

THE COMING SOUTH AFRICAN GENERAL ELECTION AND THE FAR-RIGHT FACTOR

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The decision by P W Botha to call a general election for the white chamber of South Africa's racially segregated tri-cameral parliament on May 6 has focused attention on the white political scene in that country. At one level the election will be an irrelevance and an anachronism. It will be another occasion on which only the white minority will be consulted about the government of the country. Yet, it will take place at a time of near universal recognition that racist minority rule is doomed. Moreover, it is a foregone conclusion that Botha's Nationalist Party will emerge as election victor with a comfortable majority in parliament. At the same time, however, the election promises to provide important insights into secondary contradictions within the dominant classes. The election will undoubtedly reveal much about the present state of the relations between different social forces within the white community and also something about the strategy the Botha regime intends to follow in the face not only of the deepening crisis of the apartheid system and state in general, but also of the manifest failure of its own 'Total Strategy'. In particular, since Botha has chosen to define the election principally in terms of a contest between his regime and the far right, the election will bring into focus the question of the far right. It can be expected to reveal much of importance about the nature and strategy of the various organisations which occupy the extreme reactionary pole of white politics and also provide an important index of their strength, not only in electoral, but also in broader political, ideological and even military terms.

Botha's decision to go for an election at this time has, in fact, relatively little to do with substantial decisions about policy or strategy. When he originally hinted at the possibility of an election (during the Nationalist Party Federal Congress in August 1986), Botha tried to give the impression to the international community and domestic monopoly capital that a major objective would be to obtain a mandate for 'further constitutional development'. That facade has now been dropped and one of the certainties is that the Botha regime will not be going into the election seeking support from the white electorate for any substantial new 'reform' initiative.

On the contrary, the regime will be going into the election at a time when it has clearly already taken a *strategic* decision to resist all pressures to move beyond the limits of its existing 'reform' package. Advances in the liberation struggle in recent years have succeeded in demonstrating not only that the regime's 'reformed apartheid' programme is totally unacceptable to the majority of the people of the country, but also that it is unworkable as a 'solution' to the deepening crisis of the apartheid system and state. Faced with the increasingly evident failure of its own 'Total Strategy' to create a new support base to stabilise the crisis-ridden apartheid system and state, the regime has been forced to make a strategic choice between two broad alternatives: moving into the terrain of serious negotiation politics, which would imply struggling over the terms, conditions and timing - but accepting the inevitability of - an eventual transfer of power; or alternatively, attempting to ruthlessly hang onto power come what may. Events of 1986 - the rejection of the proposals of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, and the declaration of the State of Emergency - were unmistakable pointers to the fact that the regime has chosen the second option. It is now firmly set on a course of attempting to cling to power through naked terror regardless of the effect on the country as a whole or the international consequences. It has chosen the path of increasing repression at home; of escalating aggression in the region and of stubborn resistance to outside pressures, including sanctions. The regime is clearly hoping opportunistically to capitalise on this stance in the coming election. In so far as it is seeking a mandate in the election at all, it will be a mandate from the white electorate to continue to steadfastly refuse to enter the terrain of serious negotiation politics, implying a genuine transfer of power to the majority of the people, regardless of the social and economic costs to the country as a whole.

The regime evidently judges that its current stance, which has in reality been forced on it by the advancing liberation struggle, will be popular with the white electorate - particularly among those strata of the white petty bourgeoisie and white labour who have been attracted to parties and organisations of the far right. In this sense, rather than being principally about major policy questions, the Botha regime's decision to go for an election at this time appears to be largely motivated by tactical considerations at the level of white party politics. Botha appears to have judged that the present moment will be one of the least unfavourable for his Nationalist party to consolidate its position vis a vis other parties presented in the white legislature. It is also probable that the regime believes that an electoral victory on a platform of resistance to 'external pressure' will strengthen its hand in attempts to persuade the imperialist

powers to restrict their demands for 'reforms' within parameters acceptable to the regime, and, in particular, to drop demands which would imply the elimination of racist minority rule. In addition, some press reports (for example, *The Citizen*, 08.01.87) have suggested that P W Botha, who will turn 71 this year, is planning to retire from politics and wants to be able to initiate a process of transition to a new Nationalist Party leadership on the basis of a secure electoral position. According to these reports Botha is planning to retire within a year to 18 months of a general election.

One of the major issues in the coming election will thus be a test of the strength between the Botha regime and the far right. The deepening crisis of the apartheid system and Botha's 'reforms' have provoked the deepest divisions within Afrikaner nationalism since the Nationalist Party (NP) came to power in 1948. The far right, which accuses Botha of having betrayed the 'white man, and 'the Afrikaner' in particular, has in recent years emerged as a major force in white party politics. Both the Konserwatiewe Party (Conservative Party - KP) and the Herstigte Nasionale Party (Reconstituted National Party - HNP) have won seats from the Nationalists in parliamentary by-elections, while the neo-fascist Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (Afrikaner Resistance Movement - AWB) has emerged as a major extraparlimentary force, holding rallies and disrupting Nationalist party political meetings in areas of the Transvaal. There has not, however, been an opportunity for an overall test of strength in a general election - the last general election, held in April 1981, was before the breakaway of the Conservative Party (in February 1982).

