. One Afrikaans newspaper even welcomed the formation of the DP. The editor of the *Transvaler*, Gerrit Velthuyzen, in his personal column, believed that the DP held exciting possibilities and that should the left of the political spectrum crumble it would be a tragedy. It was important, he argued, that the strong liberal tradition of the advocacy of civil rights and individual liberty be continued.<sup>51</sup>

The new party had also clearly captured the public's imagination and quickly enjoyed a wider support base than any of its predecessors. Whilst the collective leadership contested the ideological and strategic ownership of the party, at constituency level the DP took on the life of a party that was greater than the sum of its parts. The remarkable enthusiasm for a reconstructed liberal party translated into early organisational and recruitment successes. In the first two weeks of the party's existence 2 000 new members had joined, and within the same time frame, the three leaders had addressed 11 major public meetings and another 25 were planned. New constituency committees were established in areas such as Vereeniging and Klerksdorp. The DP also enjoyed early membership recruitment success in NP heartlands such as Johannesburg West and Florida. In the NP-held seat of Hillbrow membership jumped by more than 50%.<sup>52</sup>

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50 . *Die Burger*, 12 April 1989.

51 . *Transvaler*, 14 April 1989.

52 . *Business Day*, 25 April 1989.

Within weeks of the party's launch in the Western Cape Region some 2 000 new members had been signed up to boost membership to over 12 000. Of these, 500 new members had signed up in Stellenbosch alone.<sup>53</sup> Within one month of its formation the DP had recruited over 5 000 new members and a reported 15 000 to 17 000 people had attended its meetings.<sup>54</sup> Within five weeks of its formation the *Altests Mark en Menings* survey indicated that support for the party had risen from 22,5% to 24,2% of white voters.

A similar picture obtained in Natal where at one meeting held in the Pietermaritzburg City Hall in April, 1 200 heard co-leader Denis Worrall declare that the DP would become the official opposition after the election and the government of the country within five years.<sup>55</sup> Seemingly, despite the best efforts of the disparate factions within the party, the public imperative which had led to its formation, continued to demand its cohesion, as popular support at DP public meetings proved time and again.

Political liberalism, although differently packaged, was extending its pull beyond the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town and the Northern Suburbs of Johannesburg and was beginning to make its presence felt in cities such as Bloemfontein and Pretoria where the DP was drawing under-30-year-old Afrikaners in numbers. The message to the electorate in these previous liberal wastelands was that the new Democrats were distinguished from the old Progressives in that they not only stressed the importance of the traditional, liberal values, but were beginning to convince the white voter that they were in the business of gaining power in order to implement these policies. The pragmatic liberal message was beginning to take shape.

#### DP economic policy

By late July 1989 the conflagration over the vexed question of the economic identity of the Democratic Party had been resolved and the party released its economic policy document. In essence the document was a forerunner of the DP social market

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53 . Cape Times, 26 April 1989.

54 . Argus, 17 May 1989.

55 . Argus, 25 April 1989.

programme. It was marked by practical populist formulations and served as the party's economic manifesto for the forthcoming election. The central features of the manifesto were as follows: A DP government would be based as far as possible on the principles of private ownership and free enterprise, in which state involvement in the economy would be kept to a minimum. The document set out a broad policy framework and some immediate steps the party would take in order to give the economy a boost and to get it moving in the right direction.

The document proposes a four-stage strategy to fix the economy. The immediate steps it would take include the following:

- \* Reducing inflation to below 10% within three years by controlling money supply, decreasing government spending, and eliminating apartheid wastage.
- \* Freeing the Reserve Bank from government interference.
- \* Reviewing the role of the agricultural boards with a view to freeing prices to market forces.
- \* Easing punitive tax rates, giving incentives for people to work hard and accumulate capital, the separation of tax for married couples, reducing GST to below 10% and the removal of GST on medicines, and the removal of exorbitant and unnecessary taxes on petrol.
- \* The introduction of VAT and a graduated scale lower for basic goods and a higher rate for luxury items.
- \* The abolition of "golden handshakes" for politicians.
- \* A streamlined and effective civil service in which the deserving are rewarded.
- \* Encouraging economic growth through restoring confidence in the SA economy, through policies based on democracy.
- \* Eliminating demoralising corruption and derailing the "gravy train" (i.e. placing curbs on patronage).
- \* Appointing a Minister of Consumer Affairs to protect the consumer against price-rigging and by giving more muscle to the Consumer Council.

The policy document was predicated on the principle that it would be able to reduce taxes as long as the economy grew, which could be achieved by restoring investor confidence through democratic policies.

The role of the state would be limited to:

- \* The administration of the country through a streamlined bureaucracy and the guaranteeing of state security.
- \* The equitable upliftment and development of all South Africans, based on the ability of the tax base to provide the necessary capital and the needs of the deprived communities.
- \* The provision of institutional and physical infrastructure to support private initiative and train manpower. All South Africans would be encouraged to participate in the mainstream of economic activity.
- \* A role in the establishment of an orderly system of collective bargaining between employers and employees.

Structured with one eye firmly focused on the forthcoming general election, whilst the other focused on its patrons, this populist economic programme clearly held an appeal for a broad band of white middle-class voters. Whilst the economic programme adhered closely to the principles promoted and by liberal formations for 30 years, this was “designer economic policy” with the expressed purpose of winning votes. The DP’s economic programme not only gave focus to the party, but also sent a clear message to the white middle-class that it was the party best suited to promote its sectional interests, as well as those of the long-term national interest. The achievement of electoral success and the promotion of policies designed to maximise the realization of these objectives became the benchmark of the Democratic Party from its birth through to the 1989 general election.

Given that white voters were increasingly alienated from the National Party, the guiding principle for the DP in the forthcoming months was the non-alienation of existing and potential white DP supporters. However, electoral success was far from assured and it

was thus essential that the party present itself publicly as trustworthy, capable of governing, and united. Given the prevailing anti-Nationalist sentiment the DP would also have to focus its forthcoming campaign on helping the National Party politically to “self-destruct”. Thus for the DP the avoidance of controversy became the keyword in the run up to the election campaign.

The problem for the DP was that its heterodox political parentage caused it to lack unity of purpose. Hence its nascent internal contradictions would inevitably percolate through into the public arena. The immediate challenge confronting the leadership would be the retention of internal organisational cohesion for the period of the election campaign.

## CHAPTER TEN

The Democratic Party's performance in the 1989 general election is discussed in the final two chapters. It will be argued that the election took place against a backdrop of conditions highly unfavourable to the ruling National Party, which thereupon entered a period of reversal. It will be argued that the Democratic Party orientated its campaign to these conditions and sought to leverage them to its benefit. It will also be contended that despite ongoing organisational, strategic and ideological disputes within the party, the synergy resulting from the merger and the inertia of the election campaign propelled the DP to conceive, market and execute an effective and populist national election campaign. The second chapter on the election examines the detail of the campaign, its results and their significance for political liberalism in general and the Democratic Party in particular.

### The General Election

Although formally constitutive of the severely attenuated form of representative democracy in South African white politics, elections and referenda have frequently been used instrumentally by the ruling party as the constitutional lens through which to give focus to its electoral support base. However, the number of elections and referenda in South Africa during the 1980's evidenced the state's acute crisis of legitimacy and the tentativeness of the government's formative action programme. The repeated mandates sought by the government revealed in clear terms its attempts to retain hegemony and restructure the ruling political bloc. Although the hegemonic position of the securocratic structures in the form of the SSC in the formulation of policy during the period of crisis in both the total strategy and counter-revolutionary phases was earlier noted, there is a danger under this rubric of reducing all other dimensions of politics to an irrelevance. This is far from the case, as Hyslop points out:

Although enormously strong and centralised at the administrative and coercive level, the regime relies for its legitimation on the mechanisms of white elections, an arena in which it is threatened and under considerable pressure. It is only if we are prepared to understand concrete effects of this specific institutional mechanism of legitimation that we can appreciate

how white politics affects the national political situation. The need of government to gain white legitimacy places serious constraints upon it, while the particular alignment in can have a real effect on the course the state pursues.<sup>1</sup>

South Africa experienced an inordinate number of elections and referenda during the 1980's. These included the 1981 general election, the 1983 referendum, the 1984 House of Delegates and House of Representatives elections, the 1987 House of Assembly election, and the 1988 municipal elections. However, the 1989 general election was the most crucial since 1948, as for the first time, there seemed some possibility that the National Party might not win an overall majority.

#### The context of the 1989 election

The 1989 election was the second in succession to be held under a state of emergency. The election was qualitatively quite unlike its 1987 predecessor, however. A combination of factors conspired to turn the 1989 election into a watershed in white political history. For the first time in 41 years the National Party would be forced to fight a political rearguard action and to lose some of the vast political power it had both deftly and bluntly accrued to itself over four decades of uninterrupted rule.

The 1989 election was constitutionally unlike the 1987 election in that it was a general election for all three chambers of Parliament. Importantly, it was an election "imposed" on the government in terms of clause 9 of the constitution, which requires the State President to dissolve Parliament and to call a general election within five years of the commencement of a term of office.

Whereas the 1987 election was tactical, in that it was called by President Botha in order to capitalise on political factors favourable to the government and disadvantageous to the opposition, in contrast, the 1989 election was forced on the National Party due to PW Botha's failure to persuade the Labour Party to extend the life of Parliament beyond its statutory five-year term. Thus by the alienation of his erstwhile tricameral ally, primarily

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1. Jonathan Hyslop, 'Introduction: The State and Politics', in, South African Review 5, Ravan, 1989, p.6.

through the public humiliation of the Labour Party leader and former cabinet member Alan Hendrickse, Botha denied himself the advantage of political timing which proved critical.

The rupturing of relations between Botha and Hendrickse in effect heralded the death knell for the co-optive/co-operative relationship between the Labour Party and the ruling National Party. Thus by 1989 the tricameral system, far from being reformed from within, was beginning to collapse under its own weight. The web had begun to unravel.

The second factor militating against National Party electoral success was the irony of the efficacy of the state of emergency. The success of the security apparatus in quelling the nationwide uprising by 1989 stood in stark contrast to the siege mentality which pervaded the political consciousness of the white electorate during the 1987 election. In successfully curbing both the incidence and reportage of national unrest, the government had created both the reality and the illusion of relative normality. The government was thus trapped in a paradox of its own making. It could not claim, on the one hand to have the security situation under control, whilst at the same time abuse the security question to petrify white opinion behind it. The tool, so successfully used by the National Party since 1977, was thus blunted both by its overuse and increasing redundancy.

Thirdly, the "issue consciousness" of white voters had altered substantially within the intervening two years. Economic deprivation had become the uppermost issue in most white voters' minds, rather than the question of security. In particular, it had become clear to the white electorate that economic and financial sanctions against the Botha government were having a marked and damaging effect on their own livelihood. The National Party clearly lacked any clear idea of how to circumvent or come to grips with the economic malaise its policies had produced.

The fourth critical factor was the series of events set in motion by the cerebral haemorrhage suffered by PW Botha on 15 January 1989, his subsequent resignation as leader of the National Party on 2 February, 1989 and his forced abdication as State President a mere three weeks before the election. Apart from physically debilitating

Botha, the stroke had the consequence of weakening his political grip on power. In February 1989 he made the politically suicidal error of resigning as leader of the National Party. It soon became clear that although the *de jure* institutional authority of the Office of the State President is constitutionally derived, when separated from the political engine-room of power, namely the ruling party caucus, Botha's *de facto* hold on power was tenuous.

The election of NP Transvaal leader FW de Klerk as the National Party leader should also be seen in the light of the fact that his main challenger within caucus was the reformer Barend du Plessis, then Minister of Finance. De Klerk's narrow victory (69 votes to 61)<sup>2</sup> over his *verligte* challenger left him in no doubt about the weight of reformist opinion within his own caucus. The *verligte* challenge sent a clear and unmistakable signal to the new leader that accelerated political change was the only option open to him.

The final issue of importance in understanding the differences between the 1987 and 1989 elections was the coverage of the election by the state-controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation. Unlike all previous elections, and the 1987 one in particular, the SABC assured its viewers of a neutral service. In a statement released by the SABC, it stated that:

In fulfilling its role as a news medium, the SABC will strive for the highest degree of fair reporting within the broad framework of its broadcast policy. Standpoints will be reflected on grounds of their newsworthiness and appropriateness to the themes of programmes. The overriding objective will be to inform the voter fully.<sup>3</sup>

The rider of "within the framework of broadcast policy", gave DP spokesperson Peter Soal cause for concern, but an indication of the more balanced approach of the SABC Board was the broadcasting of open debates called "telepellations", which were designed

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2 . Robert Schrire, *Adapt or Die: The End of White Politics in South Africa*, Ford, 1991, p.111.

3 . *Argus*, 19 July 1989.

to give parties an equal hearing in the form of a television debate.<sup>4</sup> Given the overwhelmingly superior donor base of the NP compared to its major rivals, free television time was a considerable fillip to the Democratic Party's election campaign. More importantly, the DP representatives were found to out-perform their National Party protagonists on most occasions, according to polls taken in local newspapers. The importance of television delivery in modern elections became particularly clear during the 1989 campaign and as public communicators *par excellence* television debates strongly favoured the DP leadership and Worrall in particular.

#### The timing of the general election

Early in 1989 there emerged a range of pressures from within the National Party for an early general election. In terms of the optimal requirements of the ruling party it was desirable for the election to be held on the coat-tails of the government's success in negotiating a peaceful settlement leading to Namibian independence. However, to minimise the domestic conservative political fallout of the expected SWAPO victory, NP strategists reasoned that the election would have to be held before the Namibian election on 1 November.

It was also perceived in NP circles that due to a number of public debacles and public realisation that CP policy was increasingly untenable, NP planners reasoned that the tide of opinion was then turning against the CP. Other factors favouring the NP against the CP included that, if called, an early election would take place under the existing delimitation conditions, which in the CP stronghold of Transvaal, had led to under-representation of 13 seats.<sup>5</sup>

An early election would also attempt to catch the DP with its guard down and without it having resolved the leadership question. Looming by-elections in the constituencies of Hillbrow, Lydenburg, and East London City were also a source of concern for the government at the time as two of its MP's had resigned in disgrace. A further issue

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4 . Argus, 19 July 1989.

5 . Rupert Taylor, 'Between Apartheid and Democracy: The South African Election of 1989', in Moss and Obery (Eds), South African Review 5, Ravan, 1989, p.63.

impelling the NP machinery towards an early election was its confidence that it was best able to sustain a long election campaign.

However, contrary to the logic of NP strategists and the weight of opinion within the party, State President PW Botha declared in a television interview in the middle of March that he intended seeing his term out to the maximum which, in this case, was extendable to March 1990. This caused a near-revolt amongst Nationalists and engendered deeper animosity between De Klerk and Botha such that in response to the groundswell of protest and after caucusing with his party, De Klerk met with State President Botha and an agreement to compromise was struck.<sup>6</sup> Having exchanged frank views with his successor, Botha announced at a joint sitting of Parliament on 6 March 1989, that he had changed his mind about not holding a general election that year and that the term of the State President would expire after five years on 4 September 1989. This critical strategic victory for De Klerk over Botha was important in cementing his NP leadership and yielded him enhanced authority and prestige locally and internationally, to stamp his own identity on the conduct of the election campaign. Asked to comment on Botha's announcement, De Klerk responded, "You can see I am smiling".<sup>7</sup>

#### DP reaction to the announcement of the general election

For the *troika*-led fledgling Democratic Party the election was a baptism of fire. In contrast to the National Party, which had been in existence for some 77 years, for 41 of which it had ruled the country, on the day of the 6 September election the Democratic Party would have existed for a mere 150 days. The calling of the election had the effect, however, of galvanising the party and of giving the unification process a sense of urgency and purpose. Asked to comment on the announcement, Worrall responded:

It means in effect that after only two years there is a chance of winning back the seats we lost in 1987 and of getting a creative party as the official opposition.<sup>8</sup>

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6 . Rapport, 26 March 1989.

7 . Cape Times, 7 April 1989.

8 . Cape Times, 7 April 1989.

The successes of the PFP's contestation of the 1988 municipal elections had left the Western Cape, and Southern Transvaal region of the party in particularly good organisational and financial shape to fight the general election.<sup>9</sup> In the less affluent regions the party also reported unprecedented organisational enthusiasm. The revival of liberal opposition was particularly noticeable in the Eastern Cape. In the Albany constituency, Professor Ian MacDonald, campaign manager for DP candidate Errol Moorcroft, noted an enthusiasm from volunteers that had not been seen since the 1950's.<sup>10</sup>

Exploiting this apparent enthusiasm for political liberalism in the Eastern Cape, Worrall argued, at a meeting in King William's Town, that the DP had developed an identity independent of the three parties from which it sprang. It was, he claimed, demonstrated by its level of support compared to that of its founding elements. Indeed, the final polls before the election campaign showed that the DP enjoyed 30% of the popular support, whereas the PFP had fallen to 9% before its dissolution.<sup>11</sup> Worrall also sought to bring the business community squarely behind the DP:

There is a buoyancy, a sense of mission, and sense of purpose in the DP. And all of this, I would like the business community of South Africa to know, is being done on a shoestring compared to the almost endless cash resources which seem to be available to the National Party. I suggest businessmen who talk about "giving FW a chance" think again. They are backing the wrong horse.<sup>12</sup>

### The DP philosophy

Soon after the election announcement co-leader Zach de Beer stamped a clear classical South African liberal identity on the new party which sought to distinguish it from an increasingly reformist-sounding National Party. He summarised the DP philosophy as having two overriding objectives: The first was the creation of a single, harmonious

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9 . The Star, 2 April 1989.

