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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Office of Congressional Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20505


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TO: Mr. Philip L. Christenson
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

5 December 1988

Phil,

Enclosed are a few articles by Simon Barker that we could locate. I still think you should check with CRS; they may subscribe to these English-language publications.


Deputy Director, Senate Affairs
Office of Congressional Affairs

STAT

FORM 2-86 **1533** OBSOLETE
PREVIOUS EDITIONS.

(40)

Bad medicine

the opposition is not economic political. The October municipal elections lie ahead, with the National Party on the rack, and in wings — decently off-stage but quite out of sight — is the formidable figure of the State President, who has patience with free markets is wearing thin, and he is surrounded by advisers who want the country to move to a siege economy with the panoply of controls. This, perhaps, is not the time to put a political

The essential point is that control of money supply has slipped once again, and that control needs to be reasserted quickly.

Mozambique, under increasingly simulated management, will be less a country than a channell-house with

SIMON BARBER in Washington

"Marxist" and "terrorist," while bandied about in political rhetoric and unthinking media shorthand on both

K

"Note should also be taken" — and this is a particularly nice point — "of recent Soviet counsel that the long-term interests of the forces for change in SA will not be served by

Moral stand

Next we offer for Declassified

Coded message

THE return of Helen Suzman as a speaker on Wits' campus marks a welcome step in the rehabilitation of the university as a liberal institution. The decision to allow her to speak was no doubt made easier by the fact that no election — at least, not any that matters — was in the offing. The danger that, say, Denis Worrall, whose hatefulness to some of the campus community might

policy statement from UCT) the right to express dissent is "exercised in such a way that it does not limit the freedom of expression and speech of other people".

We repeat our suggestion that the university, having repented, should commemorate its lapse into illiberalism by sponsoring as an annual event an "Unpopular Speakers Programme" to which it might invite such provocative people as Chief

The State President may have



Why Pretoria's latest decisions make perfect, if horrible, sense

latest decisions make perfect; if horrible, sense and have been taken in

In return for not complaining that

the cultural and diplomatic senses. Ultimately, when the ANC and all

day. His next column will appear on March 28.

embark on policies that could result in their own destruction, especially when no one has given them an overwhelmingly convincing reason why they should.

To the contrary. Sane is to put the power and resources at your disposal to effective use. Given what appears to be the ultimate goal, government's latest round of krapadadheid must be judged effective.

SIMON BARBER is going on holiday. His next column will appear on March 22.

'CRY FREEDOM' is a curate's eggish film, extraordinary in parts, stodgily didactic in others. Sir Richard Attenborough's cinematic view of the life and death of Steve Biko will almost certainly receive an Oscar or two — if for no other reason than the academy which awards the things will be accused of racism if it does not.

What its manichean vision of SA will not do is promote any original thought about solutions. Afrikanerdom does not emerge in a charitable light. In fact, it is safe to say that most audiences are likely to be converted, if they have not been already, to the cause of full-scope sanctions.

The scenes of Crossroads being bulldozed and Soweto demonstrators being gunned down are inexpressibly harrowing. Furthermore, they are so very nearly true that they will be nigh impossible to refute. Horror can rarely be diminished by footnotes.

Nor, having personally attended every day of Steve Biko's inquest, can I quarrel with the depiction of the security policemen who caused him to fail the Extensor Plantar reflex test.

It did not matter to me then that these people might, in the bosoms of their families, be human beings. Attenborough does not find it worth noticing now. They come across as embodiments of evil for whom there can be no mitigation.

Jimmy, "dit laat my koud" Kruger gave no quarter as Minister of Justice. He merited, and gets, none in the film. In a theoretical Nuremberg trial of apartheid, he would be a star defendant. It didn't take Attenborough, to stimulate, such a conclusion, though he does, devastatingly.

In rebutting "Cry Freedom," it will probably be said that that was then, this is now. The day before the film opened, Govan Mbeki was released.

But it has changed in 10 years. Exactly how much, it is impossible to tell. Unless you happen to be on the sharp end, atrocity in the endless literary and cinematic rehashing of the concentration

Why SA will be a prisoner of its history



WOODS... escape in tedious detail

SIMON BARBER in Washington

Kruger's successors are slicker and better protected from public exposure. Opponents do not die in such obviously attributable ways. Now they simply disappear. Intimidation and pacification have become more subtle.

But let us grant that things are better today. It still would not make "Cry Freedom" unfair, even though most who see it will not make the distinction between 1976-77 and 1987. There is no statute of limitations on barbarity. Nor does it make one whit of difference that others, to the north, behave equally, if less visibly, badly.

The fact is that as a nation white South Africans have done wrong, sickeningly wrong. They carry the guilt of Sergeant Wilken, who declared that even in death Biko was "hamming," and that guilt will be the terrible birthright of every white baby born in SA, for generations to come. It is a place far beyond the director's and his audience's experience: a place for whose grim external sympathy is

easy, but for whose interior realities empathy is not.

It is interesting that Attenborough chose an American actor to play Biko. Denzel Washington gives a deeply moving (and surely Oscar-worthy) performance, but a trick is being played.

For US audiences, the man lying comatose on the floor of a Port Elizabeth jail cell is not only a simulacrum of Biko. He is also the attractive young intern in "St Elsewhere," the television hospital series.

Unavoidably, perhaps, the result is that the founder of the black consciousness movement is embedded in the outside world's mind in frankly alien terms — a curious irony when you think about it.

It is even more curious when you consider that this version of Biko was scripted, edited and directed by whites and subjugated to a white man's adventure story. The real Biko's central thesis was that "black-South" Africans must escape the psychology of victimhood and become managers of

their own fates, not brutalised objects to whom and for whom things are done.

It is a pity Attenborough felt unable to use his medium to paint a fuller picture of the man and his philosophy. Instead, he kills him off less than half-way through the film when he has served his purpose as Woods's authenticator and tour guide to the obscenities of apartheid.

I do not know what Biko would be asking of the world if he were alive today, and it would be worse than condescending to ascribe any particular prescription to his memory.

But that, functionally if not in so many words, is precisely what "Cry Freedom" attempts. Its subtext is that Biko, like Woods, would be calling for the total economic and political ostracism of his country.

Perhaps, in desperation, he would. Yet reason — as opposed to the raw, xenophobic emotion provoked by the film — suggests that such a course will not fulfil his dream. Indeed, that it will deprive black South Africans of what tools they have to achieve what he preached.