While the far right has clearly demonstrated that it is a force in 'white politics', it is also one divided within itself. Two main political parties and a number of 'cultural', trade union, church and other groupings exist. They have thusfar been unable to achieve any lasting unity. Yet experience has shown that when the two main parties have campaigned and put up candidates on an individual basis, they have divided the far right vote and allowed the Nationalists to scrape home. Conversely on occasions when they have cooperated and presented a united front they have been able in certain constituencies to present a formidable challenge to the Nationalists. Experience has also shown that at times when the Botha regime is emphasising 'reforms' the far right challenge is greater than at moments when it is emphasising its strong arm and the limits of the 'reform process'. The current conjuncture has not only seen the Botha regime declaring a state of emergency as a cover for a reign of terror and stubbornly refusing pressures to enter the terrain of serious negotiation politics, it has also seen a major attempt to unite the two major far right parties flounde-

ring on apparently minor and esoteric policy disputes about whether or not the 'betrayal of the Afrikaner' began under B J Vorster or whether South Africans of Indian origin should be assigned a separate 'homeland'. Behind these apparently petty disputes has been a sharp and unresolved struggle for hegemony within the far right. Whether or not some kind of electoral pact is in the end agreed to, the far right will go into the election with a legacy of recent bitter feuding which can only be to the advantage of Botha's NP. In such circumstances, Botha has evidently judged that the moment is propitious for his Nationalist party to consolidate its electoral position vis a vis the far right parties. The regime has clearly defined the main battle ground in the forthcoming elections as a contest between itself and the far right. It will be seeking to pitch its appeal to potential far right voters, hoping to woo them back into the NP fold.

This dossier will analyse the background to the coming election: focusing on the issues at stake and on the 'far right factor' in particular. It will examine how the current situation, which is in fact one of deepening crisis for the regime in real terms, has created a potential opportunity for the Botha regime to enhance its position in a purely electoral sense vis a vis the far right. The dossier will briefly examine the different far right organisations and the factors that have bedevilled their attempts to date to forge a united front. The dossier will argue that whatever the outcome of the election the far right will remain a significant but limited force on the broader South African political scene. Finally the dossier will examine the likely stance of the Botha regime on both domestic and regional policy during the election campaign; its likely policies in the period after and current perspectives on the succession to P W Botha.

1. THE CONTEXT: THE CRISIS OF THE TOTAL STRATEGY

It is generally known that the past decade or so has witnessed a steady shift in the balance of forces between oppressor and oppressed inside South Africa. Beginning with the strikes in Durban in 1973 and passing through the Soweto uprising of June 1976, a process was inaugurated in which the oppressed gradually assumed the initiative and forced the oppressor onto the defensive. At the same time the defeat of Portuguese colonialism in the mid-1970s changed the balance of forces at the regional level. The apartheid regime was no longer surrounded by a ring of colonised 'buffer states', but by independent states committed to achieving liberation in the sub-continent. By the mid-1970s it had become clear that the apartheid system was in deep crisis on both the domestic and regional terrains of struggle.

The Botha regime came to power in September 1978 representing a new alignment of forces within the dominant classes - an alliance between Afrikaner monopoly capital and the top military commanders. It also received a degree of support from non-Afrikaner monopoly capital, unprecedented for a National Party regime. The new governing alliance led by P W Botha recognised that the crisis had deepened to the point where it was impossible to maintain racist minority rule through established Verwoerdian apartheid. In Botha's famous slogan apartheid had to 'adapt or die'. The period since 1978 saw it attempting to implement a 'Total Strategy' aimed at combining repression with a number of measures designed to restructure the system in a number of specific respects. Presented ideologically as a programme of 'reform', changes were initially introduced in the economic and social spheres. These sought to relax certain restrictions on the horizontal and vertical mobility of the more skilled strata of the black labour force. At the same time measures were introduced to provide more openings for a 'black middle class' in the hope of widening the regime's miniscule support base among the oppressed. At the regional level, the regime launched its 'constellation of states' initiative, aimed at creating a tight knit alliance of regional states cooperating on the economic, military and political level with the self-appointed 'regional power' - South Africa.

These changes, or 'reforms', were accompanied by an ideological shift in which even members of the regime declared that apartheid was 'outmoded', 'finished' or even 'dead'. Of course, all such protestations were based on a very restricted conception of apartheid: a view which reduced it to selected racially discriminatory laws. For the oppressed and exploited apartheid has always been much more than a list of specific racist restrictions on movement, residence, employment or the choice of a spouse - important and abhorrent though these are. From their standpoint, apartheid is a total system of capitalist exploitation based on national oppression imposed by a racist minority, which monopolises political and economic power. It is a system, whose development depended, and whose survival depends, on the exclusion of the majority of the people in the country from any effective control over political or economic power. As such, it is not a system which can be 'reformed' by the actions of the existing power holders, but one which has to be dismantled through a transfer of power to the oppressed and exploited.