10 . Sunday Times, 13 August 1989.

11 . *Mark en Menings* poll, of the third week of July. In the same poll, NP support had dropped to 40,6%, and Conservative Party support was down to 23,1%. Weekly Mail, 28 July 1989.

12 . Citizen, 11 August 1989.

nation. The second was to provide all with a steadily improving quality of life. For De Beer the basis of harmonious nation-building was the principle of universal justice. This meant that the citizenry had to enjoy all the fundamental human rights characteristic of western democracies. The DP held that these basic human rights, such as freedom of association and speech, assembly, movement and the right to acquire, hold and dispose of property were to be entrenched within a constitution. Most importantly, citizens had to enjoy universal and equal adult suffrage. De Beer stressed that law and order had to be retained, but not detention without trial. Bannings were inimical to this process, he warned, as was the retention of any legislation based on race.

The second aim of the party was to improve, in a sustainable manner, the quality of life of all South Africans. South Africa, he argued, shared the characteristics of other third-world countries, namely, a pattern of increasing population growth, but stagnant economic growth. To reverse this trend, he argued, apartheid had to be scrapped and the Democratic Party elected to power.<sup>13</sup>

With the vital exception of the advocacy of universal adult suffrage, De Beer's philosophy for the DP was a revisitation of the classical liberal founding principles of the Progressive Party, discussed in chapter two. That these principles were still espoused by the repository of political liberalism in South Africa thirty years later, and yet were now welcomed by a broad spectrum of white opinion and support, indicated the slow but steady popular shift towards an acceptance of liberal democracy, but with the important rider that a credible political vessel for these values had now been fashioned.

#### DP electoral potential

The DP entered political life with 19 seats in Parliament, and requiring a net gain of four seats to oust the CP as the official opposition. DP electoral success or failure would, to a large degree, hinge on whether the party could attract all the support enjoyed by the previous constituent elements of the party, as well as mining the rich seam of the

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13 . Citizen, 11 April 1989.

disenchanted 24% within the National Party. This, after all had been the *raison d'être* of the tortuous unification process.

At a meeting of its National Board held on 31 May 1989 the decision was taken by 14 votes to 3 that the party should fight the forthcoming election on a broad, as opposed to a narrow front.<sup>14</sup> The targeting of constituencies to be contested hinged on a number of variables. Obviously the principal determinant was the degree of “winnability” of the seat. Secondly, the present and perceived future value of contesting the seat in terms of public exposure of the new party. Thirdly, the functionality of fighting the seat in terms of fighting a broad national campaign. Fourthly, whether or not the votes attracted by a DP candidate would be likely to allow the Conservative Party to take the seat, thereby undermining the DP’s efforts to become the official opposition. It was also perceived that should the DP vote be seen to split the moderate vote and give rise to CP electoral gains, this would have a negative impact on press and public attitudes towards the party. The final criteria were, as always, the bottom line with all parties, namely whether financial and human resources were available, including a suitable candidate.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from the 19 seats held, DP strategists focused intensively on a further 24 “winnable” seats. These comprised ten in the Cape, seven in Natal and seven in the Transvaal. The party also sought substantially to expand its vote and general support in a further 29 constituencies, whilst another 16 were categorised as “flagwave” seats.<sup>16</sup> These were seats that, although the Party could not win, would lay the groundwork for future growth as well as help the DP to project a national campaign.

The top priority on the Reef was for Brian Goodall to win back Edenvale which the Nationalists took in 1987 with a majority of 168. The other priority was to win back Hillbrow which the DP expected to do because it had lost the seat by just 90 votes and the NP candidate Leon de Beer had been jailed for electoral fraud. To win North Rand

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14 . Minutes of a National Board Meeting of the Democratic Party, 31 May 1989.

15 . Memorandum from Tian van der Merwe to the Standing Committee of the DP National Board, 17 May 1989.

16 . Electoral schedule of the Democratic Party, undated, 1989.

(1987 = -1 197 votes) would be an important victory for the DP as it would translate into a swing of eight percent towards the party, but would also be a major psychological breakthrough as the party's first victory in a predominantly Afrikaans constituency. The other possibility for the DP in Johannesburg was to recapture Bezuidenhout (1987 = -2 442 votes) in which the PFP were trounced by the NP in 1987, but the hope was that the conservative vote would be split, thus allowing the DP to creep in. Nevertheless, this would necessitate a 17% swing to the DP. The most optimistic forecast still did not put Waterkloof (1987 = -2 650 votes) or Benoni (1987 = -2 798 votes) within sight of the DP where swings of 20% and 22%, respectively, were demanded for victory.

The DP expected and planned to do particularly well in Natal as the IP had shown up strongly in the province and, indeed, the DP also tailored its identity and campaign in part specifically to retrieve the lost Natal voter. The Natal priority seats were Umhlanga (1987 = -557 votes) and Umbilo (1987 = -480 votes) where swings of 5% were required to bring them into the DP camp. The campaigning of Worrall in Natal was designed to draw in the many old UP/NRP supporters who had been seduced by the scare tactics of the NP in the 1987 election, their inherent political conservatism notwithstanding. The DP expected to win Mooi River (1987 = -1 807 votes) which was previously held by Ralph Hardingham of the NRP until his retirement from politics. Both Pietemarienburg seats were also high priority campaigns for the DP. Maritzburg North (1987 = -1 121 votes) required a 9% shift in moderate voter sympathy, whereas the more difficult Maritzburg South (1987 = -1 509 votes) constituency required some 15% swing make it secure. The same order of swing was required in South Coast (1987 = -1 419 votes), Durban Point (1987 = -1 230 votes) and Amanzimtoti (1987 = -1 884 votes). The DP remained hopeful in Umfolozi where independent candidate John Blignaut had put up a good performance in 1987.

In the Western Cape the recapturing of the "A" category seats of Wynberg (1987 = -97 votes) and the gaining of Simon's Town (1987 = -268 votes) from the NP took priority. Attention was again to be focused on Helderberg (1987 = -39 votes), in which the DP expected a top-class performance from David Gant, given his profile in the area and the

type of campaign fought by Worrall in 1987. At the outer limits of the bounds of possibility was Stellenbosch (1987 = -1 781 votes), which required a massive swing of 17% in favour of the DP over the Independent Esther Lategan's good performance in 1987.

In the Eastern Cape and Border the immediate priorities were the recapturing of Albany (1987 = -844 votes) and Walmer (1987 = -539 votes), both of which the PFP lost to the NP in 1987. The other seat within the realms of possibility for the DP was King William's Town (1987 = -2 731 votes) which, until 1987 was an NRP seat, but would require a swing of some 20%. Others which seemed out of reach were the East London City (1987 = -3 782 votes) and East London North (1987 = -3 873 votes) seats.<sup>17</sup>

However, almost half of the 19 Democratic Party seats were held in the 1987 election by relatively small majorities and the young party therefore expected stiff challenges from the National Party in: (margin of victory in the 1987 election in brackets) Green Point (39), Gardens (486), Port Elizabeth Central (596), Greytown (676), Durban Berea (769) and Durban Central (1 360).<sup>18</sup>

#### The DP hung Parliament strategy and splitting the right-wing vote

Leading from the "balance of power" strategies of the PFP and IP, the Democratic Party articulated its immediate electoral goal as the forcing of a hung Parliament. Such a strategy would require the party to field as many strategically-placed candidates as possible, even in constituencies where the DP stood no chance of victory, in order to weaken the NP. The winning of the targeted 43 seats, together with the splitting of the reform vote, would serve to reduce the NP's representation in Parliament to less than the required 84 seats needed to form a government.

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17. Sunday Star, 27 August 1989. Neil Ross argued in a personal interview that constituencies such as the two East London seats were capable of being won with more funds and two more weeks of campaigning.

18. Argus, 15 April 1989.

The "going for power" dimension of the strategy would result from the NP (bearing in mind the strong reformist sentiment within the NP caucus) requiring the support of the DP to govern, thus yielding the DP political leverage in the achievement of its policy objectives. The table below summarises the overall electoral shifts required for the achievement of a hung Parliament.

<b>ELECTORAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A HUNG PARLIAMENT</b>					
<b>Swings needed for CP to gain seats from the NP</b>					
	0%	2%	4%	6%	8%
CP present seats	Stilfontein Wonderboom Hercules Rustenburg* Pretoria West Parys Sasolberg (vote split in 1987)	Lydenburg Krugersdorp Meyerton Roodplat Kuruman Potchefstroom Newcastle	Springs Gezina Heilbron Innesdal Ladybrand*	Nelspruit Vereeniging Maraisburg Smithfield Geduld Klerksdorp Kuduspoort	Oudtshoorn De Aar Fsmith Vryberg Primrose Boksburg Welkom Bethlehem Brentwood Alberton
Running total	29	36	41	48	58
<b>Swings needed for the DP to gain seats from the NP</b>					
DP present seats		Wynberg Hillbrow Edenvale Simon's Town Walmer Helderberg	Umhlanga North Rand Maritzburg North Umbilo	Maritzburg - South South Coast	Albany Waterkloof Durban Point Amanzimtoti
Running total	21	27	31	33	37
Combined total	29	63	72	81	95
* Indicates the swing required is a rough estimate, because the CP or DP did not fight the seat in 1987 or there are special conditions. NB Mooi River is regarded as DP held.					

Adapted from Financial Mail, 31 August 1989.

Given the unfavourable general political climate and the fear of a burgeoning right wing, the DP's hung Parliament strategy unnerved the National Party, particularly in the Transvaal. The DP's contestation of constituencies such as Potchefstroom held by Minister Louis le Grange (NP majority 558) and Vereeniging held by NP leader FW de

Klerk (NP majority 1 524) could have been the critical factor in tipping the balance of the Transvaal in favour of the Conservatives.<sup>19</sup>

Other cabinet ministers whose seats were held by a slender majority included Chris Heunis in Helderberg, Eli Louw in Namaqualand, Dr Gerrit Viljoen in Vanderbijlpark, Sam de Beer in Geduld, George Bartlett in Amanzimtoti, Dr Org Marais in Waterkloof, Leon Wessels in Krugersdorp, Amie Venter in Krugersdorp, and Piet Badenhorst in Oudtshoorn.<sup>20</sup>

Besides the enormous financial cost to the party, the hung Parliament strategy placed many DP supporters, in the Transvaal in particular, in an unenviable and confusing dilemma. In those seats where the NP candidate had won by a narrow majority over the CP candidate in 1987, a vote for the DP may well have split the right-wing vote, thereby allowing the CP to be elected. In the case of Springs, the NP had won the seat in 1987 with 6 532 votes to the CP's 5 639 and the PFP's 1 325. Many English-speaking voters felt that the CP had strengthened its position since the previous election and, in the case of Springs, it was perceived that more blue-collar workers were entering the city, making it a stronger candidate for a CP gain.<sup>21</sup> The DP attempted to counter this concern by arguing that the forthcoming election ought to be viewed more as a referendum for the policies of the new party, and important, therefore, to vote for the party of one's conviction, regardless of whether this split a vote in favour of the CP. The DP argued that there was no chance of the CP achieving the required 87 seats in the House of Assembly under any given scenario.

#### NP seeks electoral deal

The hung Parliament strategy prompted the National Party to attempt to strike a deal with the DP in key constituencies in the Transvaal. The National Party approached the DP to withdraw its candidate from the Modderfontein constituency held by Defence Minister General Magnus Malan. In return, the NP offered to withdraw its candidate from the

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19 . Rapport, 3 June 1989.

20 . Argus, 24 April 1989.

21 . Star, 6 August 1989.

Sandton election, to withhold funding from the Edenvale constituency, and to refrain from using “ANC *gevaar*” tactics against the DP in the area. Former cabinet minister Hendrik Schoeman also wrote to DP leader Zach de Beer requesting that the DP not put up a candidate in Delmas. The third such incident was an attempt by the NP to stop the DP putting up a candidate in the marginal Geduld seat held by *verligte* Deputy Minister of Education Sam de Beer.<sup>22</sup> The DP’s National Board rejected the Malan offer and concluded:

We wish to make it clear that we will not be party to any quiet deals to frustrate the democratic choice of voters. As a senior member of a government which has shown little regard for its responsibilities, General Malan is just the type of candidate who should be vigorously opposed. We view this offer as part of the Nat malaise of looking after themselves at the expense of the country.<sup>23</sup>

Worrall declared that the NP’s Modderfontein offer indicated that the DP was “already shaking the NP tree.”<sup>24</sup> The DP moved quickly to assure the reform voter that mathematically and politically it was impossible for the CP to become the government and that scare tactics by the NP to get people to vote NP in three-way contests were merely a ruse. DP leadership buttressed their arguments with the results of June polling figures that gave the CP 18% of the vote and the DP, after only six weeks in existence, some 26% of the vote. The DP also attempted to demonstrate that in terms of voter statistics, the CP would have had to win all the Afrikaans-speaking votes in the country to achieve the required 84-seat majority in Parliament, and that this was impossible.<sup>25</sup> Acting National Board Chairman Tian van der Merwe responded to the entreaties of the ‘closet Nats’ who urged the DP to stand back in three-cornered fights in order not to split the NP vote and thereby ensure the CP was kept out of the seat as follows:

From our perspective, there is little difference between the consequences of NP rule or CP policies. If some commentators are hoodwinked by the sugar-coating of Nationalist apartheid, let them look a little deeper. Voters had a right to express their particular political opinion at the ballot box and political commentators had no right to deny them that right or to force them into a choice between shades of

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22 . *Sunday Star*, 18 June 1989,

23 . *Sunday Star*, 18 June 1989 and DP National Board Meeting minutes.

24 . *Cape Times*, 21 June 1989.

25 . *Argus*, 21 June 1989.

apartheid. To save the NP in any seat would be inconsistent with the DP's avowed goal of removing the NP from power. The CP was spawned as a direct result of NP policy and was steeped in decades of racism. It is the DP's right and duty to put its viewpoint to as many constituencies as possible and to give as many voters as possible the chance to vote for the party of their choice. The DP is serious about power and it is its aim to achieve a hung Parliament after the 1989 election.<sup>26</sup>

The NP argument was also based on the false premise that, in the absence of a DP candidate, a DP supporter would vote for the NP as many DP supporters would not vote for any racist party.

#### DP political marketing strategy

In May 1989 the Democratic Party had convened a three-day "Indaba" to discuss and workshop its 1989 electoral marketing strategy. The workshop conducted a series of "SWOT" (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analyses and, leading from this, adopted a political strategy based on Von Clausewitz's classical theories of warfare as applied to political marketing. This conception of marketing warfare had three themes. Firstly, "defensive marketing warfare", was the strategy best adopted by market leaders and entailed defending one's advantage by having the courage to attack, and by blocking any pre-emptive initiatives by one's competitors. DP strategists accepted that this fairly described the position of the National Party. The second strategy considered was "offensive marketing warfare". This entailed identifying the "enemy's" strong point, finding the weakness in the strong point and attacking the weak point with concentrated forces. Broadly this was accepted as an appropriate strategy for opposition parties. The third strategy was that of "flanking marketing warfare". This called for the party to move into an uncontested area, to use tactical surprise and to pursue and follow through its achieved tactical advantage. The consensus emerging from the Indaba was that the strategy of "offensive marketing warfare" was the most appropriate for the peculiar circumstances obtaining at the time of the 1989 election, although the "flanking strategy" was viewed as having issue specific utility and could be used in constituencies and regions with unique features.

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26 . Cape Times, 24 July 1989.

Having accepted the broad framework of the offensive warfare strategy, the Indaba identified the National Party's strengths as those of safeguarding security and controlling reform; its sense of permanence for the white voter; the "give FW de Klerk a chance", new leader/new initiative axis; the fear of the CP/AWB; and the perception held that the National Party was the natural home of Afrikaners. Beneath the armoury of National Party's strengths, the DP strategists identified a range of weaknesses and vulnerabilities. In terms of the security question, the clearest governmental weakness was that its image of being strong on security was more apparent than real, given the ongoing threat to society caused by NP policy. That whites voted more through fear than hope, indicated the NP's inability to provide real security. Such security as was provided by the National Party came at an unacceptably high price. DP strategists also reasoned that the NP's reform programme lacked vision and was totally unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of black people.

Regarding the sense of NP permanence, DP strategists identified that they could turn this to their advantage by stressing that despite its political longevity, the government had failed to deliver any credible political solutions. Furthermore, the entrenched position of the NP could be turned against it by highlighting the profligacy and corruption this had produced at the expense of the taxpayer and the public in general. As the government's economic record was particularly abysmal, the DP developed its central electoral theme around the NP's culpability in the creation of "creeping poverty".

The third strength of the NP was that of its new leader FW de Klerk. The weakness of De Klerk, and in particular his reformist, "new initiative" image, lay in his track record as one of the most conservative members of cabinet. DP strategists thus reasoned that the party would need to focus on De Klerk's public political record and pronouncements rather than attempting to tackle his public persona.