The more vibrant the South African economy, the more it belongs to those without whose labour it would not exist; the more it is theirs to control. So long as there are legions of hungry and unemployed, those who command the economy will always be able to force the surplus to sell its dignity to feed its families.

With a strong economy and the help of access to capital which the sanctions would deny, black South Africans can achieve a con-

trolling interest in the companies that employ them, and thence, since mass individual ownership is the only real source of democratic power, in the state that presently dictates (and all too often destroys) their lives.

"Cry Freedom," even though it tells a large measure of descriptive truth, hopes to encourage policies that will promote the very kind of black subservience Biko died trying to combat.

It is that part of the current egg that is particularly loathsome.

The wrongs of human rights

SIMON BARBER in Washington

EACH YEAR at this time, the State Department publishes its annual country-by-country report on human rights practices. A quick flip through its 150 or so densely-packed pages indicates that practitioners are rare.

Take sub-Saharan Africa (please). Of the 47 countries the report includes in this category, just four — Botswana, Senegal, Mauritius and Gambia — technically speaking afford their citizens "the right to change the government" without resort to the death option.

Not to pick exclusively on Africa, the region the State Department designates "Near East, North Africa and South Asia" contains only one fully functioning democracy — India. Two, if you count Israel without the occupied territories.

Essentially, then, the report reminds us that the rest of the planet is a pretty un-Jeffersonian place.

Quite what this reminder is supposed to achieve is unclear. In theory, its purpose is to help Congress to evaluate who (other than Egypt and Israel) should receive American aid and who should not. As a practical matter, the thing is largely ignored.

The concept of good government that the US shares with a handful of its allies may be worthy, but it is profoundly absurd.

Pretoria, on the other hand, is almost pedestrian in its normalcy, especially when placed alongside most of its neighbours.

It differs chiefly from the latter in that its power is considerably more efficient, self-confident and broadly-based (some people do occasionally get asked their opinion).

Oh yes, and on the apparent premise that whites are more interesting, not to say candid, than blacks, the State Department accords SA a rather longer chapter.

The reason for the similarity is scarcely startling. Most states, especially the more recent ones — and therefore, obviously, most of Africa — are the virtual property of elites for whom the devolution of power on anything but their own terms holds absolutely no thrill.

This is a very simple point and it should not be necessary, even for a US Congressman, to have to sweat through the human rights report to grasp it.

Reserved

To save time, the Congressman might simply read the opening paragraphs of the Africa chapters. Here are two, picked at random: GABON: "Gabon has a single-party political system in which effective political power is concentrated in amendment to the party constitution restricts candidacy in future presidential elections to the president-founder of the Democratic Party of Gabon, thus reserving candidacy for President Bongo."

TANZANIA: "In 1985 President Julius Nyerere voluntarily retired and sanctioned the election of Ali Hassan Mwinyi. Nyerere remains as before the chairman of the Chama Chas Mapinduzi, the sole legal political party. The party attempts to control activity at



□ NYERERE ... sanctioned

all levels of society through its system of 10-family cells.

And so on.

The standard excuse for this state of affairs can be roughly summarised: these African countries are the artificial creations of the former colonial powers who, having raped the indigenous, then gave them arbitrary borders, lumping together large numbers of people who did not necessarily want to live with one another.

Unless they are very small and blessed with oil or some other valuable commodity for which there is fairly inelastic demand, countries run as the private fiefdoms of a party or some other narrow political elite cannot hope to be economically successful.

To begin with, the allocation of resources and capital must inherently be inefficient if the main criterion is to maintain the allocator in office and perquisites and to fulfil his absurd ideology or grandiose dreams.

Then there is the matter of what economic expansion does to autocrats. As the Shah of Iran discovered, it can be downright dangerous.

Interdependency

It has the unhappy habit of creating new centres of power making their own decisions based on interests that do not necessarily square with those of the regime.

No totalitarian, of the left or right, wants to see the rise of a middle or entrepreneurial class or of an independent trades union movement made powerful by a surging demand for labour.

This leads, in southern Africa, to an interesting thought about the interdependency of SA's and the region's ruling elites. Very bluntly, to survive they need each other to remain in precisely the form they are now.

Every member of the Frontline states, except the successful, and

relatively open Botswana, uses SA as a crutch upon which to justify, both to their own populations and the oh-so-guilt-ridden West, their chronic and very largely self-induced economic and political ruin — ruin which they could not reverse without putting themselves out of power.

For example, aside from an improbable outright victory by Unita, the most terrifying thing that could happen to the Angolan regime would be peace. It would mean some form of settlement with the "SA-backed bandits" and at best a dilution of the MPLA's hitherto total control.

Without SA, the "internationalist" allies would be gone and the revolution over. A luta must continue, else farewell Dos Santos. It was fun while it lasted.

On other side of the coin, a vibrant Frontline made up of real countries (Mozambique and Angola are just as much fictions as Lebanon), would be extremely bad news for Pretoria, and not only from the standpoint of their being able to lend genuine support to its opponents.

The last thing SA's autocrats need is a stirring example on their border of how the future might work without them.

In sum, instead of trying to proselytise their very excellent system in the region, it would be nice if America's policy-makers went back to their human rights report and gave some consideration to why its findings are so dreary.

For the most part, they might discover, the people they are trying to change have nothing to gain by being anything other than what they are.

Johannesburg The STAR (Sw)

Johannesburg
Sunday Times
17 July 88

IF YOU are accosted by a raving madman in the street, it makes little sense to adopt his style of discourse and rave back.

Unfortunately, this is precisely how many otherwise sensible South Africans seem determined to deal with Michael Duka, the Democratic presidential nominee, and his fellow inmates in the US Congress.

I use the word imbeciles advisedly. Nothing else comes to mind for a collection of politicians who can vote, as the House of Representatives did recently, to attack apartheid by punishing American entrepreneurs who do business with companies that do business in SA.

Without debate, they passed a Bill that could make owning a Xerox machine a crime punishable by the denial of government loan guarantees.

Last week there was much tooting and fro-ing over whether Duka advocates banning F-16 fighter-bombers in Botswana to strike the "terrorist" camp at Voortrekkerhoogte every time the SADF mounts a cross-border raid.

The record of the candidate's May 25 debate with the Rev Jesse Jackson in which he is alleged to have made this suggestion is clear. The man was babbling, so, indeed, was his opponent.