The limits of the Botha regime's 'reform programme' became strikingly clear when it began to put forward its proposals for a 'new constitutional dispensation'. These demonstrated to anyone who still had doubts that all its proposed 'reforms' were intended to create a new basis on which to

defend racist minority rule, not as part of a process of dismantling it. In 1984 the regime introduced its tri-cameral system of parliament. So-called coloured and Asian South Africans were in theory given representation in parliament for the first time, but in separate racially exclusive Chambers. The Nationalist dominated white Chamber had a permanent built in majority and the newly created Executive President was given wide powers vis a vis parliament. The ineffectiveness of so-called coloured and Asian chambers as any kind of forum for pressing demands of the oppressed has been dramatically demonstrated on a number of occasions. The most recent came in January this year, when P W Botha demanded and obtained a grovelling apology from the leader of the Labour Party, Allan Hendrickse, for taking a swim on a 'whites only' beach in Port Elizabeth as a mild protest against the continued existence of so-called 'petty apartheid'. Botha told Hendrickse that he could not behave as though he were the leader of a separate partner in a coalition. He was a member of the Cabinet and as such bound by principles of collective responsibility. He had therefore not only to abide by but also support in public the decisions of the Cabinet. As the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group put it in their Report published in mid-1986, '... the government's approach to power sharing has been cast within the parameters of apartheid and with the backstop of a white veto' (*Mission to South Africa: The Commonwealth Report*, Harmondsworth, 1986:41).

Not surprisingly, the regime's constitutional proposals have been totally unacceptable to the majority of the people of the country. This was clearly demonstrated in the campaign against the 'elections' for the tri-cameral parliament organised by the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983/4. More recent advances, beginning with the Vaal Triangle uprising of September 1984, not only confirmed their continued unacceptability, but also rendered them unworkable as a 'solution' to the deepening crisis. In 1985, the ANC launched the slogan 'Make apartheid unworkable and the country ungovernable'. A combination of mass action and armed struggle focused on the administrative apparatuses of the apartheid state in black residential areas. By the end of 1985, this campaign had largely succeeded in one important objective - rendering inoperative the regime's so-called Black Local Authority (BLA) system. In the regime's constitutional plans BLAs were to have served as the basis of a complex hierarchy of local, regional and national advisory bodies, which would have been the regime's answer to the 'problem' of 'urban blacks'. The destruction of the system, and the subsequent creation of local embryonic structures of popular power, thus had the effect of undermining the regime's whole constitutional 'reform' programme. By the end of 1985 at the latest, it had become plain to all sides of the political spectrum in all corners of the world, that the

regime's own constitutional plans had failed. It had been placed in a position where it was being seen not only by the people and progressive forces but also by its erstwhile imperialist allies to have no political solution to the crisis in South Africa. As ANC President, Oliver Tambo, put it in his New Year message in January 1986: The Botha regime had lost the strategic initiative.

2. THE REGIME'S RESPONSE

Faced with the failure of its own 'reformed apartheid' proposals, it has been forced to choose between one of two alternatives. First, it could begin to move onto the terrain of serious negotiation politics, which would imply struggling over the terms, conditions and timing - but accepting the inevitability of - an eventual transfer of power. Alternatively it could attempt to hold onto power by launching a reign of state terror at home and a wave of military aggression in the region.

The May 19 SADF raids against Gaborone, Harare and Lusaka - on the day the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG) returned to South Africa to put proposals to the regime to initiate negotiations - plus the declaration of a State of Emergency on June 13 were clear indications that the regime had opted for the second alternative. In the course of its discussions with the EPG, the regime was, indeed, quite explicit on this point. In a letter to the EPG, R F Botha wrote 'It (the South African government) is not interested in negotiation about a transfer of power'. As the EPG itself put it:

while the Government claims to be ready to negotiate, it is in truth not yet prepared to negotiate fundamental change, nor to countenance the creation of genuine democratic structures, nor to face the prospect of the end of white domination and white power in the foreseeable future. Its programme of reform does not end apartheid, but seeks to give it a less inhuman face. Its quest is power-sharing, but without surrendering overall white control (*Mission to South Africa: The Commonwealth Report*, Harmondsworth, 1986:132-33).

It is essentially support for this stance which Botha will be seeking in the coming election. He will be asking the white electorate to endorse a position of refusing to move towards negotiations about a transfer of power, despite the implications in terms of South Africa's relations with its erstwhile imperialist allies - who are increasingly coming to the view that racist minority rule can no longer guarantee stable conditions for

capital accumulation. Moreover, since the Emergency has not actually succeeded in breaking the mass challenge, he will be calling for support to continue to lead South Africa towards a future of escalating civil and regional war and deepening economic crisis.

3. ISSUES IN THE ELECTION

Had the constitution not been amended to give effect to the tri-cameral parliament in 1984, Botha would have been obliged to have called an election for the 'white' House of Assembly by April 1986 - five years after the previous election in 1981. Under the new constitution, Botha need not have summoned an election until 1989 and he should, theoretically, have held elections for the three chambers simultaneously. Why then has he chosen to go for an early election and why will it be restricted to the white chamber of parliament?