The final strength of the NP was that it was perceived as integral to an identity with Afrikanerdom and offered more of a social church than just a political party. In order to make the DP attractive to Afrikaners, its strategists argued that the party would have to fight on as broad a front as possible and that the trans-ethnic appeal of Denis Worrall

would have to be maximised in the campaign. In keeping with this strategy a “moderate rhetoric” was urged in order not alienate those “agonizing inside” the NP. Thus the DP would have to project the National Party as outmoded and unable to face up to the new challenges. Conversely, the DP would have to attempt to market itself as an alternative democratic government.<sup>27</sup>

The corollary of this task was the identification of the ‘SWOT’ of the Democratic Party. Its strengths were regarded as its vision, its ability to negotiate with and “deliver” meaningful partners, the fact that it had in fact united the fragmented opposition thus setting the pattern for nation- building, and consequently offered real long-term peace and prosperity. The DP enshrined and exemplified the increasingly popular beliefs in human rights, justice and fairness, as well as now having the ability to project a trustworthiness. It also viewed its strong international links as a potential asset over the increasingly isolated NP government.

DP weaknesses were regarded as principally those of the public perception of the *troika*, the liberal “weak-on-security” image; the indecisive/inconsistent image created by the participation/acceptance of membership question. Finally, at that point it was perceived that DP policy lacked clarity of substance and public value.<sup>28</sup> Shortly after the Indaba the validity of the Von Clausewitzian analysis was put to the test by the DP.

#### DP redefines security

Leading from its adopted Von Clausewitzian political marketing strategy, a vital task of the DP, both in the long term and in particular during the election campaign, was to redefine the conception of security for the white electorate. As was noted in chapter 3, in terms of the securocratic definition, opposition to the government and its security legislation during the period of crisis, was tantamount to sedition. For a political party to espouse views strongly at variance with those of the securocratic ideologues was to be branded dangerously naive, and, by definition, unfit to govern.

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27 . Democratic Party ‘Political Marketing Strategy : General Election 1989’, 19 May 1989, pp.1-5.

28 . *ibid*, pp.6-7.

Thus in keeping with the securocratic mind-set, the tried and tested ‘*swart en rooi gevaar*’ tactics, and indeed with the Von Clausewitzian “defensive marketing warfare” strategy, early in the election campaign the government, or factions within it, notably Magnus Malan and Adriaan Vlok, attempted to polarise public opinion against the DP and to engender the view that it was too close to the ANC and the MDM. The tactic first emerged in an NP advertisement in a Sunday newspapers of the first week of August, depicting Wynand Malan and DP economics policy advisor Sampie Terreblanche together with SACP Secretary General Joe Slovo and ANC information head the late Johnny Makhatini. The advertisement noted that Malan was a frequent visitor to the ANC in Lusaka, and said of Terreblanche that he was “well-known for his socialist tendencies”.<sup>29</sup>

Rather than reacting defensively, and in keeping with the DP’s “offensive marketing warfare” strategy, Malan responded to the advertisement by stating that the DP had used the same photograph in an informational pamphlet a few weeks before without any negative comment whatsoever.<sup>30</sup> The DP response to the campaign was to emphasise the fact that the NP had used the smear tactic so early in the campaign, which indicated a degree of desperation within its propaganda machinery. The NP strategy appeared increasingly anachronistic and counterproductive. Moreover, as a number of factors militated against its propaganda having the devastating effect it had had in the 1987 election campaign.

The most salient of these was the ANC’s curtailment of its insurgency campaign and the specific avoidance of “soft” targets such as the Wimpy Bar and Ellis Park bombings of 1987. Secondly, a host of businessmen, academics, students and leading sports administrators had held discussions with the ANC in the intervening two years. But the final contradiction in the NP smear campaign was the face-to-face discussions held between President PW Botha and Nelson Mandela at Tuynhuis. This meeting, together with the revelations that ongoing discussions had been held between senior cabinet

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29 . Cape Times, 7 August 1989.

30 . Vrye Weekblad, 11 August 1989.

ministers and Mandela for some years, served both to “legitimate” Mandela as an important leader, and remove any further doubt about the importance of speaking to the ANC. The DP seized the opportunity to launch a counter-offensive against the NP as DP co-leader Denis Worrall warned:

If white South Africans are afraid and insecure it is because of Mr FW de Klerk and the NP government’s inability to provide answers for the future. They are insecure because of the deficiencies of NP policy. But the obvious failing of the National Party is that it has neither satisfied whites nor given black South Africans a sense of confidence that they can realise their aspirations by peaceful means. And this is because the NP has a false sense of law and order and security. Mr FW de Klerk has come to think of law and order and security in terms of detaining people without trial, threatening and closing down newspapers, intimidating universities and generally acting as a bully. The concern of the State President and his Nationalist colleagues is the maintenance of the existing situation. That is what they mean by law and order.<sup>31</sup>

This was an important departure for the DP as for the first time, a liberal democratic party had exhibited confidence in challenging the National Party on the security question. This assertiveness clearly demonstrated Worrall’s commitment to rid the DP of its “opposition mentality”. Worrall affirmed:

We will be promoting real security, both by creating a political and economic climate which offers a future for young people, and through measures like doubling the police force. And we are presenting fresh constitutional vision based on universal adult franchise in a federal system.<sup>32</sup>

Co-leader Wynand Malan accused the government of creating a condition of insecurity for over 41 years which had resulted in the country’s emotional and spiritual security being threatened by the National Party government.<sup>33</sup> The DP’s counter-offensive had the effect of blunting the National Party’s hackneyed and increasingly anachronistic electoral white fear tactics. Natal coastal region chairman Mike Ellis commented:

We can hardly believe it’s real. Everything the NP has tried to smear the DP has not worked. This is probably because the National Party has no answers to the

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31 . Sunday Tribune, 16 April 1989.

32 . ibid.

33 . Argus, 17 May 1989.

real issues of the economy and security and the voters are not being fooled by its propaganda.<sup>34</sup>

#### Ex-Security establishment candidates stand for the Democratic Party

Of critical importance for the DP in boosting its efforts to redefine the security question was the range of high-ranking former SADF and SAP personnel it attracted as candidates in the election. As discussed in the previous chapter General Bob Rogers, former Chief of the Air Force, had publicly identified with the DP at its launch and subsequently made himself available as a DP candidate in the forthcoming election.<sup>35</sup> In announcing her candidacy for the DP, Colonel Hilda Burnett, the former head of the SADF Women's College at George, explained that she had been a member of the NP and had voted in favour of the new constitution in the 1983 referendum. The electorate was still waiting for the step in the right direction to materialise, however. Another in the growing list of former security establishment figures endorsing the DP was former SAP Brigadier Ernest Schnetler. Schnetler accused the SAP of blatant nepotism, and objected to the government forcing the police to "do their dirty work".<sup>36</sup>

It is instructive to note how both General Bob Rogers and General Wally Black rationalised their decision to stand as DP candidates. In the case of Rogers, he explained:

You only need a defence force in case political action fails. Morally I've always been against apartheid. The theories of revolutionary and ideological wars taught in SA military colleges which hold that, ultimately, only government, with the consent of the governed, can succeed were not implemented by the political establishment. The politicians just left us in the lurch. Either the Nats don't understand security or they understand it but refuse to face the facts because they don't like what follows from an understanding of the word. Economic security is an absolute must if you want to have a secure country. The proposition is a simple one: You must have the people on your side ... and this SA refuses to do point blank.<sup>37</sup>

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34 . Argus, 5 September 1989.

35 . Sunday Tribune, 4 June 1989.

36 . Sunday Times, 23 July 1989.

37 . Sunday Times, 27 August 1989.

General Wally Black, former Chief of General Operations at Defence Force HQ, argued:

We, the DP, are not soft. The NP is reckless with our security by not addressing the root cause of our problems. And the root cause is the lack of political rights for all South Africans - that is why we have unrest and live in a state of emergency.<sup>38</sup>

In a politically mature and strategically incisive observation, Black notes that the government made a critical error by:

(A)ttempting to sublimate demands for political rights by black South Africans through socio-economic upliftment in the black townships. SA is now in the second phase of revolution - open confrontation with the government and defiance of its authority - and urgent political solutions are needed to avoid entering the third phase of guerilla warfare.<sup>39</sup>

#### A home for disillusioned Nationalists and Afrikaners?

In keeping with the findings of the DP's marketing Indaba, a further important area of focus was to challenge the conception that the National Party was the natural home of the Afrikaner. As we have noted there were two dimensions to this thrust. One was a power dynamic the logic of which demanded that if the DP wanted to achieve Parliamentary leverage it had to break into the more than 50% of the electorate controlled by the National Party. The second dimension was both class- and philosophically- driven in that many middle-class Afrikaners were indeed disillusioned with the policies and prescripts of the National Party and genuinely sought new political solutions. The task for the DP was to meld these demands. The DP was given a major boost in this task by the announcement of the candidacy of a number of high profile ex-National Party and Afrikaner establishment figures.

In a major fillip for the DP and concomitant loss to the National Party, Dr Teunis Schleubusch, the former NP MPC for Queenstown, announced his availability as a candidate for the DP. He gave his reasons for quitting as no longer having confidence in certain NP leaders and Chris Heunis in particular. Shortly thereafter Mr Kobus Jordaan,

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38 . Sunday Times, 27 August 1989.

39 . Sunday Times, 27 August 1989.

former senior constitutional negotiator, the youngest ever NP Senator and Commissioner-General to Gazankulu, and possible future leader of the NP in Natal, announced that he was going to stand for election as a DP candidate in the NP-held Natal constituency of Umhlanga. He explained his break with the NP as being more than just a break with a political party. To change sides was not an easy decision because of the hegemony of Afrikaner organisations, such as the Dutch Reformed Church. The main reason for his split was "the total inability of the NP to grasp issues". As a chief negotiator in the Department of Constitutional Development Jordaan had been tasked with making contact and exchanging ideas with representative leaders of the extra-Parliamentary movement. This experience and the handling of his confidential reports on his findings by the State Security Council convinced him that the NP government was unable or unwilling to lead the country through a political transition. Jordaan also believed the rejection of the Kwa Zulu/Natal Indaba proposals was a mistake.<sup>40</sup>

Afrikaans journalist and sister-in-law of Cape Administrator Kobus Meiring, Mrs Martie Meiring, also announced her candidature for the young Democratic Party. Meiring was to stand in the strongest NP-held seat of Pretoria East with a majority 8 242 in 1987. In explaining her decision she stated simply:

Jong Afrikaners is keelvol. Hulle soek nou politieke inspraak en hulle soek dit deur die DP.<sup>41</sup>

#### Slabbert and the DP

Perhaps the clearest indication of the appeal of the DP and the opportunities attendant on both its creation and the "new political thinking" pervading the extra-Parliamentary movement, was the agreement of former PFP leader Van Zyl Slabbert to seriously consider the nomination as the DP candidate in the Stellenbosch constituency.<sup>42</sup> Whereas before the formation of the DP the combined Stellenbosch membership of the PFP, IP and NDM was 800, hundreds of new voters had registered on the back of the wave of

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40 . Personal interview with Kobus Jordaan MP, 20 May 1993.

41 . Vrye Weekblad, 30 June 1989.

42 . Sunday Times, 4 June 1989.

expectancy in the constituency. Since the launch of the DP a student branch had also been formed in addition to the town branch.<sup>43</sup> Although Slabbert eventually declined to stand (which he announced while at a meeting with the ANC in Lusaka), he endorsed the DP candidate in Stellenbosch, Hennie Bester, and encouraged students to vote for him:

The time is not right for me to re-enter Parliamentary politics, but I would encourage the students of Stellenbosch to support the DP in the election.

Although the candidacy of Slabbert would have provided a massive boost for the new party, Bester's candidacy held a unique Afrikaner appeal, and complemented the party's new outreach programme. At the time of his candidacy Bester was a National Serviceman. He had been a student leader at Stellenbosch University and had attempted to lead a group of students to meet the ANC in October 1985, but was prevented from doing so by President PW Botha. Through his stance and by standing up to Botha at a face-to-face meeting, Bester had gained considerable sympathy from the academic community in Stellenbosch, and had come to symbolise a form of Afrikaner renewal.<sup>44</sup> Bester noted that whilst the main issue for the election campaign in the rest of the country was economic, this was not the case in Stellenbosch where nearly half the electorate were students. For this group, the issues were more related to morality, justice and the effects of racism:

I think the time has come, particularly for the Afrikaner, to regain the moral high ground within our own political processes. I find people responsive to the idea that there cannot be peace without justice. We won't have security until people in the country are treated equally.

There was the sense that whilst the government was proclaiming apartheid to be dead, no alternative had been proposed:

The alternative has to come from Stellenbosch, which can be regarded as the academic and religious conscience of South Africa.

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43 . *Vrye Weekblad*, 2 June 1989.

44 . Personal interview with Hennie Bester MP, 18 May 1993.

Bester added that his information was that 70% of the student body supported the DP and its policies, and that many had been influenced by the academic revolt of 1987. Bester averred that Afrikaners could be the most committed agents for change if their sense of justice were activated. He added that Afrikaners knew that there would have to be change in favour of other races in South Africa. He added:

The crucial difference in this election is that for the first time in decades we have an opposition party to the left of the government acceptable to Afrikaans South Africans.<sup>45</sup>

Importantly, too, the DP had been requested to put up candidates in traditional NP and even CP heartlands. Both DP co-leader Denis Worrall and MP Peter Soal were flown by DP supporters to Klerksdorp. Worrall had been invited to a black tie affair in Boksburg and a tea in Springs.<sup>46</sup> Clearly the DP was being treated seriously by the white electorate and was making an appeal in hitherto hostile political terrain.

#### Nomination contests

The vitality of the new party was further evidenced by the calibre of its candidates and the stiff competition for nomination for DP seats in the run-up to the announcement of the candidates for the September election. A notable feature of many of the nomination contests was the range of candidate nominated. The DP nomination contests drew unprecedented numbers of young Afrikaans- and English-speaking males and females into contention. Eventually in nominating ten female candidates the DP fielded some 33% of all women contesting the House of Assembly elections.<sup>47</sup>

From the PFP tradition, the success of the “Young Turks” in the 1988 municipal elections inspired other young candidates to stand for election for the DP. The youngest of these was 25-year-old DP youth leader Michelle Guttler who contested the NP-held seat of Tygervallei in the Cape. The successful candidates included Lester Fuchs, 31, Tony Leon, 32, Wessel Nel, 35, and Geoff Engel 33. The unique phenomenon for the DP *vis-*

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45 . Argus, 12 August 1989.

46 . Argus, 24 June 1989.

47 . Sunday Times, 30 July 1989.

*a-vis* its political forebears, however, was the many young professional Afrikaners who campaigned against considerable odds in NP-held constituencies. Amongst them, apart from Hennie Bester, 26, who has already been mentioned, was Gus Janse van Rensburg, 31 former Naval officer, Elmarie Neilson, 27, Christiaan du Preez, 33 who stood in Vereeniging, and Dr Theunis de Bruyn, 34 who contested Helderkruijn.<sup>48</sup>

Despite a healthy degree of cross-pollination at the constituency committee level between the former IP, NDM and PFP being achieved, the pressure for seats re-opened old divisions and raised some new ones. A number of constituency committees of the former PFP fought two elections in 1989, one for their candidate and the second to have the candidate elected to Parliament.

Nowhere was ex-PFP resistance greater than in attempting to prevent DP co-leader Denis Worrall gaining the nomination in the Berea constituency of former PFP Natal leader Ray Swart.

Apart from a degree of mutual antipathy between Swart and Worrall, the former PFP members' criticism of Worrall's proposed candidacy was that it was inconsistent with his claim that he and his former party could expand into areas the former PFP could not. In opting for a safe seat, Worrall was seen to be renegeing on his commitment to challenge the NP. Worrall's response was that he had opted for a safe seat with the approval of the party's executive in order to allow him more time to campaign as a co-leader and to strengthen the party's overall campaign in Natal.<sup>49</sup>

A titanic struggle also ensued in the Cape Town constituency of Gardens where incumbent Ken Andrew was challenged by former NDM leader Dr Esther Lategan.

There were a number of notable exceptions to the trend, however. In the safe liberal Cape Town seat of Groote Schuur former editor and political newcomer Dene Smuts

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48 . Sunday Times, 6 August 1989.

49 . Die Burger, 12 June 1989.

ousted PFP stalwart and incumbent MP Jan van Gend. In Simon's Town, former IP Chairman Jan Momberg defeated former PFP communications director James Selfe.<sup>50</sup>

The nomination contest for the safest liberal constituency of Houghton symbolised some of the important changes liberal politics was undergoing. The contenders were the leader of the Young Turk cabal Tony Leon and "the epitome of Randlord graciousness and style",<sup>51</sup> PFP veteran Irene Menell. In a campaign that led Helen Suzman to remark that, "it made Tammany Hall look like a teddy bear's picnic",<sup>52</sup> Leon won the contest in a landslide, and in so doing brought the curtain down on a remarkable era in the constituency that had helped to keep a tradition alive.

#### Municipal by-election victory in Linden a boost for the DP

Riding the crest of a wave of popularity and optimism the DP received a decisive boost in June 1989, when it unexpectedly won the Johannesburg Ward 3 (Linden) by-election from the National Party. This breakthrough served as the most tangible evidence of the appeal of the burgeoning DP. The result represented an overall 20% swing to the DP in relation to the 1988 PFP performance. In the 1988 municipal election the NP had won the seat with 1 383 votes to the 989 of the PFP and the 319 of the CP. The 1989 result returned the DP with 1 563 votes to the 1 223 of the NP. The Linden constituency was historically an Afrikaans constituency, but had recently seen an increase in the number of English-speaking voters, giving the area a more representative mix. It was still regarded as a young middle-class or "YUPPIE" constituency and the result supported the view that the DP was likely to capture many young upwardly-mobile Afrikaner votes.