The relevant dialogue, to give it altogether too ground of its own, went as follows:

JACKSON: "The State Department has released a report that says that it's the most heinous set of crimes since the holocaust of World War Two, because they were killing without any political motivation. Just innocent killing. How many have been killed inside of the (inmate) in South Africa?"

DUKA: "The first thing we ought to do, Jesse, is pass the Duka Bill and start applying some real pressure to South Africa. And the second thing we ought to do is stop wasting resources before the Security Council that would impose international sanctions on South Africa."

JACKSON: "That's the way... DUKA: "I'm asking a very different kind of question."

DUKA: "But I'm responding, Jesse, by saying that the first step is to take to stop the use of naked aggression against its neighbors, which South Africa is engaging in, is to use the tools we have, to impose tough economic (sanctions) on South Africa and stop opposing the imposition of those sanctions internationally."

I want this country to lead those efforts, and the way we do it is through international sanctions and with your neighbors and allies."

JACKSON: "But the original question was whether or not we should support the Duka Bill, which would make it illegal to do business with companies that do business in South Africa."

YES JESSE, NO JESSE

by
Simon Barber
writing from Washington

question was: What kind of military action would you take against terrorists, whether in Libya or some other place?"

South Africa is sponsoring terrorist raids into neighboring states. Does the same terrorist policy apply to, as throughout, the possible use of military force, relative to South Africa?

DUKA: "Well, I've laid out that policy, Jesse. And, yes, one of the ways to do it is to get tough on South Africa. And that means the Duka Bill. And that means the United States leading the effort to make that an international boycott instead of continuing to veto resolutions over and over again in the Security Council."

There goes Jesse. It's hardly great minds at work, but let's critique it only once.

Jackson opens with a series of rhetorical questions about the State Department's Memphian report.

He knows Duka supports the Duka Bill, but is not going to let him take the wind from his sails. South Africa is the subject, the area upon which he expects to be the leader. The ante must be upped.

Duka's is the ultimate briefing for politicians and leaves his lips like the pristine, slightly awkward school prefect he so often resembles. South Africa? Ah, yes, Duka Bill, multilateral action through the UN.

Jackson presses Duka's answer putting South Africa on the economic equivalent of Mars but, unless he caves in and utters the



For the hell of it, I asked the adviser — an otherwise sane individual when wearing his other hat as a policy analyst — to explain the difference between Israel's raids on Palestinian camps and South Africa's actions.

It's a question of targets. South Africa goes after non-combatants. Israel has gone after combatants.

This is the stuff of political campaigns. It is beneath contempt, but because it has to do with South Africa the Republicans won't touch it.

Duka's even says he will bully Maggie Thatcher into losing his line. Golly.

Thankful! South Africans would be well advised to be kind to ignore these whole nothing quietly to cooperate with those, both in Congress and the professional bureaucracy, who will be keeping a tight ship on policy whenever wins.

Besides, I am beginning to suspect the winner may be Vice President George Bush. What with Jackson going ballistic because Duka didn't telephone him to say he had chosen someone else as his running mate next week's Democratic convention promises to be a suitably televised chaotic affair.

It's a bit of a pity, for his own and his country's sake, that Mr. Bush is prepared to give her that nod. It should not distract South Africa from the main event.

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THERE IS NOTHING new or original about Mr. Neil Kinnoch — a man who thinks and talks in clichés of stonewalling, if allusive, banality. Neither is there anything new or original about a politician who is in trouble at home seeking solace abroad.

It is a game Opposition politicians especially love to play: making promises they are not in any position to fulfil to people who will never be in a position to vote for them.

The resulting warmth of their welcome in foreign climes is a pleasant if spurious balm to spirits bruised by domestic failure and discord. And beneath the wide Welsh grin, Mr. Kinnoch's spirits must be bruised indeed.

Even if, as expected, he survives the coming Benetton challenge to his leadership, his long-term prospects look dim. Indeed many of his supporters, from the hard men of the Transport and General Workers' Union to the soft left of the Guild Tenancy, have begun to wonder whether deep down Mr. Kinnoch is just too shallow for the job in hand.

With the rule of statistics denied to him at home, it is little wonder that he has seized the opportunity to play it abroad, exchanging love and kisses with Mr. Oliver Tambo and hyperbole with President Mandela, and gazing with fearful fascination and awe at the Zulu king in the Zulu Kingdom.

What has emerged smooched is his reputation for silliness. Even those British conservatives who support his position on sanctions have disapproved of his staid refusal to give a first-hand knowledge of South Africa and his country of the code on foreign visits by his old homestead attack on Mrs. Thatcher.

All of which will doubtless open the present leader of the Downing Street who likes nothing better than the spectacle of Mr. Kinnoch making a fool of himself.

Especially as his southern African safari was an attempt to outstage her own visit planned for early next year.

Which should be a sobering thought for white South Africans as they smile briefly in happy indignation over Mr. Kinnoch's as-

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Fleur de Villiers
Merely a sideshow

The view from London

lies. For the fact is that what the Labour leader says or does is not important, nor is it likely to be so for a very long time to come.

What the British Prime Minister thinks about South Africa is vital to its future. And her thoughts at the moment are said to be not over-friendly or benign.

Certainly there was an audible sigh of relief in Whitehall this week when Mr. Kinnoch postponed the hanging of the Sharpeville Six, thus reprieving South Africa's infamous relations with Germany and granting a stay of execution to both the Duka Bill in the United States and a slew of European sanctions.

But by the end of the year when she sets off on her own southern African safari as possibly the only Western leader left who still believes friendly persuasion works where threats fail, Mrs. Thatcher is going to need more tangible proof that her way is best.

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DRAMATIC NEW TECHNOLOGY **CASIO**
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BUSINESS DAY, Tuesday, 8 November 1988

COMMENT

Cycle of illusion

F the British Deputy Foreign Secretary, Lynda Chalker, did indeed say in Harare that she hoped for an end to "apartheid" next year, she should seek sources of information. Her wish is worthy but fatuous.

Of course, there is a chance that the confab "apartheid" with the Group Areas Act, but it is more likely that she is thinking of a transfer of power from the minority to the majority. That belief will not be achieved in 1989 even if Chalker persuades her Prime Minister to send the Falklands invasion force to land at Blomburgstrand.

Meanwhile, it is persistent and debilitating for senior officials of any government — and particularly the British government which has a reputation for knowing more about Africa than other people — to talk in this fashion. It perpetuates all sorts of people among them Archbishop Tutu, to take a short-term and simplistic view of the South African problem. The result is to give spurious credibility to such follies as the one-more-push sanctions campaign.