In fact, Botha came under strong pressure from the far right to go to the polls in 1986 as he should have done had the new constitution not come into effect. He was accused of manipulation and of being afraid to face the electorate. The first half of 1986 would, however, have been a bad moment for Botha to have taken on the far right challenge, which he evidently considers to be the most significant in 'white politics'. His regime was still trying to mount a rearguard action to appease the western powers, salvage some of the damage caused by his disastrous August 1985 'Rubicon speech' and ward off sanctions. Botha's speech at the opening of parliament in January 1986 was 'reformist' in tone, promising the 'repeal' of the pass laws and other modifications of the system, and definitely aimed at the international bankers (with whom the Pretoria regime was then trying to negotiate a debt rescheduling). Until the May 19 raids against Harare, Gaborone and Lusaka and the June 13 declaration of a State of Emergency at least, the regime was still preoccupied with trying to sell its version of 'negotiation' to the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group and the Reagan administration. Botha was still concerned to present a 'reformist' face, albeit one severely scarred and worn. It was not an image calculated to appeal to voters from those strata susceptible to far right influence.

With the declaration of the State of Emergency, the regime's increasingly blunt refusal to contemplate any negotiated transfer of power, and the consequent worsening of relations with the West (manifested in sanctions and disinvestments), Botha has judged that his image has improved among those sections of the electorate. He has already indicated that he intends to go into the election campaign presenting an image of *kragdadigheid*, an Afrikaans word meaning stubborn strength. He is evidently hoping also to capitalise on the worsening relations with the United States -

manifest in the passage by the Congress of the bill providing for limited sanctions in October 1986 - by presenting an image of himself as a leader who refused to bow to external pressure. Botha clearly expects that by stoking up a mood of narrow chauvinism and anti-Americanism he will be able to win votes. A number of commentators have pointed out that Vorster secured the largest NP majority ever in the 1977 election after campaigning on an anti-American platform following clashes with the Carter administration. Botha is clearly hoping that he will be able to make similar gains. The regime probably calculates that its position will be reinforced by being able to argue that the white electorate will not tolerate 'reform' beyond existing limits.

Clearly such a programme will be principally pitched at potential far right voters. It will be aimed at wooing the far right back into the fold of the Nationalist Party. Botha will be seeking to project himself as the *volksleier* (leader of his people) rather than the *verraaier* (traitor) which the far right have described him as. He will be looking for issues around which to present a 'tough' image. Already it is clear that even 'reforms' which the regime might earlier have contemplated are now 'on hold' at least until the election is over. For example, the report of the President's Council on the Group Areas Act (which recommended that racial zoning be delegated to local authorities and applied on a 'flexible basis') has been shelved.

The fact that the NP's election campaign will largely be pitched at potential far right voters, also explains why the regime has chosen to call an election only for the white chamber of the tri-cameral parliament. The Botha regime is in no mood to make 'reformist' concessions merely to enhance the, in any case slim, electoral prospects of its allies in the so-called coloured and Asian chambers. On the contrary, the recent Hendrickse swim incident indicates clearly that the regime wants to emphasise to the white electorate that the inclusion of these so-called coloured and Asian puppets had not undermined white control of the legislature. At the same time, it clearly does not want any repeat performance of the UDF anti-election campaign of 1983, particularly at a moment in which it will want to be seen to be 'in control'. In this the regime is able to capitalise on the fact that the last thing that the members of the so-called coloured and Asian chambers want to do is face an election. They had a very rough ride in the 1983 election and by-elections since then have consistently produced even more derisory polls. They are, in short, thoroughly discredited and in no position to face 'their' electorates even under emergency regulations. The *Sunday Times* of November 30 even suggested that the regime reached a deal with coloured and Asian representatives, in which the latter agreed

not to oppose the shelving of the President's Council report on the Group Areas Act in return for being left out of the election. Indeed, one of the sanctions which Botha threatened to get Hendrickse to make a grovelling apology after taking his swim on a whites-only beach was that he would dissolve parliament and call elections for all three chambers.

4. THE FAR-RIGHT: ORGANISATIONS AND POLICIES

In class terms the far right draws its support from certain categories of small capitalist agriculture, white labour and the white urban and rural petty bourgeoisie. These are class forces originally mobilised and united under the banner of Afrikaner nationalism in the late 1940s, whose current perception is that the Botha regime's 'reforms' are a 'sell out' made at their expense. They generally hanker after the 'golden days' of apartheid and fear that even minor adjustments to the system will result in the undermining of their privileged position in it.

The far right is organised in and represented by a number of different types of organisations. These include racist trade unions opposed to any modification to job colour bars, a variety of church, cultural, research and academic bodies (such as the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs - SABRA) and a fair number of 'lunatic' organisations. An example of the latter is the *Oranjerwerkersvereniging* (Orange Workers' Union) led by Hendrik Verwoerd, the son of the assassinated Prime Minister. This seeks to prepare for the idea of a separate exclusively white 'homeland' independent of 'foreign', ie black, labour through persuading farmers in a few districts of the Northern Orange Free State to reduce the numbers of black workers in their employ. (It appears, however, that they have as yet not persuaded any to dispense with black labour altogether.) Also important is the *Afrikaner Volkswag* (Afrikaner People's Sentinel), led by Verwoerd's son-in-law, Prof Carel Boshoff. This is ostensibly a 'cultural organisation', but functions in reality as a secret society committed to exerting behind the scenes influence. It is modelled on the *Afrikaner Broederbond* (Afrikaner Brotherhood) (now in the hands of *verligte* ('enlightened') Nationalists), and is sometimes described as a 'counter-Broederbond'. The far right also embraces three main political organisations in addition to a number of smaller sects. These are: the *Konservatiewe Party* (KP), led by Andries Treurnicht; the *Herstigte Nasionale Party* (HNP), led by Jaap Marais; and the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* (AWB), led by Eugene Terre-Blanche. Each have different histories and somewhat different ideological slants.