Professor Albert Venter, a resident of Linden and head of the Department of Political Studies at RAU, stated, after observing polling trends in Linden, that young Afrikaners between 35 and 45 had voted DP:

Who would not previously be seen dead at a Prog table. The DP has shown it can recruit Afrikaners, but these tended to be from middle-class or "petty bourgeois"

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50 . Cape Times, 10 June 1989.

51 . Sunday Star, 11 June 1989.

52 . Citizen, 5 June 1989.

backgrounds. After Linden we can safely talk of 15% of former Nats who support the DP and that this would result in the DP winning between 30 and 35 seats in the forthcoming election.<sup>53</sup>

Co-leader Wynand Malan argued, “Linden signals that the DP is a kosher topic in the establishment”. Psephologist Willem Kleynhans believed that Linden represented a 12% shift nationally in favour of the DP which was “very impressive”.<sup>54</sup> Kleynhans added:

For the first time, there has been an appreciable swing of middle- and upper-class Afrikaans voters to a left-wing party. A number of English voters also returned. I believe voters are sick and tired of the NP and realise that their sentimental support for the NP is being manipulated. They want a change to a party with reformist ideas. This, I think, means to them that black people are to get a fair representation in Parliament where decisions are made which affect them. I think they realise that blacks won't be satisfied with a minority vote.<sup>55</sup>

For the DP, the Linden victory was a boost for its efforts to make an impact on the more sceptical arenas of potential support such as the media and business, and could not have come at a better time. The DP had run a slick, professional, and hard-nosed campaign. It had projected an image that was strong on law and order, committed to addressing the economic plight of the country, and to constructing a reconciliation of disparate groups within the country.<sup>56</sup>

The DP victory was all the more significant given that the NP had mounted a weighty campaign. It had played its “give FW a chance” card and had called in its heaviest political artillery in the form of Foreign Minister Pik Botha to address an audience on the final night of the campaign, but to no avail. Shortly thereafter the DP also won the by-election in Kariega Park in Port Elizabeth from the National Party.

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53 . Sunday Star, 11 June 1989.

54 . Financial Mail, 16 June 1989.

55 . Financial Mail, 16 June 1989.

56 . Sunday Times, 11 June 1989.

### Policy and principle contradictions

Despite these unprecedented successes of a broadly-based liberal party within the general ambit of white politics and in particular vis-a-vis the National Party, the party soon found itself in its deepest imbroglio. The conflict the young DP was to face encapsulated in miniature form the essence of the dilemmas facing political liberals operating in the broad context of the organic crisis and the particularities it had thrown up in the final years of the 1980's. Whilst there was no constitutive, conceptual contradiction in the DP's tripartite action plan, the simultaneous implementation of all three legs of the plan proved to be impossible given the context and proximity of the 1989 general election. In declaring as a *sine qua non* the principle of non-racialism within its party constitution, the DP had drawn a number of black people to its ranks. The political problem arose in the membership of the DP Members of Parliament and participation in the other two Houses. As has been noted, historically both within the PFP and during the formation of the DP, the debate regarding appropriate strategies for relations with the other two Houses was acute and divisive.

For the former IP members the first leg of the action programme determined that the DP ought to seek control of both Houses, in conjunction with achievement of political leverage through the hung Parliament strategy in the House of Assembly. Amongst former PFP members a range of views and dilemmas obtained.<sup>57</sup> For De Beer there was no principled or logical reason why, as a non-racial party, the DP ought not to contest the other two Houses. His caveat was one of a prudential nature. The party, he believed, ought to contest seats on a strategic basis if candidates of a "high calibre" could be found and local constituency committees, funding and infrastructure established. De Beer's position was strongly supported by the five Natal-based Democratic Party MP's and the Natal Coastal Region in particular.<sup>58</sup> A considerable body of opinion in the Southern Transvaal also favoured participation in the other two Houses as a "matter of principle".<sup>59</sup>

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57 . Personal interview with Roger Hulley MP, 1 May 1993.

58 . Personal interview with Roger Burrows MP, 14 June 1993.

59 . Memorandum of Ian Iverson, Senior Vice Chairman of the Democratic Party in the Southern Transvaal Region, to Tian van der Merwe, 29 June 1989.

A further variable to the equation, though, was the fact that at its formation, the DP already occupied three seats in the House of Delegates and it thus had a moral obligation to support these founding members in the election. Other applications had been received from members of the HOD and the HOR and were awaiting the outcome of DP executive policy and a declaration of intent.

In sharp contrast, the former NDM elements, supported by some ex-PFP members, opposed participation on a number of grounds. The NDM philosophy had been predicated on the attempt to foster, in a strategic manner, interaction between all spectrums of political opinion and belief. In establishing these credentials it had become clear that the conflictual cleavages between those participating in the “discredited” structures of the House of Delegates and the House of Representatives and the MDM, were deeper than those between the MDM and white liberal formations. In consequence, it was reasoned that at the time, to have participated in the elections of the other two Houses would effectively have curtailed any prospect of achieving the objectives of the third leg of the action programme which had been specifically written by the NDM as a condition of unity.<sup>60</sup> The NDM faction within the DP urged that the party not be caught up in the tumult of the election campaign, but rather focus on the longer-term dynamics in the post-election phase. Strategic advisor Van Zyl Slabbert also expressed opposition to participation until the question of extra-Parliamentary contacts and alliances/strategies had been decided upon. The dynamic was increasingly complicated by the aforementioned tentative rapprochement between elements of the MDM and the DP and the strategic opportunities this potential held. In this regard TIC leader Yunus Carrim reasoned:

The specific political culture and lack of boycott tradition amongst whites; the need to mobilise those who have broken with the NP and the Establishment; the fact that the House of Assembly is a significant site of power; the presence of a consistent liberal opposition in the House of Assembly, all suggest that it might be tactically sound for white members of the extra-Parliamentary movement to vote for progressive candidates. There are other ways in which the extra-Parliamentary

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60 . Personal interview with Pierre Cronjé MP, 8 June 1993.

movement could possibly support a reliable liberal opposition within the House of Assembly.

The formation of the DP raises this issue more starkly for the extra-Parliamentary movement. The DP, after all, wants to seek links with the extra-Parliamentary movement. Provided the DP does not contest the Houses of Delegates and Representatives, the prospect of at least some degree of co-operation with, and possibly support for, the DP cannot be ruled out. At the very least, however, the approach of the DP will take the debate about participation in Parliamentary elections further and widen the range of tactical options open to the extra-Parliamentary movement.<sup>61</sup>

Publicity secretary of the TIC Firoz Cachalia warned that participation by the DP in the elections of the other two Houses:

‘n konflik is met die beleid en strategie van die breë demokraties beweging. Dit kan slegs tot konflik tussen die DP en buite parlementêre groep lei. Ons beskou die stigting van die DP as ‘n positiewe ontwikkeling en sekere politici binne die DP lewer ‘n waardevolle bydrae om versoening en onderhandeling te bevorder.<sup>62</sup>

The question of UDF strategy and its relations with the DP shifted up a gear due to the circulation of a document by the Natal Indian Congress during the second week of June 1989. The document speculated that the Democratic Party could become part of a broad alliance with the MDM in an attempt to form a national coalition against the government. The main aims of the alliance would be to strengthen white opposition to the government and to discredit the Houses of Delegates and Representatives:

What is critical is that they (the DP) must be drawn positively into the struggle for freedom with the Mass Democratic Movement...(the formation of the DP) for the first time offers a fresh perception into the struggle for freedom. The party may also be used as a platform “in the short term” to articulate the views of extra-Parliamentary organisations which are burdened by emergency regulations.<sup>63</sup>

In response to the NIC alliance document and in an effort to pre-empt the National Board meeting scheduled to discuss the question of participation, DP MP for Reservoir Hills in the House of Delegates Pat Poovalingam moved to make good on his founding Congress

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61 . Sunday Tribune, 9 April 1989.

62 . Vrye Weekblad, 19 May 1989.

63 . Sunday Star, 11 June 1989.

promise that the DP would fight in all three Houses. Poovalingam disclosed that he had received permission from the DP leadership to campaign in the Natal region where he had recruited some 1 500 members and organised 21 constituency committees. The DP was set to field 14 candidates in the HOD and would return with more than just the three it went into the election with he promised.<sup>64</sup>

Poovalingam's history and pedigree in the Liberal Party had left him antagonistic to Congress-aligned formations. He viewed the ANC as intolerant of opposition in black politics, and berated the NIC and the TIC for what appeared to be *prime facie* contradiction of an Indian Congress calling for non-racialism. Poovalingam evinced the classical South African liberal predisposition to political incrementalism<sup>65</sup> in explaining his argument for participation:

The tricameral Parliament is no great shakes. But it did have the great benefit of assisting white MP's to cross an important colour and racial hurdle. Even five years ago, it was unthinkable that brown MPs, some very dark-skinned, would sit in the same Parliamentary chamber and engage in direct debates with white NP as well as CP Members of Parliament. And for these whites to be obliged to listen to some harsh home truths told directly and bluntly by the "darkies". The whites not only had to take it, but seasoned political journalists have commented that it was this straight talking that so affected many Nats that the Government had to withdraw the Group Areas Amendment Bill.<sup>66</sup>

Seeing his position weakened by the National Board's failure to reach a decision on participation, however, Poovalingam launched a scathing attack on the NDM faction within the DP stating that his view was:

(I)n teenstelling met mnr. Malan se standpunt, en die van die UDF en ANC wat eis dat die DP glad nie aan die verkiesing vir die bruin en Indiër raad deelneem nie. Die UDF en ANC kan nie besluite vir ons neem nie. Ons moet ons eie besluite neem aan die hand van die nie-rassige beginsels van die DP. As die leierskap sou besluit dat iemand nie vir die DP mag staan nie omdat hy 'n Indiër is, sal dit nie net 'n growwe miskennning van die DP beginsels wees nie, maar ook 'n belediging vir die Indiër gemeenskap. Ons het drie opsies: Ons kan die besluit ignoreer en

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64 . Sunday Tribune, 18 June 1989.

65 . See Bobby Godsell and Ann Bernstein, 'The Incrementalists', in Berger and Godsell (Eds) A future South Africa, Human and Rousseau, Tafelberg, 1988.

66 . Sunday Times, 18 June 1989.

voortgaan om kandidate te stel, ons kan gaan lê, iets wat ons nie sal doen nie, of ons kan 'n ware nie-rassige party stig.<sup>67</sup>

After an intensive debate in which De Beer favoured participation, Malan none, and Worrall a compromise, the DP executive committee announced on 1 July 1989 that the party would contest some seats in the House of Delegates, but none in the House of Representatives. The DP statement explained:

The fact of increased DP participation in the other two Houses would make it very difficult for the party to play a catalyst role in getting negotiations (among diverse constituencies inside and outside Parliament) started. (The DP recognises that there would be) some disappointment among certain members over the decision, the national interest must be served ahead of the party's natural desire to contest all Houses of Parliament.<sup>68</sup>

Immediately after the decision Poovalingam resigned from the party. In announcing this he railed:

This is a gross betrayal by the so-called non-racists who have capitulated to the demands of the ANC, UDF and their affiliates. We - and I am speaking for my colleagues - can no longer tolerate hypocrisy, so I'm resigning from the DP.

The co-leaders were charged with:

(R)aiding the DP and ruining its liberal content. They do not know the first thing about what liberalism means.

The compromise decision was universally unsatisfactory. It had the effect of placing the DP in a no-win situation which left the Party with the worst of both worlds. Within the DP a group of MP's sought to test the legal and constitutional status of the National Board in order to have the decision overturned, whilst other members of the National Board were disillusioned by the Party's ineptitude in dealing with the matter.<sup>69</sup>

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67 . Die Burger, 26 June 1989.

68 . Cape Times, 3 July 1989.

69 . Interview with Dr Louis Luyt, 22 July 1993.

The UDF viewed the decision as nonsensical, unprincipled and opportunistic. This “hostile act” was an error of judgement the consequences of which would serve to weaken the anti-apartheid alliance and put paid to future co-operation between the two formations.<sup>70</sup>

Without regarding the UDF declaration as necessarily disingenuous, it should be noted that relations between the DP and the UDF at the grass roots even before the National Executive decision were far from smooth. For example, members of the Thornhill Residents’ Association, whose spokesperson was Advocate Dullah Omar, had “taken over” a DP meeting held in Athlone’s Samaj Centre in June. The UDF supporters “objected to the fact that the DP was interfering in our area”. Three local DP leaders were informed that they were not welcome on the Cape Flats because the DP was ruling class and worked with collaborators and were warned to “stay out of our areas”.<sup>71</sup> Certainly for members of the Black Students’ Interim Committee the issues were clear. In explaining its prevention of a debate that was to have been held on the Wits campus between Van Zyl Slabbert and Zach de Beer, Black Students’ Interim Committee co-ordinator Nepo Kekana reminded students that community and ANC leaders were banned and unable to speak on Wits campus, thus:

The battle lines have been drawn. No National Party, nor Democratic Party, leaders will make speeches here for as long as we are on this campus. What you are seeing here today is just the beginning today. The DP represents Nazism. Their leadership is no different from the Nazi generals of the past. They are no different from Klaus Barbie.<sup>72</sup>

Whilst condemning the abrogation of the right to free speech after the disruption, Slabbert accused the DP of “soaking its own cat-o’-nine-tails in its own salt water” by deciding to field nine candidates in the House of Delegates election and ignoring the understanding with the MDM.<sup>73</sup>

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70 . Business Day, 3 July 1989.

71 . Cape Times, 30 June 1989.

72 . Cape Times, 1 August 1989.

73 . Business Day, 6 August 1989.

Despite the mixed messages of hostility and reconciliation from the MDM, the DP's handling of the participation question was a debacle and represented the low point in its formative months. The treatment of this crucial question served to alienate important elements of its own membership on both ends of the ideological spectrum, but more importantly severely damaged relations with the extra-Parliamentary movement. Indeed, the National Executive decision to participate in the House of Delegates election was a turning point in the power struggle that had been waged within the party and a decision that would set the mould for its ideological identity and strategies in the coming months.

The clearest indication that, pursuant to this ideological and tactical battle, the party intended distancing itself from the MDM, was the pressure it placed on a number of its MPs not to attend a conference with the ANC in Zambia hosted by the Five Freedoms Forum.<sup>74</sup> Despite the fact that the conference was the largest organised to date between the ANC and white politicians, a DP source said that, whilst it supported negotiation, the party was not in favour of “going on someone else’s visit with people who do not necessarily share our political agenda”. The source added, “We will make our own visit in due course. Although no definite decision has been taken, I will not be surprised if it happens next year”.

This statement highlights more clearly than any other two particular features of the Democratic Party at this stage of its development. Firstly, the conservatives and pragmatic liberals in the party had secured not only organisational control, but also control over policy formulation. The principled liberals, social democrats and those closest to the MDM had been defeated, and had little alternative but to remain locked into the party through the election. The victory of the conservatives and pragmatists therefore served to clear the way for the DP election campaign to focus primarily on non-ideological issues and to address its white constituency with more focus. The second, but related, feature of the DP was that by choosing to focus on white concerns and power structures it had sacrificed its claim to credibility with the extra-Parliamentary movement

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74 . Personal interview with Jan van Eck MP, 7 June 1993. It should be noted that Helen Suzman and Dene Smuts together with a number of other DP members, did attend the conference.

and thus its ability to deliver “real security”. The rejection of participation in the FFF conference confirmed what had become apparent from the setbacks of 1987, that political liberals had become strategically defensive. The Progressive Federal Party had lost its way after 1987 and no longer set the standard for enlightened white thinking and engagement. The political pace had henceforth been set by white UDF affiliates freed of the institutional constraints of white party politics and constituencies. At its inception the DP had the opportunity of re-capturing the strategic and political initiative, across Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary divide, for the broad values of liberal democracy, but instead it became a follower, not a leader.

Whilst there was reticence by some within the party to talk to the ANC as a matter of principle, others viewed discussions with the organisation as conceptually sound, but procedurally unwise during an election campaign. A number of the retiring PFP stalwarts had held discussions with the ANC in exile since the 1960's and continued to urge the need to retain contact.

Indeed, deep into the election campaign DP delegates travelled to Lusaka to hold discussions with the ANC. The DP delegation returned with a positive message that the ANC was working on a number of new initiatives, but that it would not enter into negotiations until it was unbanned and it was able to operate freely in the country in order to seek a mandate from the people. The DP delegation urged the ANC to enter into negotiations with the government. It argued that:

(A)n opportunity existed to break the deadlock by opening up the negotiation process. As long as the ANC and the government set preconditions which cannot be met, the deadlock will continue.<sup>75</sup>

The question for the DP remained whether or not it could, through its 1989 election campaign, make its promised contribution to breaking the deadlock.

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75 . Argus, 17 July 1989.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

This chapter details the performance of the Democratic Party's 1989 election campaign. It will be contended that having located and constructed itself largely as a party of pragmatic liberalism, the DP was able to capitalise on the major contingent issues advantageous to its campaign and deleterious to those of the government.