The intriguing question is why people like Chalker still talk in this silly fashion. It is true that international television teams, making ever more dramatic for what ever reason, did create in the West a perception of South Africa as being on the brink of revolution. To the extent that this perception was created, the TV news coverage was a lie, and it deceived its audiences. The ban on television footage has

shifted the camera focus to Israel (where at least the effects seem to have been so far less damaging) and it has been left to the print media to break or reinforce the expectations of imminent disaster. Some have been content to reinforce the misperceptions (good guys win, bad guys get their just deserts, fade-out like the sunset), others have tried to restore some balance. But the fact of the matter is that, collectively, they have failed to convey to their readers — including, apparently, Lynda Chalker — any realistic sense of the possibilities.

South Africans are usually puzzled, and often genuinely hurt, by this phenomenon. The events at Saturday night's banquet of the Foreign Correspondents' Association, where insolent questions and a rude audience provoked Foreign Minister P.W. Botha into a matching display of insult and rudeness, give some clue to the problem. The foreign correspondents live in the wrong city (they should be in the capital), talk more to people without power than to people who wield power, take a theologically righteous view of the society, and often enter into the fray as though they held some residual colonial responsibility. They are confirmed in their score for government, and therefore in their prejudices; whenever people like Botha accuse them of ferocity of ignorance and prejudice, it is a circus.

Poor Mrs Chalker doesn't have a hope.

The chips fly

THE appearance of an anti-apartheid Afrikaans weekly newspaper — the cultural counterpart of the government-suspended *Weekend Mail* — is not an isolated event. In publishing it follows the launching of the intellectual journal, *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, and to politics the deflection of Van Zyl Slabbert from the PPP and the information of the NDM by the

they are recognizing the politeness of trying to organize an English minority to overthrow an Afrikaans majority; their proper field of endeavour is Afrikaansness itself. Nor are they liberate in the Anglo-Saxon mould but — at best — social democrats in the German mould, with an added touch of agrarian

SOMETHING of the order of 50-million Americans, representing a little over half the eligible voting population, will head for the polls today to elect a new president, culminating a campaign that is broadly said to have been unexciting, trivial, apathy-inducing and, in the words of a recent Washington Post headline, the "TV era's nastiest".

I say the campaign is "nasty" to have been all of these things because, like all but a small minority of those who will vote, I have watched most of it in the translation provided by the television networks and a handful of newspapers.

That translation may gain some credibility from the fact that it is an optic — those responsible for it are in remarkable herd-like accord about what it is they have been covering — but the fact remains that supposedly the most important political determination an American citizen has to make is based upon the judgment of others over whom the average citizen has no control.

Tom Wolfe, author of "Radical Chic", "The Right Stuff" and most recently "The Bonfire of the Vanities", has complained that his brothers in journalism start not by observing the world about them but from a hypothesis of how that world ought to be. They see, in other words, what they have decided in advance they want to see.

Wolfe is exactly right. The election you and I think we are witnessing does not exist. It is chiefly taking place inside the minds of a narrow, bigoted, self-congratulatory and largely sacrosanct elite. It is a piece of theatre based only distantly on what the candidates themselves are trying to say.

Let us take the charge that the Republicans have made this an election of unprecedented nastiness. There has been no nastiness in the headlines, both print and electronic, for more than a month and has become so compelling that Michael Dukakis, the Democratic candidate, has made it the centrepiece of his last stand.

American political campaigns are not and never have been Socratic dialogues. Candidates routinely edit and caricature their opponents' records, engage in ad hominem attacks and generally do not disclose as they might at a village tea party.

Yet equally truthfully, the Press hypothesizes that this was not always so and believes democracy

Election marred by the US Press and its prejudices

SIMON BARBER in Washington



DUKAKIS last stand

unknown to the populace, are thigh deep in position papers and fairly specific policy proposals. Unfortunately, the latter have no place in the screenplay written by the television networks which cannot be bothered with such things. What television, in particular, wants is drama, and since television is their only certain conduit to the public, the candidates have had no choice but to provide it.

The National Hockey League officially disapproves the fist fights its players are prone to, but privately encourages them, knowing that many

will keep up attentiveness.

Similarly, the Press goes on the candidate to have at each other, relentlessly forcing more drama from each camp by giving their

taunts and counterattacks maximum play. It then sits back and smugly lectures about negativism.

Two weeks ago, the accusation of the hour was that Vice-President George Bush was "racist", this based upon television advertisements highlighting Governor Dukakis's belief in allowing convicts out for the weekend, even those serving life sentences without hope of parole.

One such felonious vice was especially vicious individual by the name of Willie Horton who took the opportunity to escape and brutalize a young couple in Maryland.

But that is just the beginning. Having decided that the present campaign is a new paradigm of shallow brutality, the Press has set about establishing its case, selecting from each day's supply of speeches and exchanges only those moments that fit and embellish its theory.

This, in turn, has had an effect on the candidates both of whom, all but



DUKAKIS last stand

his rivals, first Democratic Senator Albert Gore during the New York primary, then Bush.

Had Dukakis promptly repented, apologized to Barnes and changed the Massachusetts furlough rules, he might have been spared, but as it is not, and while that is by no means the only the Press's fault — the size of the country and the viciousness with which central government

appropriates and powers and responsibilities are also very much to blame — the Press and its prejudices have been trying to stir up racial tensions.

The charge was highly irresponsible, of course, but the Press would not rest until it had produced both Dukakis and his running mate, Sen-

tor Lloyd Bentsen, into making it in public.

Reporters then started buying at Bush and his surrogates for a rebuttal. For several days, as far as the ordinary news consumer was concerned, it was the only issue in the campaign. Both sides may have talked about other things during that time, but you would have only known that if you were actually at one of their rallies.

Thus the Press invents a content based almost exclusively on its own prejudices, creating a degraded soap opera out of what, in reality, is a serious debate, and turning the candidates into cheap gladiators until for the hypothesis of what the presidency should be all about.

To close the circle, it then conducts a poll of what the public thinks about the election and the candidates. Lo and behold, the answer comes back that the public is turned off and that 60% would prefer an entirely different set of choices.

Finally, in sublime arrogance, the commentators postscriptedly mourn about how, on election day, the turnout will be a pitiful 50%, as though this were something new and disgusting.