Although the KP is the largest and most important, the oldest of the three is the HNP. The HNP was formed in 1969, when four Nationalist members

of Parliament led by the then Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Albert Hertzog, were expelled from the Nationalist Party after opposing the decision by the then Prime Minister, B J Vorster, to 'relax' sports apartheid (when and where this would help white South African sportsmen to be readmitted to international tournaments). The four were opposed to Vorster's 'outward looking' regional policy. The HNP's basic programme calls for a vigorous implementation of full blooded Verwoerdian apartheid, with strict racial separation of residential and social facilities; reduced expenditure on black education, health, housing etc; and separate 'homelands' for Africans and so-called coloured South Africans. The HNP also advocates that Afrikaans should be the sole official language. For 16 years the HNP was in the political wilderness, standing in numerous elections and by-elections without winning a single seat. However, by the time of the 1981 elections it was clearly benefiting from the growing petty bourgeois revolt against Botha's Total Strategy and succeeded in picking up 14% of the total vote, although again it narrowly missed winning a seat. After the formation of the Conservative Party in 1982, the HNP continued to contest by-elections in its own right often putting up candidates against the Conservative Party. This experience, however, not only consistently demonstrated that the HNP had less electoral support than the KP, it also frequently split the far right vote to the advantage of the Nationalists. By late 1985, largely through this pact, the HNP was finally able to capture a seat in the Sasolburg constituency. Louis Stoffberg, the victor of Sasolburg and one of the original four founders of the HNP, is the party's first and only Member of Parliament.

The Conservative Party was formed in March 1982, after a group of 18 Nationalist Members of Parliament, led by the then leader of the NP in the Transvaal, Andries Treurnicht, were expelled for their opposition to the inclusion of so-called coloureds and Indians in Botha's proposed tri-cameral system. The Conservative Party, like other far right groupings, believes in a return to apartheid as practised in earlier periods. It is totally opposed to any form of political 'power sharing' and advocates the re-establishment of a single chamber, whites only parliament. It believes in separate tribal 'homelands' for so-called coloured and Indian, as well as black South Africans and would refuse to concede any form of political or administrative rights to any blacks outside of the 'homeland' system. It also believes in stricter residential segregation. However, it is not so committed to a return to statutory job reservation, or fully fledged social or sporting apartheid as the HNP, and on occasions its leaders have even indicated that they accept modifications to apartheid policies in the social and economic, but not in the political spheres. The Conservatives

also do not advocate Afrikaans as the sole official language - a reflection in part of the support they draw from certain frustrated English speaking petty bourgeois strata, including former Rhodesians. The Conservative Party has proved itself to be a force in some areas of the Transvaal by winning a number of by-elections against the NP. However, it is not omnipotent even in the *platte land* (rural areas) and has also lost several by-elections to the Nationalists.

The Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) was formed in 1979 by Eugene Terre'blanche, a former bodyguard of B J Vorster when he was Prime Minister. The AWB is an openly neo-fascist organisation which sports as its emblem a three legged swastika, and organises militaristic rallies. The AWB has its own 'military wing' - called the *Stormvalke* (Storm falcons) - whose declared objective is to take up arms and resist any 'sell out by the Afrikaner'. In 1983, Terre'blanche received a suspended prison sentence on an illegal arms charge, and in September 1986 there were reports that the AWB was organising farmers in the Eastern Transvaal into a *brandwag* (militia) to defend themselves against landmine attacks. The latter was considered a sufficiently serious development for Defence Minister Magnus Malan to warn the AWB not to compete with the SADF (*The Star*, 01.09.86). In 1980, the AWB formed a political party - the *Blanke Volksstaat Party* (BVP - White People's State Party). Its manifesto called for the revival of the former Boer republics (which existed in the present Transvaal, Orange Free State, Northern Natal and Northern Cape provinces) as a single united White People's state governed on the basis of explicitly racist and anti-democratic principles. The manifesto was also, in typical fascist-style, strongly anti-semitic and anti-communist. It called for an economic policy which would favour capitalist free enterprise, while acting against monopoly capital. Terre'blanche has an evident strong charismatic appeal among supporters of the far right. He is a showman and a demagogue, who arrives at meetings on horseback portraying himself as a Boer General. He is able to draw large crowds and, at joint rallies, has frequently up-staged both Marais and Treurnicht. After the formation of the Conservative Party the AWB allowed its own BVP to become virtually moribund and concentrated instead on what appears to be a strategy of entryism into the KP. Considerable numbers of AWB members have joined the KP (which unlike the HNP permits dual membership) and AWB influence within the KP is said to be growing. Press reports have spoken of even Conservative Party Members of Parliament distributing AWB literature. According to an estimate by Abie du Plessis of the University of Potchefstroom's Institute for Political and African Studies, the AWB has 100,000 or more members (*Die Burger*, 25.08.86).