Whilst it has been contended throughout the study that glacial changes in the South African social formation had a profound impact on the identity and structure of liberal formations, voting patterns do not simply reflect structural conditions. Within the broad institutional constraints of patronage, political socialisation and recruitment, voting patterns are also determined by non-structural determinants. As Lichtman has noted:

Changes in voting are not the inevitable result of social and economic change ... (V)oting cycles do not ebb and flow with automatic tidal regularity. Historical events create opportunities that can be exploited by shrewd political strategy and responsive policy, or squandered by blunders and unwise policy.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will attempt to demonstrate the significance of this observation for the Democratic Party in 1989.

The first section will discuss the principal thrust of the Democratic Party's campaign which was to attack the National Party by focusing on the electorate's "misery index",<sup>2</sup> whilst marketing the DP nationally as a viable political alternative. It will be argued that the Democratic Party displayed an adeptness at issue manipulation during the election and successfully flailed the government for its economic mismanagement, corruption and profligacy.

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1. Quoted in Craig Charney, 'Towards Rupture or Stasis? - An analysis of the 1981 South Africa General Election', in D.C. Hindson (Ed), Working Papers in Southern African Studies Volume III, Ravan, Braamfontein, 1983, p.183.
  2. Understood as the sum of inflation, unemployment, and prime overdraft rates.

It will also be posited that having successfully pre-empted the NP's demonisation of the new party, and having constructed a responsible and pragmatic image, the DP was able to exploit the material concerns of the white electorate and conduct a non-ideological "bread and butter" campaign, even under the state of emergency.

The second part of the chapter seeks to audit and contextualise the performance of the Democratic Party in the 1989 election and then draw some conclusions about the relative success of the party.

### It's the economy, stupid!

The cardinal feature of the 1989 election was that for the first time in 50 years, an election would not be fought on ideological grounds. This would be a 'grievance election' *par excellence*. The 1989 election campaign was one high on rhetoric and low on substance.

The table below illustrates the issue consciousness of the white electorate prior to the 1989 election.

NATIONAL ISSUES PERCEIVED AS MOST IMPORTANT	SUPPORTERS		
	NP %	CP %	DP %
Economic problems	39	39	46
Problems in race relations	27	21	16
Group Areas	6	15	4
Apartheid in general	10	15	15
Uncertainty of the future of white survival	7	27	4
Negotiation	8	2	14
Law and order	3	1	1

Adapted from Sunday Times, 13 August 1989.

The table clearly indicates the principal issues of concern during the campaign for all whites, regardless of party affiliation, were economic. As was discussed in chapter three, the economic crisis in South Africa contained marked structural characteristics and was thus not amenable to simple manipulation and resolution by government for short-term political gain. The parlous state of the fiscus in 1989 also effectively limited the number and range of electoral “sweeteners” government was able to distribute to the public, and civil servants in particular, prior to the election. Thus the DP was able to assail government economic policy without effective response. This marginal advantage was ruthlessly exploited by the DP throughout the campaign.

The table also clearly demonstrates that unlike the 1987 campaign, questions of law and order ranked lowest on the list of priorities with, at most, 3% of the electorate finding it the most pressing electoral issue. This was uniquely advantageous to the Democratic Party as it meant that voter attention had been averted from its Achilles heel, the security question.

Prior to the election campaign, the DP purchased two full sets of electoral opinion data and was able to “piggy back” its own questions onto the broad questionnaires, yielding it rich data concerning white opinion, aspirations and fears.<sup>3</sup> With this data the DP was able to structure its election campaign both in terms of its own strengths but, equally importantly, was able to attack the government on its weaknesses.

#### The design of the DP election campaign

With co-leader Zach de Beer having located the DP as a moderate liberal party of the centre, the Democratic Party was able to execute a non-ideological, issues campaign. The primary objective of the campaign was the attempt to secure political power by means of the forcing of a hung Parliament in the House of Assembly. In terms of political style, the DP conducted an aggressive, high-energy, multi-media, American-style campaign. To achieve this, it commissioned sophisticated multi-media audio-

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3 . Interview with Councillor Neil Ross, 30 August 1993.

visual presentations, a cinema advertisement campaign, and drew on high-profile public personalities to endorse the party and its policies.

#### The 1989 DP advertisement campaign

Unlike its 1987 predecessor, the 1989 DP advertisement campaign was proactive, direct and effective. The campaign focused on four central themes.<sup>4</sup> Firstly, white security undergirded every message. All ads concluded with the byline “Secure your future. Vote DP”. The central theme of the white security thrust was best depicted in the ad that proclaimed, “It’s your right to be safe ... We need more Police. Secure your future. Vote DP”. The party’s desire to project itself as a national force was buttressed by the promise of political leverage through the election of the DP. This was enshrined in the advertisement, “Now democrats all over the country can say ... “We’re going for power. Vote DP”. The third theme was the aggressive vilification of the government, “Enough is enough. We will make our country strong again. Secure your future. Vote DP”. Finally, the theme of nation-building was dealt with via an advertisement which heralded, “South Africa needs nation-builders. Our team has the skills, the commitment, the vision. Secure your future. Vote DP”. Each campaign advertisement was supported by the DP candidates with professional skill, expertise or qualifications in a relevant field to the ad, thereby reinforcing the idea of trust, skill and credibility.

#### Utility of the *troika*

Entering the campaign there existed doubts amongst former PFP MP’s about the viability and prudence of the DP conducting an election with three leaders.<sup>5</sup> However, to have elected a single leader before the campaign would have weakened the paper-thin seams of the party. But more importantly for the conduct of the campaign, the *troika* leadership demonstrated that it could effectively cover more political and geographic turf than could any single leader. The joint leadership

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4 . All data is taken from archives held within the DP library, housed at National Head Office, Cape Town.

5 . Personal interview with Roger Hulley MP, 1 June 1993, and the concerns noted in the Political Marketing Strategy Indaba.

arrangement yielded the advantage that at any time during the campaign the DP leadership corps could be addressing three different audiences in support of its broad range of candidates. The separate appeals and strengths of the three individuals were also utilised to maximum effect, responding to the diverse class and ethnic profile of white constituencies nationwide. Thus the political, cultural, and ideological division of labour of the three translated into a far broader mix and appeal for the party during the campaign than could have been achieved by any single leader.

#### DP election manifesto

As has been noted, the important shift for the Democratic Party *vis-a-vis* the PFP was one of the degree of strategic and tactical emphasis rather than principle. In contrast to the “ends in themselves” motivations of moral outrage and persuasion, characteristic of all previous liberal political formations, the DP was born of both principled and pragmatic concerns and the demands of South African *realpolitik*. It was thus distinguished from the PFP in that it was imbued with a sense of the importance of the acquisition of political power. Correspondingly, it had taken to heart the hard political lesson that a political party, no matter how morally righteous, cannot stray too far ahead of its electorate, particularly during the time of an election. Thus the critical task for the party would be to market its core principles in such a way as to have the white electorate accept them as legitimate.

Having aggregated and prioritised the disparate claims within the party, collective agreement was reached that in the short-term, the goal of seeking the balance of power in the House of Assembly would supersede all other strategic claims the Democratic Party officially released its election manifesto on 22 July 1989.<sup>6</sup>

The manifesto's three major areas of focus were the economy, security, and black political rights. Enshrined within the manifesto, however, was a scathing attack on government mismanagement of the country's economic, political and security crises.

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6. All quotes notes and references are taken from the DP Election Manifesto, July 1989.

Mindful of the overarching demands of the hung Parliament strategy, the manifesto incorporated all the central liberal democratic principles for which the PFP had stood, but was populist in style and rhetoric and explicitly avoided ideological labelling. The term 'liberal' was not mentioned throughout the manifesto.

The Democratic Party, it claimed, was neither to the left nor to the right of the National Party, but rather proclaimed, "We belong to the future, we are ahead". The DP thereby sought to create the identity of a modern, forward-looking party, free of the ideological and ethnic fetters of old political orthodoxy. Indeed, the battles and compromises of the unity process had necessitated the construction of a party far less ideologically animated than any of its predecessors.

Thus whilst affirming its belief in full citizenship rights, the DP manifesto also sought to allay white fears generated by the terms "majority rule" and "one man, one vote", by stating:

Our opponents often claim that the DP stands for one man one vote in a unitary system. This is not true. We stand for universal adult franchise in a federal system. South Africa should consist of federal states that will conduct their affairs in whichever way they choose, provided this does not conflict with the constitution or Bill of Rights.<sup>7</sup>

Former PFP and IP policy was firmly entrenched in the document and included *inter alia* the scrapping of the present tricameral system, the establishment of a constitutional federal state, and an entrenched Bill of Rights. The document was strongly federalist and recommended that the powers of national government be limited to matters of national concern such as foreign affairs and national finance.

In terms of the security question the manifesto disclosed that "when it come to power", the DP would scrap compulsory military service and establish a non-racial professional army, but that it would also double the police force. Mindful of the IM

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7. Democratic Party - A government in the making, Democratic Party, July 1989, pp.8-9.

manifesto controversy, the DP document argued that only in extreme circumstances would a state of emergency be declared, the tenure and powers of which were to be highly circumscribed.

On economic policy the three central promises of the manifesto were to:

1. Reduce the cost of living.
2. Lessen the tax burden.
3. Cut the cost of government.

Leading from the manifesto the DP argued that as most price increases were government-led, it would tackle the problems of control boards, thereby eliminating consumer exploitation. It argued that with political will and determination inflation would also be brought under control:

The message is, we do not have to get poorer, we do not have to have high inflation and we do not have to have more instability and crime.<sup>8</sup>

In summary the manifesto reinforced the DP strategy of constantly focusing negative attention and publicity on the government whilst offering credible and populist alternative solutions.

#### Economic mismanagement

One of the peculiarities of the 1989 campaign was that in focusing attention on the government's economic mismanagement, corruption and profligacy, both the DP and the Conservative Party were in agreement on the central issues. CP spokesperson Tom Langley warned that his party would hammer the government on increasing white poverty, but that the main issue would be "corruption, corruption, corruption".<sup>9</sup> Thus the DP and CP were able to conduct an electoral "pincer movement", thereby placing the government in a dilemma. The NP was forced to fight the same issue on two different fronts and was thereby unable to label the economic critique either

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8 . Business Day, 24 July 1989.

9 . Sunday Star, 2 April 1989.

“leftist” or “conservative”. For the DP, it meant that its main electoral plank was reinforced *gratis* by the CP propaganda machinery. The DP platform was given a further unintended boost when the linkage between political crisis and economic decline was brought into sharp focus by former Governor of the Reserve Bank Gerhard de Kock in a speech in Cape Town in May 1989 when warned:

If adequate progress is not made in the field of political and constitutional reform, South Africa's relationships with the rest of the world are unlikely to improve to any significant extent. In that event South Africa will probably remain a capital exporting and debt repaying country.<sup>10</sup>

Coming as it did from the respected, independent authority of the Governor of the Reserve Bank, this warning lent great credibility to the logic of the DP campaign. The weight of respected opinion had clearly turned against government economic policy as was demonstrated when a barrage of economists, including those at Stellenbosch University, dismissed Deputy Minister of Finance Dr Org Marais's claim that June's inflation figure of 15,7% had peaked. The economists warned the public to expect a figure closer to 17% in the coming months.<sup>11</sup>

Central to the DP strategy was the constant reinforcement of the government culpability link. The DP sought repeatedly to highlight the fact that the “abnormality” of the South African economic crisis was a direct consequence of NP government policy. Calling on his experience as a divisional head of the multinational Anglo American Corporation co-leader Zach de Beer was able to tie South Africa's economic decline and government profligacy to the corrupting effect of National Party apartheid rule. De Beer also developed the theme of killing two political birds with one stone, in accusing the government of wrecking the South African economy more than any other country this side of the iron curtain, with the exception of Chile and Argentina.<sup>12</sup> DP finance spokesperson Jasper Walsh also attacked Minister of Finance Barend du Plessis on his public pronouncement that the

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10 . Argus, 5 May 1989.

11 . Sunday Tribune, 30 July 1989.

12 . Cape Times, 19 July 1989.

country would have to get used to living without an international banker. Walsh argued that the contrary was true, that in fact, the only reason the country had been left without an international banker was due to government policy.<sup>13</sup>

The DP also attempted to link the National Party to and condemn it for, “wrecking the credibility of capitalism” in the consciousness of many black South Africans. Former IP Chairman David Gant flailed the NP for its alleged commitment to a market economy whilst practising a form of racial socialism.<sup>14</sup>

De Beer further challenged the National Party on another of its vulnerable flanks, namely corruption and profligacy. He pointed to the corruption within NP circles, with the former NP MP for Hillbrow Leon de Beer serving a jail term for electoral fraud, former NP MP for East London Peet De Pontes disgraced and the forced resignation of Minister Pietie du Plessis. Two days before the election another corruption scandal involving government officials in the Department of Local Government Housing and Works was revealed.<sup>15</sup>

The DP again correctly tapped into the appropriate electoral issue mind-set on the burgeoning questions of environmental and consumer issues. In a Woman’s Bureau of South Africa survey showed that the party was more sensitive to consumer and environment issues than any other contesting the election.<sup>16</sup>

#### Boraine endorsement for DP

In July the DP received an electoral boost from an unexpected source when IDASA Executive Director and former PFP Chairman Dr Alex Boraine endorsed the party:

(Voters) should resist the temptation to give FW de Klerk a chance. If there is a genuine shift towards a non-racial democracy, the greatest service voters can do is to maintain the pressure on the National Party so that they don’t once again lose their courage and resort to white

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13 . Cape Times, 27 July 1989.

14 . Business Day, 4 June 1989.

15 . Argus, 5 September 1989.

16 . Cape Times, 30 August 1989.

minority rule at all costs. The sane and sensible choice, therefore, is to vote for the Democratic Party. As a party, it could force the National Party to practise what it preaches - unambiguously educate whites to realise that no matter what system of government is arrived at, if all South Africans are to exercise their right to vote, the majority of faces at every level of government will be black. They could help white voters to accept that it is in their self-interest and in the interests of security and prosperity for all to demand a rapid negotiated settlement which involves not only those who participate in the September 6 election but all South Africans, black and white.<sup>17</sup>

Boraine's endorsement of the DP was an important statement as it lent credibility to both the participation in the House of Assembly election and gave credence to the potential for co-operative alliance strategies between progressive white system politicians and the extra-Parliamentary movement. Having left Parliament in 1986 shortly after Van Zyl Slabbert on the "irrelevance of Parliament" ticket, this was an important shift.

A further indicator of both a changing political dynamic and the progress the DP had made *vis-a-vis* its political forebears was evidenced by the qualified support given to the DP arising out of a meeting of twelve left-wing white organisations a month before the election. The twelve agreed to encourage their members to support the white DP candidate in their constituency, particularly if they had developed sound ties with the extra-Parliamentary movement. The Five Freedoms Forum announced:

In particular we call for active support for those (white DP) candidates with a track record of building bridges with extra-Parliamentary organisations. We feel it is strategically important to have a numerically strong DP in the House of Assembly.<sup>18</sup>

#### The National Party in reversal<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to the buoyancy and confidence of the Democratic Party the once formidable National Party electoral machine stumbled from crisis to crisis in the run up to the election. Underpinning its paralysis were four key dilemmas that rent the

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17 . Argus, 26 July 1989.

18 . Weekly Mail, 18 August 1989.

19 . Lawrence Schlemmer as quoted by Mark Phillips, Weekly Mail, 28 July 1989.

party to its core. Firstly, the crippling effect of international sanctions and the search for an appropriate political response. Secondly, the divergent perspectives and interests within the political establishment concerning the continued state of emergency. Thirdly, the appropriate means of broadening the legitimacy of participation in governmental structures, the problem of the stillborn National Council, and how to break the negotiation logjam. Fourthly, the immediate problem of the release of Nelson Mandela and the treatment of the ANC.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to the crisp focus of the DP election manifesto the National Party's "Five Year Plan" was riddled with contradictions. The rhetoric enshrined in the plan reflected a party ideologically divided and programmatically moribund. The conceptual schizophrenia of the National Party was demonstrated by the fact that within the 22 pages of the Five Year Plan the word "apartheid" was never used, whereas the word "negotiation" occurred 15 times.<sup>21</sup>

Whilst remaining wedded to the neo-apartheid constructs of "own" and "separate" affairs, the partial redefinition of groups and the coalescence of a self-defined group is mooted within the manifesto. The contradictory conceptual contortions of the NP are demonstrated in the following clause of the programme:

Freedom of association and dissociation must as far as possible, be the points of departure. *A person must be able to change to another group subject to the consent of the recipient group* (emphasis added).<sup>22</sup>

Whilst affirming the relevance of the 1987 election manifesto, the Five Year Plan at the same time prepared the way for the scrapping of the tricameral system and the holding of "multi-party elections at the national level" within the prescribed time frame.

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20 . Gavin Evans in the Weekly Mail, 11 August 1989.

21 . Anthony Johnson Cape Times, 29 June 1989.

22 . Plan of Action of the National Party, C.J. van R. Botha, Pretoria, 1989. p.6.