As it happens, the figure has only hit 60% in four of the past 14 presidential elections. 50% may be low compared with other democracies, but it is far from.

Which, in my view, shows a fairly healthy attitude to government. That state has merit which does not obstruct sufficiently into people's lives that they feel obliged to make themselves heard — as they undoubtedly would if the state were to interfere in a manner of which they disapproved. This, of course, will not be said by the sages. Instead, they will insist that the low turnout is a sign that the new president has no mandate; the better to begin real powers and re-

turn down once he has taken his oath of office.

The tragedy here is that politics is being taken out of the hands of ordinary people whether they like it or not, and while that is by no means the only the Press's fault — the size of the country and the viciousness with which central government

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16 — *En-54 London* DAILY DISPATCH, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1988

Daily Dispatch

The sanctions irony

In the name of righteousness there is much perfidy. Figures published yesterday reveal that in the first nine months of 1987 South Africa's major exports to the United States declined by 417 million dollars, following the imposition of sanctions by the U. S. Congress in 1986. The biggest losses were in iron, steel and uranium.

The Republic also suffered export losses in these commodities in trading with 22 other countries, stated the report which was issued to senators principally responsible for the punitive measures, Edward Kennedy and Lowell Weicker.

The sanctions were intended to punish the South African government for apartheid, but, of course, they harm everyone living in the country, black or white, for or against discrimination. The damage does not stop at boundaries but spills over the whole sub-continent, further affecting the already rocky economies of many countries propped up only by considerable aid from relief agencies and the United States itself.

South-West Africa, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe all depend on supplies, equipment, fuel, expertise and money emanating in one way or another from the Republic. Attempts in the United States and elsewhere to wreck the economy of the sub-continent's powerhouse

assuredly will further push many other African countries into greater penury.

There is a terrible irony in what the West is doing to Africa in the guise of this righteousness — dispensing free food grown in Canada and Europe but neglecting the essential internal distribution, and agricultural education; propping up dictatorships and limping one-party states; giving with the one hand, hitting with the other.

Whether intended to help or not, most of the West's action is to the detriment of Africa, driving away the best and the brightest with their expertise and capital, and ensuring that it remains the pauper continent of the world as a mere producer of primary products for the more developed and affluent countries.

There might be some justification in the misguided course taken by Edward Kennedy and his ilk if it would conceivably result in a peaceful, non-discriminatory South Africa, and if he pursued thereafter the considerable task of restoring the economy of the region with as much zeal as he contributed to its destruction. But then there would be little domestic political gain in that for him, even as proponents of sanctions began to discover that what is often lightly switched off is not immediately or easily switched back on again.

Girl

Lat. 2.10 N
Daily Dispatch
12 Oct 88

Not the real thing

The Marriot Marquis Hotel in New York is an extraordinary structure, half hanging garden of Babylon, half prison block on a heroically totalitarian scale.

Its 50 storeys of vertiginous corridors face onto a covered atrium in the middle of which stands a pillar the size of a moon rocket with a dozen see-through lifts gliding up and down its flanks.

Even when things are quiet, it can take a good ten minutes to navigate from your 250 dollars a night room to the world outside. That is, if you don't look down and you really want to get there. The neighbourhood beyond the great hollow henge is one of Manhattan's most festering, a sort of Calcutta with peepshows.

It was an odd place to hold round 7.5 of Angola-Namibia peace-in (it did not rate a whole number, being technically "informal" so as not to offend Congo's President Denis Sassou-Nguesso who has been promised the kudos of hosting the breakthrough) but also a peculiarly apt one.

The talks are beginning (if they have not already) to inhabit a universe as separate from exterior reality as their latest venue. The sessions have taken on an air of ritual as the vari-

ous delegations roam about in flying wedges to group and regroup in all the possible permutations, trying to make something happen that is beyond their own earthen grasp to create for themselves.

In the absence of hard, political decisions by their masters, the SA, Cuban and Angolan negotiating teams have developed, with the help of the American mediators, a series of ever more inscrutable mysteries in honour of the great god nuance. Their labours have reached such a state of perfection that almost anything that can be divined about the mysteries' true meaning is automatically wrong.

If the negotiations are going to succeed several obvious things are going to have to happen, none of which the negotiators themselves may discuss without risk of blasphemy.

Principally, Angolan President Eduardo dos Santos must decide the time has come to make peace with Unita and, unless he can be removed or otherwise translated, Dr Jonas Savimbi. Fidel Castro must decide, unreservedly, that the time has come

to bring his boys home. P. W. Botha must make up mind with equal absence of casuistry that Namibia is to move to independence under the terms of the UN plan in its current form. The Americans and the Russians must unequivocally agree to terminate military support for Unita and the MPLA respectively.

Unless all these things occur, and occur pretty much simultaneously, the present talks will remain entirely open-ended, notwithstanding piously reiterated commitments to the November 1 date agreed upon in Geneva last August for the implementation of UN resolution 435.

In the real world, if not according to the Talmudic scholars on the negotiating teams, that date is a dead letter anyway. It is too late for Martti Ahtisaari and his UN transitional assistance group to have their machinery up and running, and insofar as November 1 is observed, it will almost certainly be with a formula of words rather than actions.

The only reasons the date is still being men-

tioned are, first, to maintain a little discipline among the negotiators, and second, because no-one has yet found a way to say this particular emperor is naked without being blamed for his being so.

As of last weekend, the delegations had gone beyond the "nitty-gritty", beyond attempting to "crack the nut", beyond even the molecular structure of a deal, and were venturing into its subatomic particles. Rest assured that without the above mentioned decisions, they will be trying to subdivide its moons before long.

Broadly, what they were talking about was, in Dr Chester Crocker's poetic phrase, the "rhythm" of Cuban redeployment north — away from the Namibia — and west, which is to say across the Atlantic. How quickly how many move above what parallel and/or home.

Such discussion was made possible by SA's concession, at the last Brazzaville round, that some Cubans could remain in northern Angola after the South African flag came down in Windhoek. In return, the An-

golans and Cubans accepted a reduction in the length of the overall withdrawal timetable from three years plus to "somewhere" in the 24 to 30-month range.

The Cubans wanted 27,000, or roughly half their existing complement, still in the country at Namibian independence. The South Africans said this would not fly, citing as one reason "right-wing hysteria" back home, and pushed for much heavier "front-loading", on the theory that too many Cubans too close to the Namibian border would have an intimidatory effect on the constituent elections to be held seven months after the kick-off of the UN independence plan.