In addition to the far right's own para-military style organisations, there is considerable evidence of significant far right support within the SADF and SAP. By November 1982, far right influence within the SADF was considered to be sufficient to prompt the then Chief of the SADF to issue a warning through the pages of the official SADF periodical against SADF personnel becoming involved in 'secret military factions' (*Paratus*, 33, 10, November 1982). A specific regulation exists preventing members of the SAP joining the AWB. Despite this, however, Terre'blanche has openly boasted of SAP support within the AWB and offered free legal assistance to any SAP member 'victimised' for association with the AWB (*Sunday Times*, 19.10.86). After the AWB broke up a public meeting at Pietersburg due to have been addressed by R F Botha in May 1986, the Minister of Manpower, Pietie du Plessis, publicly accused the police of taking sides with the far right. He said Terre'blanche had 'actually entered the building escorted by police' and that the police did nothing to stop Botha's meeting being disrupted (*The Times*, 24.05.86).

5. ATTEMPTS AT FAR-RIGHT UNITY

As indicated earlier, one of the factors behind the regime's decision to call an election at this time is undoubtedly the fact that the far right has thusfar failed to secure any lasting coherence and unity. The two main parties - the KP and the HNP - have, however, realised from experience that when they have stood against each other as separate parties, they have divided the far right vote to the advantage of the NP. On occasions, for example during a series of by-elections in November 1985, they have managed to negotiate specific agreements not to stand against each other and to each call upon their supporters to vote for the other's candidates. They have not, however, managed to achieve any more permanent unity and, in particular, have up to the time of writing failed to negotiate a basis for contesting the coming election as a united front. Even if in the end they do succeed in achieving some kind of electoral pact, they will be entering the election with a recent background of well known and widely reported public feuding. Botha evidently calculates this will be of benefit to his NP.

At first glance, the differences between the two parties seem to be based on no more than a petty squabble about esoteric ideological issues of no real importance. The HNP insists on an acceptance that the 'betrayal' of the volk began under Vorster, whereas the KP argues there is no point in quarreling about the historical role of a figure who is now dead. The HNP believes that Afrikaans should be the sole official language, and does not agree with KP policy that South Africans of Indian origin should be

assigned a separate homeland (on the grounds that they are 'aliens'). The HNP is also opposed to the KP continuing to allow its members to also be members of the ANS.

Behind these apparently petty and obtuse doctrinal disputes, is in fact a real struggle for hegemony within the far right. Although the HNP has less support than the KP, it regards itself as having a real claim to hegemony by virtue of the fact that it is the oldest far right organisation. It believes that it took a principled stand against 'betrayal' of the *volk* from the start and paid the price of being out in the cold when the current leadership of the KP was still prepared to 'compromise' itself by remaining in the NP. Another important factor, which the HNP leadership finds difficult to forgive and forget, is that Treurnicht was elected to the HNP national executive in 1969 but chose instead to stay in the NP. When it comes to the crunch both the HNP and KP leadership have shown themselves extremely reluctant to surrender leadership to the other in a united front, despite the fact that they both recognise that it is essential to join forces if they are to mount a successful challenge to the NP. They both appear to see the possibility of the far right displacing the Progressive Federal Party as the official opposition, but they cannot agree who should become leader of the opposition - Marais or Treurnicht. The KP has the advantage of being the larger of the two parties. The HNP's only advantage is its historic claim to legitimacy as the original defender of the *volk* against 'betrayal'. Hence, by insisting on an agreement that the 'betrayal' began under Vorster, the HNP leaders are in fact staking a claim to leadership on the basis of an acknowledgement by other far right organisations that it is they who have the historic legitimacy as the original authentic principled defenders of the interests of the *volk*.

That the real issues are of power rather than principle was revealed during the course of the latest attempts to negotiate a basis for a united front to contest the coming elections. In August 1986, shortly after Botha hinted at the NP Federal Congress that he might call an early election, the KP Transvaal congress passed a motion calling for a merger of the far right political parties. This was followed by a series of meetings between the KP and HNP leaderships, in which the latter put forward their well known doctrinal demands. Perhaps unexpectedly, the KP leadership made substantial ideological concessions and pushed the HNP to accept these as a basis for a merger. By late September, *Die Burger* was quoting a source saying that the KP now stood for an 'out and out Verwoerdian vision' (23.09.86). Unanimity was also reported to have been reached on 'homelands' for 'black and brown', while both parties agreed to modify their respective positions on 'homelands' for South Africans of Indian origin. The HNP

accepted that there should be a degree of 'self management' for Indians, while the KP agreed that they would have to have a 'different sort of homeland' from 'black and brown people'. Treurnicht also went some way towards HNP demands on the role of Vorster saying that it was no secret that he and Vorster had differed over sports policy. He would not, however, totally repudiate Vorster, saying that he did not agree that Vorster was the 'personification of political divergence' and insisting that the latter's 1977 constitutional proposals were a very different thing from the present tri-cameral parliament (*Die Burger*, 24.09.86).