The degree of disenchantment with the NP was also illustrated by the lukewarm reception elements of its traditionally supportive media gave the Five Year Plan. Both *Beeld* and *Rapport* warned the NP that its adherence to policies that were premised on the assumption that the building blocks of a future constitution would be groups was problematic.<sup>23</sup>

A further indicator of NP decline was that, in contrast to the pulling power of the DP leadership ticket, the NP's traditional drawcards failed to ignite the public's imagination in the run-up to the election. During the campaign Defence Minister Magnus Malan drew a "crowd" of 38 at a meeting at Voortrekkerhoogte, whilst later attracting 80 in Uvongo and the same number at the Strand. Deputy Minister of Transport and Durbanville MP Frikkie van Deventer managed a total of 17 at one of his constituency meetings. Ron Miller and Sakkie Pretorius raised 30 at a Gardens meeting. Minister of Finance Barend du Plessis drew 180 at a Welgemoed meeting, whilst on the same night the DP's 26-year-old Stellenbosch candidate, National Serviceman Hennie Bester, attracted more than 700. When Du Plessis spoke at Stellenbosch after Bester, only 400 attended. In Welgemoed Wynand Malan, speaking in support of Pieter Schoeman, attracted 400 supporters, more than twice Du Plessis's attendance.<sup>24</sup> In his final meetings Worrall attracted 1 200 and 1 500 supporters, respectively, compared to the 700 for De Klerk in his final campaign meeting.

At the level of personnel the NP crisis was also acute. A feature of its 1989 campaign was the scale of resignations among its leadership cadre. Fully one-fifth of NP MP's did not stand for re-election in 1989, and a further 25% were faced with mortal battles for their political futures. A quarter of the National Party cabinet also announced its retirement before nomination day.<sup>25</sup> Thus the powerful National Party became marked by mediocrity in its Parliamentary candidates and an increasing reliance on

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23 . *Financial Mail*, 7 July 1989.

24 . *Cape Times*, 23 August 1989.

25 . *Sunday Times*, 21 May 1989.

party functionaries to fill candidate nominations.<sup>26</sup> The party machinery also lacked its traditional dynamism and enthusiasm. This was highlighted by the DP's threat to lay charges against the NP for its alleged payment of canvassers in contravention of the Electoral Act.<sup>27</sup> A further signal of NP ideological reversal was Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok's admission that apartheid had "become an albatross" around the country's neck. Apartheid was something the world hated he added, and was something the government "wanted to kill":

If we do not get rid of (apartheid) it will crucify us all. Apartheid must go and we must find something to replace it.<sup>28</sup>

The question for the NP was, with what should it replace apartheid? The wholesale failure of neo-apartheid, the loss of its moral authority within Afrikanerdom and the fracturing of its intelligentsia had left the National Party devoid of a conceptual paradigm within which to focus its campaign and from which to proffer political solutions.

Denuded of ideas, blinded by conceptual blockages and faced with severe political reversal, the National Party turned to its single most important political asset in the form of new NP leader FW de Klerk. In so doing the National Party re-launched its campaign on the promise of future political renewal under De Klerk.

De Klerk had acquired a degree of prestige by virtue of his public relations successes on a European trip earlier in the year. His public persona, in contrast to that of PW Botha, was politically marketable. Despite this, De Klerk remained cramped for political space as during the first half of the campaign his hold on political power was still somewhat latent, reactionary, and tenuous. Whilst the pressures for De Klerk to articulate a clear reformist position mounted from outside and inside the NP caucus, conservative elements within the cabinet and the SSC still held powerful lien on policy direction. An added concern for De Klerk were reports that erstwhile NP

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26 . Cape Times, 14 June 1989.

27 . Cape Times, 11 August 1989.

28 . Cape Times, 5 July 1989.

leader PW Botha was incensed at the poor NP performance in the election campaign and had considered stepping back into the breach.

Given these dynamics, De Klerk had little choice but to conduct a political holding pattern, but with the promise of reform and renewal. Included in the renewal promise was a vague undertaking to tackle (after the election) questions such as the deeply divided nation, the lack of progress in negotiations, poverty and underdevelopment, and the unequal distribution of power.<sup>29</sup>

The Democratic Party seized on the mixed messages of the Five Year Plan and the vulnerability of the NP leader. For the DP the promise of renewal enshrined in the plan was the clearest admission of the failure of both the policies and leadership of the NP. For Worrall the theme of NP renewal only served to confirm that, "The National Party is washed up and on the wrong side of history."<sup>30</sup> The theme of NP renewal was depicted by the DP as a an admission of divisions within the NP as well as of past failures. But, equally importantly, the DP sought to link De Klerk's implicit rebuttal of the securocrats as indicating the an admission that the old policies were moribund, as was the old leadership.<sup>31</sup> This was a flagrant dismissal of Botha and his political coterie. To have publicly proclaimed as an election plank the policy of renewal signalled a break with the past; it was a profound message to the party and to the electorate. The NP was in the throes of undergoing a marked ideological and organisational shift. This was a strategic decision, but its historical importance should not be underestimated.

The DP attacked the NP Five Year Plan as an admission of the failure of its policies of the past 41 years. Zach de Beer argued that the five areas the NP promised to address should it be re-elected were all an indictment of the past failures of NP

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29 . Business Day, 5 September 1989.

30 . Cape Times, 22 May 1989.

31 . Financial Mail, 7 July 1989.

policy. The contradictory political messages of the National Party led Constantia DP MP Roger Hulley to accuse the NP of:

(B)ehaving like political transvestites by appropriating the DP's verbal clothing to bamboozle the voters by masquerading as democrats. The NP has opened the floodgates of misleading propaganda in the final leg of the election campaign.<sup>32</sup>

Zach de Beer attacked De Klerk for his "double speak" when addressing a meeting of DP supporters in Margate:

Does he (Mr de Klerk) support the principle of equality? Does he or does he not propose a vote of equal value for every adult in South Africa? Will he, for once, answer a plain question clearly? Will the real Mr de Klerk please stand up?<sup>33</sup>

#### Botha's resignation

Entering the final month of the long 1989 election campaign the NP was a more embattled party than ever before in its 41 years of governance. It was to some extent, however, rejuvenated by the outcome of the intensive "*boeretwis*" that had plagued the party since PW Botha's resignation as NP leader on 2 February 1989.

The critical turning point in the election was the resignation of President PW Botha three weeks before election day. Botha, who resigned in a fit of pique, was a politically destroyed figure. His removal from power, was, in effect, a palace *coup*, executed by FW de Klerk and Pik Botha, with the support of the majority of the cabinet. Politically, Botha's decision to resign centred on the fact that NP pronouncements had become too reformist. The pretext of his resignation was that De Klerk and Foreign Minister Pik Botha had usurped cabinet authority by travelling to Zambia to hold discussions with President Kenneth Kaunda without his approval or knowledge, but it was revealed later that members of the cabinet had asked him to publicly lie and declare his failing health to be the reason for his resignation.

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32 . Cape Times, 1 September 1989.

33 . Cape Times, 16 June 1989.

De Klerk moved quickly to consolidate his hold on power and, having ousted Botha on the premise of the need for greater reform, the NP leader embarked on an intensive campaign to recapture the considerable amount of ground lost by his party principally to the DP in the previous months. This was a critical turning point, since in focusing on the gains made by the Democratic Party De Klerk had shifted the future focus of his party both in the short and medium term. In so doing De Klerk finally abandoned any hope of re-capturing the white right wing and henceforth sought to contest the moderate, reformist “middle ground”. Thus, after struggling to find an election theme around which he could crystallise his party’s campaign, De Klerk found it in the theme of “negotiation for a new constitution” leading towards equal citizenship.

In an interview in *Leadership* magazine of August 1989, De Klerk assumed a markedly reformist tone:

We say all the people of South Africa, whether they be black or white, Indian or coloured, must have a vote, must elect their leaders and must through their leaders, become part of all decisions affecting their lives. They must therefore become involved at all levels of government in such a way that no one group will be able to dominate the other. In as much as it can be said that the white group in SA dominates the others, that must be moved away from.<sup>34</sup>

De Klerk argued that it was the government’s top priority to draw people from other groups into the negotiating process. He added that the country needed a new constitution and conceded:

We must replace certain acts which have a long history, with a new basis for assuring the interests of individuals and minority groups. On the Group Areas Act we stated that we were not wedded to specific methods. With regard to residential areas, we believe that, according to the principle of freedom of association, people should be allowed to associate on the basis which they themselves prefer.<sup>35</sup>

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34 . *Leadership*, Volume 8, Number 6, 1989, p.25.

35 . *ibid.*, p.26.

As Slabbert noted, there were a number of unique features about this theme for the National Party. Firstly, it was the first time the NP had sought a mandate to sacrifice some political control. Secondly, the politics of negotiation was unfamiliar terrain for the NP thus its election manifesto was riddled with contradictions and ambiguities. But most importantly, the NP as we had come to know it was finished. It found itself in the position of the old United Party, that of a party using up all its energy in a vain effort to find a new identity with contradictory tendencies in its ranks.<sup>36</sup>

Botha's resignation had had the effect of splitting the election campaign into two parts. Having fought a campaign on a ticket of slating a moribund National Party the DP was now faced with re-strategising and reformulation of its campaign. A number of new variables came into operation. DP leaders were required to dispel the myth of the reformist image of FW de Klerk by pointing out it was the same De Klerk who had earlier berated Constitutional Development Minister Chris Heunis for his most reformist speech. It was also rumoured that De Klerk had a hand in the wording of PW Botha's disastrous "Rubicon" speech in 1985.

Eglin attacked De Klerk for wanting to retain apartheid under the guise of "own affairs." De Klerk, he claimed wanted apartheid under this guise strengthened, not eliminated. From many years of encountering De Klerk and sitting with him on standing committees and having studied his speeches, Eglin argued that he knew De Klerk to be far to the right of his former rival for the presidency, retired Minister of Constitutional Affairs Chris Heunis, "and Heunis was in no sense left".<sup>37</sup> But despite the Democratic Party counter-attack, had earned ground had been lost. The removal of Botha was viewed as a positive development by the DP's natural constituency, namely English-speaking South Africans and fractions of the Afrikaans middle-class, and had the effect of making them more inclined to "give FW a chance". Surveys also indicated that an overwhelming majority of DP supporters approved of the way

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36 . Sunday Times, 27 August 1989.

37 . Argus, 30 August 1989.

De Klerk handled the Botha debacle. The NP information section also claimed De Klerk enjoyed an 80% acceptability level at one point amongst whites.<sup>38</sup>

To a degree De Klerk recaptured undecided and drifting support by bringing a new image and hope to disillusioned NP supporters. This image was buttressed by the successful trips to Britain, Europe and Africa where he had been well received.<sup>39</sup> For many National Party supporters De Klerk projected a sincerity of purpose and reason which Botha had all but destroyed. He had, of course, also demonstrated the primary pre-requisite for success in white politics, namely strength, in his victory over Botha. It also became clear that De Klerk had the support of the cabinet, as evidenced by Botha's resignation and from the obvious support given to him by colleagues in public pronouncements.<sup>40</sup>

In terms of De Klerk's forays into Africa, these were designed to give him the status of President-elect and statesman, which was resented by many in the liberal camp as domestically his administration was involved in the continued execution of the policies of apartheid which had recently included the whipping of people for walking on "white" beaches.

#### Setbacks for the DP

Whereas the DP could justifiably claim to have won the first round of the election campaign, the earlier confidence which had oozed from every pore of the Party was temporarily stilled during the last three weeks of the marathon campaign. The DP campaign had peaked too early. Two factors caused concern and, indeed, a sober re-evaluation of the party's prospects in the forthcoming election including a down-scaling of Worrall's prediction from 38 seats to 32 as a good performance. These were on the one hand, the strong showing by De Klerk as leader of the NP (and the public relief that Botha had finally bowed out of the political stage); on the other, the intensification of the MDM's election defiance campaign which had begun to worry

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38 . Business Day, 6 September 1989.

39 . Financial Mail, 1 September 1989, p.30.

40 . Schrire, p.112.

DP organisers particularly in the marginal seats where the security-conscious white voters began re-thinking their initial enthusiasm for change. The only iron-clad law of South African politics is that a direct correlation exists between the intensity of resistance campaigns and mass action campaigns and the degree of rightward swing of the white floating vote. Remarkably, DP strategists had failed to, or were unable to, factor in this dimension into their Von Clausewitzian planning strategies, and the party paid the price in the final weeks of the campaign.

#### The MDM boycott and defiance campaign

During the fourth week of July, elements of the MDM called on whites to boycott the forthcoming election. It was not clear, however, whether this was an officially sanctioned position as delegates of the FFF, on return from meeting the ANC in Lusaka, were of the impression that the ANC had given its limited support to the strategy of the DP to defeat or weaken the NP in the House of Assembly.

Credence was given to the boycottist position when Anglican Archbishop and Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu decried the elections as a sham. Tutu challenged fellow-Anglicans to consider whether they could “in all conscience” vote in an election whilst their fellow black Anglicans were excluded.<sup>41</sup> SACC leader Frank Chikane, speaking at a TIC protest meeting, also called on people attending not to vote in the forthcoming general election:

... the elections are a fraud, a farce and insulting to our humanity, our dignity and intelligence. There is no insult that can equal what will happen on September 6.<sup>42</sup>

Author and poet Don Mattera argued:

The white liberals in the Democratic Party and those to the left, who say they abhor the system, should also break away from their

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41 . Cape Times, 1 June 1989.

42 . Weekly Mail, 18 August 1989.

privileged status and protected white areas and truly join the frontline of the people's forward march to liberation.<sup>43</sup>

DP co-leader Zach de Beer responded to the calls for an election boycott by saying that the call was regrettable and that it would cost the party a few seats. More defiantly Worrall contended that whilst the DP shared and overlapped with the MDM on many fundamental objectives, "we have our own agenda and will act accordingly".<sup>44</sup>

In a further damaging development for the DP the NP candidate in Nigel and former Security Police operative, Craig Williamson, publicised a Johannesburg Action Committee document which outlined a strategy for the manipulation and engagement of the Democratic party. Williamson claimed in the President's Council that JODAC was a front for the SACP. The document had stated that the DP could not afford to be in conflict with the MDM which had "leverage and power" over the direction the party took. The more disquieting aspect of the document, however was its assessment that the DP was "running the gauntlet between Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary strategies for change". The key strategic claim of the document was that mutual benefit could be had from co-operation between the MDM and the DP. The stated advantage for the MDM was that, as the DP could not initiate alliances, the MDM could promote the idea of alliance-building which the DP would be under pressure to accept. The document reasoned that this would lead to whites being more amenable to the MDM. Such a strategy it was argued would also offer the MDM a degree of protection from the state repressive apparatuses if it were in alliance with the Parliamentary DP. In the view of the MDM the DP could play an important role in persuading whites to accept a truly democratic negotiated settlement with the majority. Whilst the idea was for the DP to be drawn closer to the MDM and to place its constituency behind the MDM in time, this could result in the MDM gaining influence over the DP and if deemed "tactically correct", it could persuade the DP to withdraw from Parliament, "thereby dealing the system a severe blow at a critical

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43 . Sowetan, 23 August 1989.

44 . Citizen, 31 July 1989.

time". The document favoured formations such as the FFF and JODAC allowing its members to join the DP and concluded:

Winning the DP over to the side of the people's camp is an historic task which cannot be ignored and requires the support and unity of the entire Democratic Movement.<sup>45</sup>

Shortly thereafter *Die Burger* leaked a letter from Peter Gastrow, head of the DP's interaction department, issuing guidelines for the treatment of the MDM by DP candidates in the election. The letter was defensive in tone and served to restrict candidates to responding neutrally to any questions or issues raised by the MDM. Candidates were instructed not to respond to the actions of the MDM without first contacting either Wynand Malan or Peter Gastrow. Gastrow's letter *inter alia* included the following:

Recent statements and actions by organisations and individuals who form part of the MDM could potentially have an impact on the election campaign of the DP candidates. ... No statements, letters, or challenges should be issued by candidates or members of the DP without first discussing the matter with Wynand Malan or Peter Gastrow.

The letter adds:

Where DP members have good personal links with individuals within the MDM, it is vital that such links be maintained and even strengthened. No one can predict whether, during the next six weeks [the letter was dated July 25], the attitude of the MDM will detrimentally affect the DP's electoral chances.<sup>46</sup>

Gastrow's directive undermined the belief held by some that the DP had some influence over the MDM as it now appeared the reverse was true.<sup>47</sup> Gastrow stated that he believed the MDM strategy was not designed to damage the election hopes of the DP and that it would have a negative effect only in those marginal seats inhabited by students. What remained clear, however, was that the decision of the DP to put up

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45 . *Citizen*, 11 August 1989.

46 . *Citizen*, 18 August 1989.

47 . Willem de Klerk, *Finance Week*, 30 August 1989.

candidates in the HoD was deeply offensive to the MDM and had caused it damage. JODAC press officer Wilhelm Liebenberg commented that the DP decision to field candidates in the HOD election had “injured the feelings of most of the oppressed in South Africa”.<sup>48</sup>

Although the first reaction of the DP to the MDM call was that it would result in the party losing seats, the revelations had a dual effect. The conservative wing of the party viewed the MDM challenge as a blessing in disguise as they believed it would not bode well for the DP to be seen too closely aligned to the MDM. On this view the public airing of tensions between the two formations could be turned to the advantage of the DP in white political circles. Public friction between the DP and the MDM made it far more difficult for the government to use the scare tactics of the past in arguing that the DP was too close to the MDM and, by extension, the ANC. Added to this, the treatment of Zach de Beer earlier in the week when he was prevented by MDM-aligned radicals from speaking at the University of the Witwatersrand, again served to distance the DP from the MDM, both in fact and in perception.