The Cubans and Angolans objected that too much "front-loading" would be bad for internal security, and would mean once again ceding to Unita. The unmentionable ghost of Savimbi began to hover ever more oppressively at the negotiating table. To save themselves from unholy thoughts, the delegations devoted themselves to minutely studying the infinite possible proportions of loading



SIMON BARBER
writes from
Washington

Angola-Namibia waiting for November 8

and the verification thereof.

And, such questions being fundamentally specious to the real decisions that must be made, got nowhere. The parties' chief agreement, when the talks adjourned on Sunday afternoon, was to say they had got somewhere, that they now had a better understanding what kind of equipment was needed to count the angels on the head of a pin, and that they were still

absolutely, positively committed to going all the way in Brazzaville before the end of the month.

Which, of course, they weren't really. After all, one of stated reasons for the inconclusive outcome was that they needed to consult with their politicians who quite patently have yet themselves to make up their minds.

SA foreign affairs director-general Neil van Heerden perhaps came closest to hitting the nail squarely when he

October 26, municipal election day, which at least has the merit of coming before November 1, or November 8, American election day, which doesn't. It defies reason to believe that Dos Santos is not waiting to see if Governor Michael you-can-have-it-all-for-free Dukakis is elected. He would be a fool if he was not.

Agreeing to Cuban withdrawal, however timed, loaded, or verified, means acknowledging at best a draw with Unita. The shape of any internal settlement that follows is in turn predicated in large measure upon the volume of outside support upon which Unita can rely.

By the same token, Pretoria would be rash to play the Namibia card when threatened with an American president determined to destroy its economy whether or not resolution 435 is implemented. Such uncertainties must be removed before the only decisions that count are made.

And until that happens, consultations like those just completed may serve some purpose in easing current tensions and developing the practical mechanics of a final settlement, but they should not be confused with the real thing.

East London

8 — DAILY DISPATCH, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1988

Daily Dispatch War of the purse

When the going is good even the prudent housewife may not be as careful as perhaps she should be but in times of roaring inflation, Barend du Plessis and less disposable income there will obviously be greater appreciation not only of the need to cut costs but to protest when it seems necessary.

It is happening more frequently in South Africa: the age of consumerism and greater shopper sophistication has arrived. The retail marketing accent in the coming years will focus increasingly on a square deal for the customer. Integrity will hold the high ground as proven already in Britain where a reputation for honesty and quality has given two major groups a considerable share of the market, though they are by no means the cheapest.

Clive Weil has already fired a major broadside in this battle for consumer allegiance, giving away in the process some secrets of the retailing trade. Many South African shoppers who thought the supermarket business was merely a matter of buying at one price and selling at another will now know there are such practices as buy-backs, particular trade arrangements, rebates, and incentive volume discounts.

Clive Weil alleged that a state of "commercial terrorism" existed between supplier and buyer in

South Africa with the consumer the ultimate victim. He said bribes had all but eliminated any elements of honesty and integrity in the retailing sector and products were being forced on to the consumer not through merit but to boost bottom-line profitability. There was a disproportionate concentration of power among retailers and suppliers, he said.

This led to Raymond Ackerman saying that Weil had disparaged the entire industry and sending him a "legal letter", which has been referred to counsel. Also on the rolling, and perhaps increasingly bitter battle for the consumers' (voters') loyalty is the finance spokesman for the Progressive Federal Party, Harry Schwarz, who said that if there were any attempt to push the issue aside, he would raise it in parliament and ask for an investigation.

Obviously, this is a matter for urgent inquiry by the Competition Board, which should hopefully approach it both with teeth and with the sole motive of ensuring that retailers, manufacturers and the consumers get a square deal, with priority and concentration on the little buyer at the end of the queue. Clive Weil's charges alleging "commercial terrorism" with the consumer the ultimate sufferer are much too serious to be ignored.



The Eastern Cape division Boys Brigade band in action during their Founders' Day parade at Parkside in East London.

East London
Daily Dispatch 1 Nov 88

Today was supposed to have been historic; the day Namibia formally started moving to independence under UN Resolution 435. That deadline is slipping by with a new reality: Fidel Castro's Soviet patrons no longer have the use they once had for him. His days of empire are over and the time has come for his little island to return to banana republicdom.

South Africa has made all the concessions that could reasonably be expected of it. It has pulled out of Angola and resisted the urge to return. It has acknowledged that 435 is set in stone. Despite bomb attacks domestically, it is getting its teeth and waging peace through the region.

Unfortunately, Angola and Cuba are not the only parties who are refusing to recognise how fundamentally the game has changed. There are some in Washington, a strange coalition, who like the deal Dr Chester Crocker has brokered.

Even less than the others, the SA's department of foreign affairs is not the least bit interested in the peace process. These gentlemen, they have included both Republicans and Democrats, believe that Crocker and Steve Symms, but not the SA's department of foreign affairs, have joined in a beneficial alliance to betray Unitas for a settlement. Some even think that 435 is fatally flawed and will work to kill it if necessary.

Unsurprisingly, the US contribution to the settlement is short, the balance of forces within the SA government has tilted in favour of statesmanship. Pretoria has grasped the nettle, or at any rate most of it.

By contrast, the Angolan government can't come to terms with the idea that by not winning their opposition to economic sanctions, they are not coming to terms with the civil war with UNITA.

Unitas, it has lost it and must settle on terms that somehow incorporate Dr Jonas Savimbi. Havana, too, seems to be having some difficulty coping with a new reality: Fidel Castro's Soviet patrons no longer have the use they once had for him. His days of empire are over and the time has come for his little island to return to banana republicdom.

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Cold warriors are now crying foul



SIMON BARBER
writes from
Washington

It must be said, that whose bidding on almost any subject, DeConcini has contributed to making a sanctions-free jumps.

Early last week, President Reagan received a letter from Savimbi, a national security council adviser, General Colin Powell, swearing that only Unitas under Dr Savimbi can deliver a major percentage of the people and territory of his country into a new, independent nation.

In high of which, DeConcini said, he would reconsider releasing the Unitas contribution, but only if consulted once an overall settlement required Helms and the hard core remained adamant even after repeated telephone calls from Powell and White House chief of staff Ken Duberstein.

When they failed, Regan himself telephoned Helms, told him that, once Luanda agreed to implement the UN Transitional Authority Group's only option if 435 was implemented, the money should be paid to UNITA.