Despite these concessions, however, the KP remained unable to convince the HNP to accept a merger. After presenting an ultimatum to agree to the KP's proposals by the end of October, Treurnicht announced at a rally in Pietersburg at the beginning of November, that the KP would go ahead and establish a rightist united front with or without the HNP. He said the KP would proceed with a proposed unity conference on January 24 and appealed over the head of their leaders to rank and file HNP members to support it. This decision inaugurated a more or less open feud between the two parties, which has been covered extensively and enthusiastically in the NP press. By mid-November, Marais was accusing Treurnicht of having 'precipitated a break in relations with the HNP' and of 'spilling angry blood' (*Die Burger*, 14.11.86). At the end of November the HNP announced it would put up its own candidates in four constituencies in which by-elections were due to be held. In December, Marais described a fresh appeal by the KP to HNP members to attend the 'unity conference' as 'not simply a threat, but a declaration of war' (*The Citizen*, 09.12.86). In January, the HNP put forward its own proposals for an electoral pact rather than a merger of the two parties. Despite various attempts to heal the rift, including an intervention by *Volkswag* leader Carel Boshoff, no agreement on cooperation in the election has yet been reached. In January the HNP announced that it was going ahead with the nomination of candidates in constituencies throughout the country, although it said it still hoped a pact could be reached with the KP. Meanwhile, the KP went ahead with its 'unity conference' on January 24, which was, however, reported to have been a failure with only about 6 - 10,000 people attending. At the time of writing, there were no signs of this rift being healed. However, considerable behind the scenes activity is taking place and it is still possible that some agreement is reached. In addition to the continuing efforts of the *Volkswag*, the AWB is also pushing hard for a pact, followed by the formation of a single far right party within six months of the election. Terre'blanche said if a pact was formed the AWB would put its full weight behind it 'and everybody in South Africa knows just how great that weight is' (*The Citizen*, 10.01.87). Failing this,

the AMB has called on its supporters to vote for 'the best far right candidate in each constituency' regardless of party (*Die Burger*, 13.01.87).

Whether or not the far right succeeds in putting together a united front to contest the election remains to be seen. What is certain is, as Willem Kleynhans of Pretoria University put it, 'if there isn't a pact the conservative forces will be divided, and they will squander a golden opportunity to make massive inroads on the government' (*The Citizen*, 2.01.87). Even if a pact is eventually agreed, Botha is clearly hoping and calculating that divisions will persist or at least that any unity which is patched up will be seen to be paper thin by voters well aware of the preceding schisms. He is hoping that by going into the election on a rightist programme his NP will be able to capitalise on the *broedertwis* (quarrelling among brothers) within the far right. It remains to be seen whether that calculation is correct.

6. PROSPECTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Having defined the principal battleground in the election as being the contest with the far right, the Botha regime is clearly going into the election putting forward its rightist face. It will be emphasising its refusal to move beyond the parameters of its existing failed, discredited and rejected 'Total Strategy' and in particular its stubborn rejection of pressures to enter into any process of negotiation which would imply its surrendering political power.

The regime has already indicated that it is prepared to pay the price of losing support from NP *verligtes* or so-called 'New Nats'. A number have already resigned after failing to persuade Botha to commit himself to 'pushing ahead' with 'further reform'. These include the prominent Randburg MP, Wynand Malan, who reportedly left Botha's office in tears, and Denis Worrall, the Ambassador to London. Both have announced they will stand against the NP in the election - Worrall in the constituency of Natal NP leader, Stoffel Botha, to demonstrate his support for the Kwa-Natal indaba proposals. Other 'New Nats' appear to be trying to follow a strategy of remaining in the NP until after the election, following which they apparently plan to provoke a split and resign as a bloc. However, they are facing a strong counter attack from the party leadership and a witch hunt of 'New Nats' appears to be underway. Albert Nothnagel, another prominent 'New Nat' MP, was hauled before an inquisition committee of the Transvaal NP over an article he wrote calling for the release of political prisoners and the scrapping of the Group Areas Act. Only a grovelling Hendrickse-style recantation saved him from being expelled from the party. Other

resignations by and expulsions of 'New Nats' seem to be inevitable.

Having defined the election principally in terms of a contest between itself and the far right, the regime will want, during the campaign, to project a 'tough' image, an image of itself as capable of maintaining order at home and standing up to external pressures. It will certainly give greater weight to the perceptions of potential far right voters than those of the international community about either domestic 'security' or regional issues. It can in short be expected to be in an extremely hawkish mood in the election run up. This was, of course, evident even before the election was announced. For example, Foreign Minister R F Botha said during a television interview following the kidnappings and murders in Swaziland in December (which he said he both knew of and approved of beforehand), 'My department does not want better relations with a country that harbour murderers and arsonists, and because of a little international popularity I will do nothing - those days are over. Neighbouring states - it does not matter who they are - who harbour terrorists should be aware of the consequences. We already have sanctions imposed against us. They should be aware that those terrorists will be sought out and destroyed ...' (*BBC Monitoring Report*, 24.12.86). The election campaign will undoubtedly be another factor pushing the regime in the same direction. For example, the *Financial Mail* of January 9 has suggested that even if the Frontline states eventually come up with only a 'moderate' sanctions package, the regime will in the election run up feel itself bound to retaliate 'since a lack of retaliation would be a surefire vote-loser'.