The centripetal forces operating between the DP and the NDM intensified in the run-up to the election, particularly during the week before the election, which was marked by massive protests and increase in the intensification of the MDM resistance campaign. The resultant South African Police crack down left hundreds of protesters and activists detained, including Trevor Manuel.<sup>49</sup> A two-day stay-away called by union federations and community groups in protest at the election was heeded by over one million students and workers on its first day.<sup>50</sup>

Despite these setbacks it was a mark of the DP, in contrast to the PFP, that it was able to respond to these challenges in a reasoned and pragmatic manner without appearing defensive.

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48 . Weekly Mail, 18 August 1989.

49 . Weekly Mail, 1 September 1989.

50 . Argus, 6 September, 1989.

Worrall reasoned that the DP had a better chance of conveying the ideals of a democratic South Africa to the white electorate than would any other party. The DP he claimed:

... has unmatched efficiency in spelling out the message of non-racial democracy for South Africa.<sup>51</sup>

Worrall responded to the boycott call by explaining that the DP participated in the House of Assembly for three reasons. Firstly, it was the “finest” institution for the articulation of white opinion in that white aspirations focused on Parliament. Secondly, by being part of Parliament, the DP could affect the tenor of the debate within the House. Thirdly, the DP was going for power and this necessitated its participation.<sup>52</sup>

#### Polls and uncertainty

The net effect of the bifurcation of the election campaign and, in particular, the intensive competition for occupation of the political middle ground was that it gave rise to the most varied electoral polling predictions. The major problem was the immense 30% uncertainty factor amongst whites, particularly in those constituencies in which there were straight fights between the NP and DP candidates.<sup>53</sup> This led to predictions being widely at variance with one another and reflected the state of flux white politics had been plunged into during the election campaign and the critical events surrounding it. The highest predicted estimate of National Party performance was 110 seats whilst the lowest estimate during the campaign was 65. For the Conservative Party the highest estimate was 64 seats with a low of 26. For the Democratic Party the most optimistic scenario pegged its electoral potential at 40 seats, whilst the lowest estimate gave it 24.<sup>54</sup>

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51 . South, 10 August 1989.

52 . South, 10 August 1989.

53 . Cape Times, 4 September 1989.

54 . Argus, 6 September 1989 and Sunday Times, 23 July 1989.

The contrasting approaches and fortunes of the NP and the DP are demonstrated by their concluding statements. On the eve of the election National Party leader FW de Klerk acknowledged:

We have almost reached the end of one of the longest elections campaigns in South Africa's history. Never again will we do it.<sup>55</sup>

The more sanguine DP co-leader Denis Worrall concluded the DP's campaign by asking:

(W)hite South Africans to send a message to the international community - to bankers, to stockbrokers, to multinational corporations - and to our black fellow South Africans - that the days of apartheid are over.<sup>56</sup>

The election results showed that they did.

#### Election results and review

The table below summarises the results of the 1989 election for the House of Assembly with comparative figures for the 1987 election.

#### Voter support by Party, 1987 and 1989 House of Assembly elections

	1987			1989		
	Seats	Votes		Seats	Votes	
National Party	123	1 083 575	(53%)	93	1 053 523	(48%)
Conservative Party	22	549 916	(27%)	39	685 250	(31%)
Democratic Party	21*	343 017	(17%)	33	451 544	(21%)
Herstigte NP	-	62 888	(3%)	-	5 536	(.25%)
Total	166	2 039 396		165 <sup>Y</sup>	2 195 853	

Sources: PFP Election Reviews 1987/1989, Professor NJJ Olivier.

\* The single NRP seat held in 1987, together with that of the single Independent is included in this figure.

<sup>Y</sup> One seat vacant in 1989.

55. Argus, 5 September 1989.

56. Sunday Tribune, 6 September 1989.

### The performance of the Democratic Party

After a long and difficult campaign the young Democratic Party was rewarded by the white electorate with a show of unprecedented support for a liberal democratic party. The election results reflected that Democratic Party had increased its overall percentage of the national vote from the 17% enjoyed by its predecessors to 21%. This figure would have been higher had the Sandton and Yeoville constituencies been contested. The party won 33 seats in the House of Assembly compared to the 19 it entered the election with. The DP drew some 10% of the white vote away from National Party and in so doing gained 13 seats from it. The DP made a particularly strong come back in Natal where it took ten of the 20 seats.

The DP seats gained from the NP were: Wynberg (Robin Carlisle majority 3 024, from -97); Simon's Town (Jan Momberg majority 3 362, from -268); Walmer (Bob Rogers majority 891, from -539); Hillbrow (Lester Fuchs majority 1 054, from -89); Umbilo (Carole Charlewood majority 698 from -480), Albany (EK Moorcroft majority 687, from -844); Bezuidenhout (Geoff Engel majority 356, from -2 442); Edenvale (Brian Goodall majority 3 551, from -168); North Rand (Louis de Waal majority 2 305, from -1 197); Umhlanga (Kobus Jordaan 1 012, from -557); Pietermaritzburg North (620, from -1 121); Pietermaritzburg South (764, from -1 509); and Mooi River (Wessel Nel 2 300 from NRP majority of 1 807).

The DP enjoyed swings of 13,7% in Wynberg, 13,5% in Edenvale, 12% in Simon's Town, 11,6% in Umbilo, and 10,8% in Gardens. In the DP marginal seat of Green Point Tian van der Merwe increased his majority from 39 to 1 823. In the safe Cape seat of Sea Point Colin Eglin increased his majority from 4 934 to 6 561. Likewise, Zach de Beer increased his majority in Parktown dramatically from 3 953 to 6 065.

In Maitland Dr Esther Lategan slashed the NP majority from 4 280 to 1 405, securing 42% of the vote compared to 27,7% in 1987.<sup>57</sup> Worrall's majority in Berea was 4 279 and in Randburg, Malan's was 1 714.

Importantly, the DP not only re-captured most of the floating English vote, but demonstrated that it held the potential to erode the NP's Afrikaans support base. In total the DP secured some 9% of the Afrikaans vote. DP communications Director James Selfe calculated that approximately 30% of the 1989 DP vote came from Afrikaners. This translated into about 130 000 votes, or more than double the PFP's Afrikaans vote. In 1981 and 1987 the PFP had won approximately 4% of the Afrikaans vote, thus the increase of the DP's Afrikaner vote "was significant and indicated a clear shift".<sup>58</sup> The DP also won its first seat in a constituency with an Afrikaans majority when Louis de Waal increased the liberal vote in North Rand by 4 789.

The constituencies where the DP vote improved on that of the PFP or NRP in the 1987 election by a margin of more than 450 votes were: Germiston (549), Johannesburg West (485), Meyerton (779), Modderfontein (1601), Nelspruit (490), Turffontein (1 628), Pretoria East (2 302), Rosettenville (485), Verwoerdberg (1 005), Waterkloof (773), Westdene (1 149), Bellville (456), De Kuilen (861), Durbanville (3 638), Maitland (1 521), Malmesbury (1 998), Paarl (759), Parow (752), Swellendam (2 001), Tygervallei (842), and Wellington (487).

In reducing NP majorities in Durbanville, Westdene, Johannesburg West, Florida, Queenstown and Waterkloof the DP showed clear indications of cutting into Afrikaans middle- class urban constituencies. The young party also demonstrated that its support base was not isolated to the Reef, the Peninsula and Durban, as it had also made inroads into the Eastern Cape.

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57 . Argus, 7 September 1989.

58 . Weekly Mail, 15 September 1989.

The disappointments for the DP were in Stellenbosch where the NP majority increased from 1 781 to 2 215, and Helderberg where the “Independent phenomenon” of 1987 was difficult to replicate.

All other things being equal, the DP would have done even better than it did under a new electoral delimitation which would have served to have increased the number of urban seats in DP strongholds. It is also of importance to note that had the electoral system in South Africa been that of proportional representation, the result of the 1989 election would have indeed produced a hung Parliament. Under a PR system the NP would have garnered 80 seats, the DP 34, and the CP 52. As the electoral system stands, the NP avoided a hung Parliament by a mere 1 735 votes which is an average of 145 votes in the NP’s 12 most marginal seats.<sup>59</sup>

However, the DP itself benefited from the split right-wing vote in a number of constituencies such as Bezuidenhout, Hillbrow, North Rand, and Pietermaritzburg. The DP lost its deposit in 18 constituencies whilst the CP lost theirs in 7.

After his sweeping victory in Berea Worrall announced that the results “had the makings of a whole new political alignment in South Africa”.<sup>60</sup> Co-leader Zach de Beer reflected:

The MDM’s defiance campaign and the “give FW a chance” factor hurt us much less than many expected. We were helped by the *gatvol* factor through which the Nats lost votes to both the left and right, but the results also show that a growing number of voters realise that the is no other way than one man one vote.<sup>61</sup>

Wynand Malan commented:

It is clear that we’re on our way to a democratic government - if not in the short term, then at least in the long term.<sup>62</sup>

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59 . Sunday Times, 10 September 1989.

60 . Argus, 7 September 1989.

61 . Weekly Mail, 8 September 1989.

62 . Weekly Mail, 8 September 1989.

### National Party performance and response

In defeating the Romans at Heraclea in 280bc. Pyrrhus king of Epirus proclaimed, "Another such victory and we are lost". The National Party's performance in the 1989 general election was indeed pyrrhic victory. A mere 6% of all adult South Africans voted for the NP in the election.<sup>63</sup> The NP lost half of its Parliamentary majority, a total of 30 seats, and made no electoral gains whatsoever. The NP yielded 13 seats to the DP and 17 to the CP. Voters had deserted the NP in droves. For the first time since 1958 the National Party won less than 50% of the white vote. The NP shed 10% of its support to the DP but only 5% to the CP. In both Natal and the Transvaal the National Party received less than 50% of the vote.

Despite its heaviest electoral setback NP leader FW de Klerk declared the results a "tremendous win".<sup>64</sup> This was not the view of the Afrikaans media, however, as *Beeld* noted after the election that the "National Party is licking wounds in places where, since 1948, it never even had wounds". The 1989 NP election campaign was particularly significant at a number of levels. De Klerk, unlike his predecessor, had abandoned the hope of Afrikaner unity and of recapturing the rural and blue-collar white support. The NP leader had directed his campaign directly to the white middle class and urban white voter. It had become clear that the NP had lost the CP voters forever and that it now had to focus its attention on both consolidating its own support and winning back the DP votes it had lost in 1989. The National Party was clearly shaken by the results and was forced to reconsider its political identity in the light of the white sentiment and the dangers to its support base demonstrated by a united pragmatic liberal opposition. Significantly for the DP De Klerk depicted the results to be satisfactory by arguing that 70% of the electorate had voted for reform. De Klerk later modified this position by saying that DP policy was fatally flawed and dangerous. In a conciliatory note the NP leader in Natal stated that although the DP

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63 . *ibid.*

64 . *Cape Times*, 8 September 1989.

and the NP had different policies and philosophies there was no reason why they couldn't work together.<sup>65</sup>

#### The Conservative Party

The Conservative Party increased its Parliamentary representation from 22 seats to 39. The CP improved its electoral support from 26% of the national white vote to 31%. All pre-election polls had predicted the CP would perform better than they did in the 1989 election. The party's failure to capitalise substantially on NP divisions and weaknesses confirmed that CP support had peaked and that its support and electoral challenge had, for the time being, been capped. The relatively poor CP showing acted as a further vitally important signal for De Klerk to move rapidly ahead with democratic reform.

#### The response of business

On the back of the electoral results and the clear mandate received by De Klerk for reform, organised business called on De Klerk to give constitutional and economic reform highest priority. ASSOCOM president Sydney Matus warned:

The election indicates a large measure of dissatisfaction with the management of key economic issues which the government will have to address as a matter of the highest priority. Constitutional reform can only take place within the framework of a strong economic base.<sup>66</sup>

Reflecting the view held by a number of prominent multi-national corporations who had remained in South Africa despite pressure to disinvest, Shell Executive Chairman John Kilroe said that he hoped the 1989 election, "would be the last election from which the majority are excluded".

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65 . Argus, 7 September 1989.

66 . Cape Times, 8 September 1989.

### International response

British Foreign Minister John Major commented:

The results of the election show that 70% of white voters want change, and so do 100% of those not permitted to vote. That is a formidable mandate for change. We look to the new government to take steps quickly towards this goal.<sup>67</sup>

Major added that the election result meant that De Klerk had won a powerful mandate to embark on a programme of comprehensive change “without delay” that would establish proper conditions for dialogue with “responsible” opposition groups including the ANC. The list of immediate changes required by the western community included the lifting of the state of emergency, and restrictions on normal political activity, the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. Major warned that Pretoria now had no excuses and should “get cracking on reform”. “This could scarcely be a more powerful mandate. I hope Mr de Klerk will proceed with it without delay”.<sup>68</sup>

The response from Washington was equally supportive of both De Klerk’s victory and the need for specific political normalisation to take place without delay. The list of pre-requisites cited by the Bush Administration mirrored that of the British and included the release of ANC leaders Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, the unbanning of the ANC and other black political organisations, the return of political exiles, the lifting of the state of emergency and associated restrictions on political activity.<sup>69</sup>

### MDM reaction

Jay Naidoo stated that the election result reflected a further fracturing in the white ruling bloc and the NP in particular. He stated that more people had demonstrated

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67 . Weekly Mail, 8 September 1989.

68 . Cape Times, 8 September 1989.

69 . *ibid.*

their opposition to apartheid than had voted, in that 3 million had heeded the MDM's stay-away call.

Gael Neke, Publicity Secretary of the Five Freedoms Forum, stated that:

While there is no democracy, we can hope that the Democratic Party will use its increased presence to reflect the concerns and needs of the whole of South Africa's population within Parliament, while the MDM continues its pressures from without.<sup>70</sup>

The MDM's Yunus Carrim noted:

Much will also depend on the role of the Democratic Party. It will have to pin the NP down to creating a climate for negotiations with the MDM. The elections have shown that while the Conservative Party has reached its zenith, the DP has enormous potential to grow. However, this will depend on the extent to which the DP is able to exert pressure to get genuine negotiations under way.<sup>71</sup>

The ANC statement on the elections concluded, "the people who voted, clearly voted for the process of dismantling apartheid".<sup>72</sup> In his reaction to the 1989 election IDASA Executive Director Alex Boraine stated:

The election result has changed the face of South African politics ... and will ultimately force the government to steer the country in a new direction.<sup>73</sup>

This more than any other statement affirmed the importance of Parliamentary opposition as one strategy for the reformation of the South African political system. From the reaction of the extra-Parliamentary actors it was clear that, in contrast to the 1987 debacle, the DP had demonstrated that a well-organised liberal Parliamentary opposition party was one important element in a broad strategy for pressuring the

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70 . Argus, 8 September 1989.

71 . Sunday Tribune, 10 September 1989.

72 . Sunday Star, 10 September 1989.

73 . Argus, 8 September 1989.

government into instituting a meaningful programme for the normalisation of political activity. What could be inferred from the results was that as the DP had demonstrated itself to be a significant player in the Parliamentary scene, it may have persuaded the MDM to take it seriously in terms of broad alliance-building. In the final analysis, the Worrallite strategy was vindicated.

#### Evaluation of the DP election campaign

Insofar as the Democratic Party sought to force a hung Parliament in the 1989 election, and thereby hold the balance of power, it failed. It failed primarily because it did not make the major breakthroughs required in a sufficient number of constituencies outside of those traditionally held by the liberal opposition. Despite the political sea-change in the white electorate, the DP ultimately failed to attract sufficient disillusioned Nationalists and Afrikaans voters to its ranks. In terms of its secondary short-term objective of regaining its official opposition status in the House of Assembly, it also failed. That the Party's performance did not match that of the 27% achieved by the combined PFP/NRP support in the 1981 election was a disappointment, but this must be viewed in the light of the fact that the political centre of gravity within the DP was to the left of the NRP, and that the National Party had in the course of the 1980's adopted many of the planks and rhetoric of the former opposition. In so doing the NP had permanently secured 5% to 7% of the old reform vote that had previously gone to the PFP.

However, a deeper examination of the achievements of the Democratic Party in the election reveals important successes at the political subterranean level. The election results were the clearest indicator of the long-term trend of an increasing number of white voters moving towards reformist and liberal positions. The historical balance of forces increasingly favoured the adoption of broadly liberal democratic positions amongst white voters.

At a party political level, despite the severe structural constraints imposed on the liberal opposition, the Democratic Party had been successful in manipulating the small window of opportunity open to it to deal the government a severe blow in the

1989 election. As a party that had existed for five months, the DP succeeded in recapturing most of the English-speaking floating vote, regaining every seat lost to the National Party in 1987 and yielding none. It won seats never previously held by a party committed to non-racial, free-market, democracy, and indeed captured one preponderantly Afrikaans seat on this ticket. In Natal the DP challenged the National Party for control of the whole province. The numerical "bottom line" of the political audit after the 1989 election revealed that a party committed to universal adult suffrage in a non-racial democracy had a stronger representation in Parliament than ever before.

Socio-politically, the form, content and identity of the liberal democratic opposition had developed beyond attracting merely the enlightened and disillusioned Afrikaner intelligentsia. It had proved that it held an attraction for the Afrikaans middle and professional classes. In the cradle of Afrikaner culture and learning, Stellenbosch, the liberal opposition, had, for example, captured half the student vote. Indeed more Afrikaners voted for the DP than English-speaking whites voted for the CP.<sup>74</sup>

Elements from the core of the National Party establishment had been drawn to the Democratic Party and had stood for election on liberal democratic tickets.