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nally requested to do so by Savimbi himself. His message was unequivocal. Mr President, you are being hoodwinked by your state department and their friends in the SA department of foreign affairs.

I asked one of the staff members in the Helms corner whether this was not being somewhat more royalist than the king. The decision to leave Namibia was Pretoria's prerogative, after all, and SA surely should be granted more say on the terms than the Unitas lobby.

To which came back a three-fold reply which may be paraphrased as follows: First, Crocker and the DFA were in cahoots to betray Savimbi. Now that Pretoria is and cut one of the last, saying enough, we must under the Reagan doctrine, our people, we must of the subject at least America's comfortable right ideas. Third, 435 is flawed. SA must either war had, feel that keep up the fight, their would result in the UN's failure to put Unitas in establishing yet another power. For it can be married regime in the DA, over to the sanctions.

Wildly stuff, but it should not be dismissed as a quiescent election. Then, if economic war against people are serious and SA, and in the calculus of US politics, could obstruct. More likely will be, it is a price going on, than lobbying people like Helms might by Unitas (and, regretably, he prepares to pay, by certain SA's. Behold, a new cry.

Since 1975, they have looked to SA to fight the Soviets for them, just as they have looked to the Contras, in Nicaragua and the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan. That they have been able to offer almost nothing in return beyond an often counter-productive rearguard action against sanctions is immaterial. They have expected SA boys to die for their cause and for Pretoria to spill its treasure.

Pressure that could have been spent building a better society for the people of Namibia. Now that Pretoria is and cut one of the last, saying enough, we must under the Reagan doctrine, our people, we must of the subject at least America's comfortable right ideas. Third, 435 is flawed. SA must either war had, feel that keep up the fight, their would result in the UN's failure to put Unitas in establishing yet another power. For it can be married regime in the DA, over to the sanctions.

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18 — *East London* DAILY DISPATCH, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1988

Daily Dispatch Erase the fear

There are always ideas and sometimes there are ideas whose time has come, usually when societies have worked through other options.

South Africa has had its apartheid option and hopefully it has lived through the option of total takeover, that some refer to as surrender. Just as the apartheid design was obviously no solution so it would prove with a total takeover that relied on coercion. People ultimately will not be bullied into unacceptable situations; the evidence of this is being revealed almost daily in the communist bloc.

In South Africa there has to be a partnership of its people, if it is to work properly on a basis of human and equal rights and non-discrimination that will be acceptable to the world. To attain this ideal there will have to be eradication of fear, the basis of our problems.

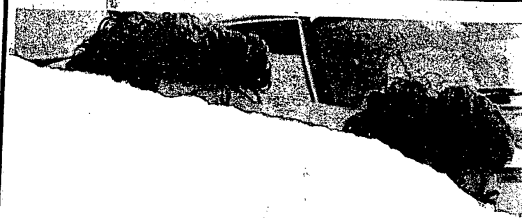
Apartheid may have been designed as a perpetuation of white control but beneath what seemed the rigid regulations and the iron fist increasingly criticised on the grounds of injustice has always been fear, fuelled primarily by the instinct of preservation. Thus the world generally tends to make the mistake of hammering at the symptom (apartheid) rather than try to understand the true cause and move nearer to a practical and workable solution which must include the removal of fear.

apartheid and total takeover will not work, South Africa must look elsewhere.

In an article published in the Daily Dispatch on October 1 this year, Aggrey Klaaste, the editor of The Sowetan, homed in on the black-white problems and courageously gave voice to a certain new and creative thinking. A perennial symptom of the anti-apartheid debate over the decades has been so much easy and fierce emotional criticism and little logical offerings on a possible solution: witness Neil Kinnock's cliché-ridden and weary condemnation at a rally in Cardiff, Wales at the week end.

Klaaste advocated both the building of black power structures (so that blacks and whites could meet as equals) and efforts to erase this white fear. With respect for each other's strengths and minds there would be no need for violence, he said.

His voice is one of hope and of love. It offers reconciliation and not hatred in a tortured country. In the end it will be that reconciliation, partnership and co-operation that will be the saviour of South Africa. The opposing factions, inside and outside the Republic that cling to their own diverse policies that both have the single ingredient of coercion will never know true peace or be easy



Daily Dispatch 26 Oct 88

It has been a couple of years coming, but Hernando de Soto's *El Otro Sendero* (The other Path) is about to be published in English. One can only hope that Harper and Row will permit it to be sold in South Africa or that De Soto will find a local publisher. Even if it has to be pirated, arrangements must be made for it to flood the country.

The importance of this book is difficult to overstate. The result of years of ground-breaking research by De Soto and his Institute of Liberty and Democracy (ILD) in Peru, it is a surgical analysis of how millions of ordinary Peruvians, driven solely by the desire to make better lives for themselves and their children, have combined to overrun a narrowly-based, selfish and highly bureaucratized state.

To do this they have relied not on politics or on its instruments of protest. They have not sought outside help. They have had no need to resort to violent confrontation, much less the terror of "The Shining Path". Peru's main communist group upon whose name the book's title plays. No ideology has driven them other than that most basic of human aspirations, the pursuit of happiness.

They have treated their successive governments much as consumers treat a product, that they do not wish to

buy; they have ignored it and looked elsewhere, chiefly to themselves. The result is that most of the 27,000 laws and administrative decisions the Peruvian state has issued on average every year since 1947 have increasingly lost any real meaning.

As De Soto himself succinctly sums it up: "We appear to be witnessing the most important rebellion against the status quo ever waged in the history of independent Peru."

Though they have changed with rather more frequency, the regimes De Soto describes in his own country bear a striking resemblance to Nationalist rule in SA. Whether of the left or right, all have been at any given moment only a small minority of the country ever benefited. The rest are excluded by what De Soto refers to as "a kind of legal apartheid".

Rather than wait for some impossible godot to redistribute things, back in its favour, El Peru Profundo (Forgotten Peru) has taken its destiny into its own hands, creating as if by second nature an entirely new order — informal, technically "illegal" but thoroughly

democratic — based on wealth and power it has generated for itself. And all without having to have an Albie Sachs or a Joe Slovo tell them how to do it.

Consider the following statistical snapshot taken by ILD in 1985:

In that year, 42.6 per cent of all housing in Lima, the Peruvian capital, was "illegal", built in defiance of government edict. The average value of each such dwelling was \$22,039, with an aggregate value of \$8.3 billion, equivalent to 69 per cent of Peru's total external debt in 1984.