The most recent known opinion poll, published in *Rapport* in December (and quoted in *The Citizen*, 15.12.86) suggests that the NP will lose some support to all other parties, but will nonetheless be returned with a large overall majority in the white chamber of parliament. The poll shows NP support dropping from 51.9% in June 1986 to 49.6%; Progressive Federal Party (PFP) support increasing from 16.2 to 18.6%; New Republic Party (NRP) support from 2.7 to 3.1%; KP from 13.4 to 14.1% and HNP from 2.2 to 3%. The PFP and NRP will enter the elections with an electoral pact and can expect to benefit from the fact that the NP is retreating from its 'reformist' image. However, few believe there is any real chance that the NP's vote will be so far eroded from either side of the spectrum that it loses its majority.

As indicated earlier, the election is not principally about policy questions. It is nevertheless likely that the regime will consider an electoral victory to be a mandate to proceed with certain already announced 'reform' measures firmly located within existing parameters. In his January 30 speech opening parliament, Botha indicated that the regime planned to go

ahead with some version of the proposed National Statutory Council: a purely advisory body dominated by nominees and confidantes of Botha, which is supposed to be the channel for Africans to 'have a say' in central government. He also hinted in the same speech that the regime might consider implementing a modified form of the Kwa-Matal indaba proposals, although remarks about not permitting 'domination' by 'any one group' might suggest it would only contemplate the proposals in a highly watered down form. Nevertheless, the tone was much less antagonistic than Natal NP leader, Stoffel Botha's summary rejection when the proposals were published in October, and some sources have suggested that rather than being rejected, the whole issue is 'on hold' until the election is over.

A more direct potential impact of the election will be on the struggle within the NP to succeed P W Botha as national leader and State President, assuming the latter goes ahead with his expected retirement plans. If the NP does reasonably well in the contests with the far right, and if there is a purge of 'New Mats' before the election, F W de Klerk's chances of succeeding Botha will be enhanced. As leader of the NP in the Transvaal, de Klerk must be regarded as front runner. The vast majority of NP MPs come from the Transvaal and the Transvaal leader has historically almost always succeeded to the national leadership. When P W Botha, who was Cape leader, became the exception in 1978, it was necessary first to break the hold of the then Transvaal leader, Connie Mulder - through the 'Muldergate' scandal. If the NP does reasonably well in the Transvaal and against the far right in particular, not only will de Klerk's general standing in the NP be enhanced, there will also probably be an increased number of rightist Transvaal NP MPs in the parliamentary caucus likely to support his candidature over other likely contenders - Gerrit Viljoen, Chris Heunis or R F Botha - all of whom are considered more *verlig*. On the other hand, de Klerk, as a known rightist, will have little appeal to monopoly capital. The possibility therefore exists of an extremely tough struggle over the succession, with even a 'Muldergate'-type intervention to break de Klerk.

What is certain is that the election will in no way resolve the fundamental crisis facing the regime - its inability, at this stage of the struggle, to, on the one hand, resist the demand for equal political rights for all, and its inability, on the other hand, to concede this demand without destroying itself. Since the election is about continuing the stance of rejecting pressures to enter into real negotiations about a transfer of power, the immediate future holds out no prospect of anything other than an increasingly desperate attempt by the regime to hold onto power by intensifying repression at home and escalating aggression in the region. However, the signs of strain even within the repressive apparatuses of the

apartheid state are becoming ever more evident. Air force and Navy conscripts are now being given army training and sent to the townships in an obvious response to relieve the hard pressed Army. The election will thus not resolve any of the real issues of the crisis.

Neither is it even likely to dampen down the acute secondary contradictions between different forces within the dominant minority. On the contrary, by adopting a rightist stance the regime has already provoked a significant rift with the 'New Nats'. These are the elements within the NP who favour moving onto the terrain of negotiation politics, and in particular 'talking' with the ANC. Although they are a minority, they are an important force within 'Afrikanerdom', drawing support from much of the intelligentsia, sections of the church, professional strata and much of Afrikaner capital. At the same time, by shifting to the right, the regime will further strain its already tense relations with monopoly capital and imperialism.

At the other end of the spectrum, even if the NP succeeds in consolidating its electoral position vis a vis the far right, the real issues behind the far right revolt will remain unresolved. The far right will thus remain a real force on the political scene. If it succeeds, on the other hand, in making significant gains in the election, it is likely to become not only an even more active and potent challenge to the regime, but, an increasingly serious menace to the democratic movement in the country. It will be placed in a stronger position to demand even more viciously repressive policies. Moreover, there have already been instances where far right rallies have been followed by mob attacks on black communities. It is possible that an electoral advance by the far right might spur organisations like the AWB to seriously activate its *stormvalke* and *brandwagte*. However they fare in the election, the fact remains that they are a serious force with some level of military power as well as political and ideological influence.