Furthermore, the Democratic Party had rid the liberal opposition of its image of being unpatriotic, unfit to govern and effete. It had demonstrated both a will and a capacity to conduct a hard-nosed, issue-based campaign, whilst carrying the principled message of non-racialism into the consciousness of an increasing number of whites from both English and Afrikaans backgrounds.

In terms of its interactive programme, the DP had won electoral endorsement from formations previously inaccessible to the PFP. That it had drawn condemnation from the MDM for its participation in the House of Delegates election reflected an opposition to the discredited tricameral structures in general and the strategy adopted by the DP in particular, rather than an inherent antipathy towards the party. To the contrary, the MDM actively encouraged the DP to form part of alliance building

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74. Weekly Mail, 14 September 1989.

strategies. The MDM mass defiance campaign, far from harming the DP, may have added to the sense of urgency felt by many whites to move towards negotiations and a political settlement as advocated by the Democrats.

In returning candidates of the stripe of Jan van Eck, Pierre Cronjé, Peter Gastrow and Wynand Malan, sections of the white electorate had also given an implicit endorsement to alliance politics and a mandate to negotiate with the ANC.

Whilst the DP failed to achieve a hung Parliament, it did achieve a *bang* (frightened) Parliament, and thereby sent the clearest possible signal to the future State President FW de Klerk that nothing short of clear and unequivocal reform towards the attainment of a non-racial democracy was the only political route available to him and his party.

In conclusion, the defining characteristic of the achievement of the DP in relation and contrast to any of its forebears was that it had achieved a degree of political leverage, albeit in the form of relational power in that it had forced the National Party into focusing more urgently on the need for substantial and profound democratic reform, as emerged in February 1990.

## CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding its deep roots in the 19th Century Cape Colony, liberalism has so far been unable to establish itself as South Africa's dominant ideology. Of the various factors that explain this failure none is more significant than the general one, applicable far more widely than South Africa, that deeply divided societies, whether colonial or post colonial, are inimical to the spread of liberal values. Colonial political orders are, by definition, based upon racial or ethnic hierarchies. The South Africa Act of 1909, which incorporated the four colonies into a unitary state, also incorporated all the essential institutional components of racial hierarchy; and by placing strict controls on the franchise arrangements, it was ensured that not only did the Cape's non-racial suffrage not in time extend to the northern provisions but was itself extinguished.

To the extent that liberalism is centrally concerned with rights and equality it could hardly be expected to flourish in a society whose very foundation was the denial of rights and the elevation of inequality to a fundamental principle. Liberal parties have struggled in post-colonial plural societies in which racial and ethnic solidarities have been the bases of political mobilisation.<sup>1</sup>

Liberalism's focus on the individual has also brought criticism also from radical critics who have accused it of insensitivity to community and conceptual myopia with regard to class.

It has been difficult for liberalism to cope with societies in which the coin of political currency is the ethnic group. In South Africa the Molteno Report grappled with this issue to some degree. The SPROCAS Report made something of a breakthrough in

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1. This phenomenon is highlighted in the collected essays contained in, H Giliomee and J Gagiano (Eds) The Elusive Search for Peace - South Africa, Israel, Northern Ireland, and also by Donald L. Horowitz, Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society, (pp. 42-86).

frankly recognising the salience of communal bonds as did the later contribution by of Slabbert and Welsh in *South Africa's Options*.

A further problem faced by liberalism in South Africa is that it has conventionally been treated as a white phenomenon. This conception ignores the powerful appeal of an ideology based upon equal human rights to rising generations of black political activists. Indeed the African National Congress from its inception through to the 1950's embraced a programme whose core component was constitutional liberalism.

Given this often hostile social and political terrain, Liberalism in South Africa has been characterised by a series of slow progressions and acute reversals in its fortunes.

It was only in 1953 that a coherent and programmatic political liberalism emerged through the founding of the Liberal Party, and only in the 1974 general election and after two decades of struggle, that political liberalism began to represent anything more than the principled protest of Helen Suzman in Parliament. The period 1974 to 1981 witnessed a phase of sustained growth in popular white support for political liberalism during which time the Progressive Federal Party became the official opposition in Parliament. However, in contrast to the trajectory of steady growth in the decade of the 1970's, the conditions that emerged in the 1980's induced the most acute crisis in liberalism in South Africa in its long history.

During the 1980's, South Africa endured a deep and protracted organic crisis, which was characterised by the coalescence of a range of structural challenges to the State at the level of security, the economy and its socio-political structure. These conditions of organic crisis gave rise to a host of far-reaching responses from both the State and popular forces. In its attempt to retain hegemony and to win consent and legitimacy, the State constructed a comprehensive network of control under the panoply of the "Total Strategy". The reformist dimension of the strategy found political expression in the implementation of the tricameral constitution which, in turn, set in motion a series of responses from popular forces opposing the imposition of the centralised, executive-driven, neo-apartheid edifice. Both the reforms of the National Party

government and its shifting class base, resulted in the Party splitting to the right in 1982, which served to re-position the NP at the centre of the white spectrum and conversely located the Progressive Federal Party further to the left in the perception of white voters. These subterranean dynamics forced the ruling party to seek out new multi-ethnic, class-based allies and thus it embarked on a programme to secure greater numbers of English speaking voters culminating in its success in the 1983 referendum.

The implementation of the tricameral constitution had a multifarious effect on the PFP. The set-back of the 1983 referendum indicated that as long as the National Party government continued with its programme of political and social reform, the PFP would be faced with the erosion of its own white traditional support base. The PFP's quandary was compounded by the formation of the United Democratic Front in August 1983 which had the dual effect of displacing the PFP in its role as spokesperson for the disenfranchised, whilst at the same time, drawing support away from the left wing and the youth of the PFP. The third debilitating effect of the tricameral constitution was the effective side-lining of Parliamentary opposition due to the centralisation of power within the new executive Presidency. Thus, the dual process of governmental reform and popular challenge operated to politically dislocate the PFP, and propel it into a period of decline.

At the same time, liberalism more broadly, was faced with its severest crisis. The range of popular challenges to the South African State from 1984 onwards evoked an intensification of repression and led to the imposition of a semi-permanent state of emergency from June 1985. The draconian measures adopted under the states of emergency and the repressive actions of the State further occluded the already severely attenuated space open to liberal institutions. At the same time the abuse of human rights, the abrogation of the rule of law and intensification of the violent conflict struck at the core of the beliefs, practices and procedures of liberals. Liberal institutions were deeply divided by the forces thrown up by the crisis and individuals within these institutions were increasingly faced with a moral dilemma between adherence to liberal principle on the one hand, or "taking sides" in the unfolding

struggle for hegemony on the other. Liberals were acutely divided over the appropriateness of their chosen strategies and lost confidence in the efficacy and utility of their beliefs within the context of the conflict. This loss of resolve led to a slide-away from principle and the blunting of the liberal identity of these institutions. By the mid-1980's, the historically symbiotic relationship that had operated between party political liberalism and liberal institutions had in a number of instances become strained.

However, it was in the realm of party politics that the liberal crisis was most clearly exposed. After more than a decade of sustained growth, in which the Progressive Federal Party had become the official Parliamentary opposition, the range of forces impacting on political liberalism saw the party suffer a debilitating series of setbacks. These included the PFP's "defeat" in the 1983 referendum campaign, and the failure of the Convention Alliance; but the single greatest setback prior to the 1987 general election was the 1986 resignation of van Zyl Slabbert. Slabbert's resignation not only threw the party into internal and public disarray, but also served to lend credence to the accusations of the left that depicted the PFP as a party of little relevance. Having been eroded from both the left and right, the party suffered its single greatest reversal in the 1987 general election when its representation in Parliament was reduced to 19 MPs and it lost its position as the official opposition to the Conservative Party. The response of the party to its crisis was contradictory and vacillating. In essence it attempted to address three constituencies that were being pulled in different political directions by the centripetal forces of "system" and "struggle" politics. The first, the floating voter, abandoned the PFP in the 1983 referendum, and remained within the National Party fold until the formation of the Democratic Party. The second constituency addressed by the PFP, was its social democratic and youth wing, both of whom were increasingly alienated from the party by both its vacillation and their own attraction to the populist politics of the UDF. By the mid-1980's only the hard core of committed PFP support remained, and it was around this, often neglected, constituency that the Party attempted to re-build itself.

Moreover, the manner of the Party's 1987 electoral reversal held long-term consequences for the PFP. It became clear that public image of the Party had been possibly irredeemably damaged by the National Party's demonisation campaign against it. However, the resignation of Slabbert and Boraine as well as that of three PFP MPs engaged in interactive work, in 1987, although weakening the party's contacts with the extra-Parliamentary movement, allowed it to focus more clearly on its own re-construction; a process that led to the formulation of a more pragmatic liberal identity.

The organic crisis and more particularly the State's inability to provide leadership, also gave rise to paradoxical and unintended consequences, and most notably in the appearance of fissures in the ruling bloc. These divisions manifest themselves in the loss of support for the NP of significant elements of its intelligentsia in 1985 and 1986. This was followed by the defection of other elements including church leaders, academics, and professional classes from the socio-political canopy of the National Party. This burgeoning *verligte* movement found clearer public and political expression with the emergence of the Independent phenomenon in the 1987 general election. The Independents tapped into a rich seam of white electoral support that was opposed National Party policy, but was unwilling to make the institutional switch to supporting the beleaguered and Anglophone PFP. The Independent Movement provided the first point of convergence at the political party level for *verligte* Afrikaners and liberals to combine forces in opposition to the ruling National Party, albeit in the small number of constituencies contested. However, the relative success of the Independents also highlighted the paradox that far more white voters supported the policies of the PFP than voted for the party.

Thus within the depths of the crisis, two contradictory, yet related phenomena were unfolding. Whilst the traditional party of political liberalism, the PFP, had been weakened to the point of ineffectiveness, a critical element had broken with the establishment and had begun to challenge it from without. Importantly too, for the future reconstruction the liberal opposition, the intensity of the liberal crisis, had provoked a period of profound introspection and self-examination amongst the liberal

intelligentsia. The intellectual response to the challenge of the crisis was variegated, but one important response, and one that found expression within the party political wing of liberalism, was that of the development of a pragmatic liberalism, which was predicated on the matching of principles to practice within given political constraints. These formulations were debated and internalised by the tight-knit liberal community in South Africa and found political expression in the restructuring of the PFP during 1988.

Leading from the 1987 split in the Independent Movement, the Independent Party had formed in 1988 as a party of pragmatism and shared a commonality of outlook and approach with that of leading elements within the Southern Transvaal Region of the PFP in particular; which was also the cradle of the pragmatic liberals within the PFP. The other element of the fragmented opposition, the National Democratic Movement, represented a small, but politically significant, constituency of enlightened elements of the Afrikaner middle class, professionals and intellectuals. The NDM had committed themselves to playing an interactive role between all spectra of political belief and were thus an important dimension to the formation of the DP, but one without any organisational strength.

The ideological and strategic positioning of the Independent Party and the National Democratic Movement presented a challenge to the PFP as both drew from traditional PFP support. At the same time the PFP underwent organisational and strategic shifts in 1988 with its newly-elected leader Dr Zach de Beer committing himself to opposition unity before the 1989 general election. The relative success of the PFP in contesting the 1988 local government elections, together with its more pragmatic image, resulted in the Party becoming a more attractive option to both the white electorate and as a political partner to the Independent Party in particular. Thus towards the end of 1988 there arose both an inter-party and a public imperative towards liberal unity. The constitutional imperative impelling the fragmented opposition together was that of the need to fight a general election in 1989 as a single political force, whilst the financial imperative was the pressure placed on the parties by major donors to reach agreement on unity.

The challenges and opportunities facing the DP at its formation were manifold. Organisationally, the differing political traditions and constituencies the three parties represented made unity a difficult and protracted process and one which was resolved at the leadership level by the formation of the troika. Ideologically, the pragmatic liberal identity of the post 1987 PFP dovetailed with that of the Independent Party and yielded a strong pragmatic thrust to DP policy and rhetoric in its formative months. However, the central contradiction of the new party lay in the question of its strategic orientation. Both by conviction and for the sake of unity, the Party had at its founding, committed itself to the pursuit of seeking power in Parliament, whilst negotiating and forging alliances with extra-Parliamentary formations. However, in the context of political dynamic operating in the pre-election period, the two positions proved contradictory and resulted in the Party making unsatisfactory compromises. Despite the fact that the party recognised the integral nature of Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary politics, it was unable to achieve this integration itself during the first six months of its existence.

However, any evaluation of the DP up to September 1989 has to be made contextually. Pragmatism demanded that the goals set of the DP's adopted strategies had to be achievable and appropriate to the given context. The nature of the DP's constituency, its limited resource base and the exigencies of the 1989 election, determined that the "institutional power" dimension of the three-legged action programme took precedence over the other two dimensions. Thus from the time of its formation in April 1989 until the election of 6 September, the DP focused its energies almost exclusively on the fighting of the general election and, given its youth, in part, derived its political identity from the conduct of its campaign.

The 1989 DP election campaign reflected its pragmatic liberal identity. Its principal focus was that of challenging the National Party on its weaknesses, namely, economic mismanagement and political inertia. It was both rational and functional to its goals and objectives that the DP fight a "bread and butter" issues campaign, whilst presenting itself as a viable alternative government to the National Party. The DP's

strategic thrust in the campaign was the forcing of a hung Parliament. The attempt to achieve a hung Parliament was not an end in itself, but was a pragmatic strategy predicated on the belief that the cardinal site of political power resided in the white chamber of Parliament. Whilst the strategy of the forcing of a hung Parliament failed, at times during the election campaign, it appeared that it might have succeeded. The resignation of PW Botha three weeks before the election day, and his replacement by FW de Klerk, was the turning point in the campaign that militated against the success of the hung Parliament strategy.

Within the genre of political liberalism in South Africa the Democratic Party was exceptional in a number of respects. Firstly, its formation represented the first time since the ascendancy of the National Party in 1948 that the opposition to the left had become united. Secondly, the Party, to a significant degree, consisted of, and was formed by political actors and elements formerly from within the National Party and the Afrikaner establishment. Thirdly, the DP drew on a broader support base than any previous Parliamentary liberal party. The DP provided a political home for numbers of middle class and professional Afrikaners and significant elements of the Afrikaner intelligentsia. The results of opinion polls during the 1989 election campaign, together with the strong performance by the Party in a number of predominantly Afrikaans constituencies testify to this phenomenon. The fourth distinctive feature of the DP was that, whilst it was a party that enshrined and espoused liberal values, it was also Party of political pragmatism, with a keen sense of the dynamics of power. Finally, and relatedly, in the course of the 1989 general election campaign, the Democratic Party accomplished what no other liberal formation had previously been able to; it had achieved a degree of political leverage within the white political power bloc.

It remains a point of speculation as to the degree of influence the performance of the DP and the major reversals suffered by the National Party had on forcing FW de Klerk into his reform programme. What is clear, however, is that the success of the Democratic Party in re-capturing the majority of the English vote, the fact that the Party had united the liberal opposition for the first time since 1953, and the challenge

it had mounted against the National Party on its own terms, presented the NP with a phenomenon it had never before experienced and one that it could ignore only at its peril.

The degree to which the formation of and support for the Democratic Party and more importantly the principles for which it stood had an effect on National Party leadership thinking must remain a question of speculation. However, an important insight is offered by Willem de Klerk when he concludes:

For the National Party the founding of the Democratic Party early in 1989 was undoubtedly an unsettling development ... What caused apprehension in the National Party was the interest shown in the Democratic Party by the so-called "fourth power" - the enlightened Afrikaners. Moreover, it was feared that large numbers of English-speakers might desert the National Party, because the Democratic Party was far more acceptable to them than the equally hidebound old Progressive Federal Party.

... I got the impression that he (FW de Klerk) was showing a new sensibility to the fact that the National Party's policy had reached a dead end and that the Democratic Party was offering a clearcut option with distinct possibilities.

Behind closed doors, I happen to know, the National Party noted that the Democratic Party's policy had considerable marketing value. Furthermore, the Democratic Party had, to its credit that it enjoyed access to and was already involved in extensive unofficial negotiations with black extra-parliamentary groups. It was also stated publically that they, without the involvement of the government, were going to set up a negotiating table and that the ANC and Inkatha would participate. This, too, made the government anxious that the initiative might slip from its hands.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, as de Klerk notes:

It cannot be denied that the left, through the Democratic Party and its sympathizers, prepared a way for the National Party. The best proof of this is that FW de Klerk has taken over the broad framework of the DP's policy.<sup>3</sup>

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2 . W. de Klerk, 1991. *F.W. de Klerk - The man in his time*. Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball. pp. 103-104.

3 . De Klerk, p.105.

The events of 1990 and after form no part of this thesis, but it is appropriate to note the striking apparent consensus on the values of liberal democracy that underpinned the constitutional negotiations process in the period to the present. The 1991 Codesa Declaration of Intent, which included *inter alia*, constitutional principles entrenched in the interim constitution, together with a Bill of Rights, the recognition of regionalism, and the most recent successes of liberal negotiators in the multi-party negotiating forum may be justifiably regarded as vindication of the liberal political message as espoused for over thirty five years.

The central challenge facing liberals in South Africa in the new democratic order is not, however, only to protect and preserve the core values that have been entrenched in the constitutional arrangements thus far, but also to meet the longer-term challenge of ensuring the values become broadly and deeply embedded in all strata of South African society.

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