Between 1981 and 1984, the state's housing investment came to only \$173.6 million, a mere 2.1 per cent of informal investment. As of 1984, total public investment in housing, including middle-class homes, represented only 10.4 per cent of informal investment.

Unlicensed street vendors (91,500) dominated retail distribution of food and other consumer goods in the city. They grossed \$322.2 million a year, took home a net per capita income of \$58 a month, 38 per cent more than the minimum legal wage then in effect, and supported between them an estimated 314,000 dependents.

A further 39,000 vendors had acquired enough capital to set up stalls in 274 informal markets valued at a total of 40.9 million and comprising 83 per cent of all Lima's markets.

By 1984, informal operators controlled 93 per cent of Lima's transport fleet, 74 per cent of its haulage capacity and 80 per cent of its seats. The replacement value of the vehicles involved was \$620 million. In addition, operators had invested some \$400 million in petrol stations,

repair shops and other infrastructure.

These numbers are far more than a dry measure of economic progress. They are a paean to the tenacity and inventiveness of the individual. The wealth they represent did not have to be taken from anywhere; it was created from almost nothing, largely by peasants who migrated to the city only to find themselves locked out and discriminated against by social and political elites who wanted; then, back where they "belonged".

But the migrants refused to leave, building themselves over the years a sort of parallel nation that has begun to subsume the official one. "As the informals have advanced," De Soto writes, "the Peruvian state has fallen back, viewing each concession as temporary, until the crisis is over, when in fact it is being forced to adopt a strategy of re-



SIMON BARBER
writes from
Washington

treast, a retreat which is gradually undermining its social relevance."

One of the book's most instructive chapters describes how the migrants obtained urban land and continue to do so. In many cases, they have simply seized it, but they have done so with such organisation and firmness of purpose, and they have picked their targets — generally unused lots owned by the state — so carefully, that successive governments have had no choice but to recognise the process. It even has an official name: invasion.

While some invasions are organic, grandmother's footsteps affairs spreading over time from a small settled nucleus, many are highly orchestrated.

In these instances, a would-be community, numerous enough to require an unpalatable degree of force should

the state seek to intervene, assembles itself, selects a site and, with the help of private architects and engineers, develops a detailed town plan, demarcating homes, sewer systems, schools, clinics, administrative buildings and recreation areas.

Leaders are elected, a census taken and a tax system agreed upon to meet the costs of creating the settlement. Responsibilities, including law and order, are carefully apportioned. In short, the invaders are a fully-fledged, and in most cases genuinely democratic, polity-in-waiting before they hit the ground.

The invasion itself usually takes place at night or on a public holiday when the authorities' guard is likely to be down. Again, it is a highly disciplined business. The new town is immediately staked out into lots, with families promptly occupying and starting to build on their future homesites. Plotters are posted to ward off counter-attack by the state, a child-care centre established to look after children as their parents go about their appointed tasks, and an agreement reached with the nearest informal bus company to include the sudden suburb on its routes.

Presented with a fait accompli, the state is usually helpless. The informals have taken the

initiative irrepressibly, providing for themselves in a manner government cannot even begin to match. Indeed, were government able to match it, the invasion would not have been necessary in the first place. Once established, the community can begin to negotiate with the authorities, for formal property rights, for example, from a position of strength.

Pretoria's threshold of tolerance would, I imagine, be rather too low for such actions to succeed as well or as bloodlessly in SA. But then the SA government has yet had to deal with the kind of popular will displayed in Peru. Instead it has been confronted by totalitarian fools who seek to play and beat it at its own game, and by absurd romantics like Archbishop Tutu who believe salvation lies in high-pitched martyrdom.

South Africa will be — indeed is already being — liberated in the manner De Soto has documented in his home country. His "other path" is the only path, because, unlike the theories of the social engineers in both Lusaka and Pretoria, it puts individuals and their aspirations first. Ordinary human beings have, in genuinely democratic combination, an infinite capacity to liberate themselves. The state, to preserve itself, pretends otherwise and tends most often to enslave.

EAST London
12 — DAILY DISPATCH, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1988

Daily Dispatch

Rugby truly for all

A historic statement was published on page one of the Daily Dispatch yesterday. It said: "They (the participants) agreed to work together to achieve these goals, and called on people of goodwill inside and outside South Africa to support this process."

It was made after the meeting in Harare attended by leaders of the African National Congress, the president of the South African Rugby Board, Dr Danie Craven, the chairman of the Transvaal Rugby Union, Mr Louis Luyt, and members of the South African Rugby Union (Saru).

The watershed outcome of the meeting — after relatively short debate — and the warmth towards one another of the delegates have surprised many, especially given the previously seemingly solid attitude of Saru and affiliates that there can be no normal sport in an abnormal society.

All the parties involved have an imperative. South African rugby desperately needs to break out of its increasing isolation. Tours to Chile may be synthetically hailed by such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation but they are in truth sad and lonely farces. There is no merit in them, no honour in trouncing poor opposition to the tune of 100-plus points.

Saru has also been striving too long but often bravely in its self-imposed cocoon in a sea of con-

traditions thrown up by the blunderland of apartheid — rigidly anti-apartheid players and officials employed in the administration of the rejected system, using grounds and venues that are symbols of separation. It badly needs to break from the cul-de-sac mould into better coaching and facilities, more finance, challenges and targets.

The totally cynical may view the agreement that rugby should come under one non-racial body as a propaganda coup for the ANC but those looking for a breakthrough in a beleaguered land will welcome this meeting of people who for all their differences and faults are nevertheless citizens of this country and who love it even as they love rugby.

If there are factors that divide us what exultation there could be in Afrikaners, English, Xhosas, Zulus et al cheering on a Springbok team against the All Blacks captained not by a white or a black but merely by a man.

That must be the aim: no discrimination, and if Dr Craven and Mr Luyt have arrived at that destination by a long and deviating route they should now be praised for their courage and supported in their endeavours. Even those who will look for ulterior motives must surely admit this is positive both for a non-discriminatory society and for rugby.

Last London
Daily Dispatch
18 Oct 88

Botha broke his long card and the willingness sought agreement with South Africa has had man played an important

Dukakis misses the main point



SIMON BARBER
writes from
Washington

It is perhaps a little premature to conduct a post-mortem on Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis' run for the presidency. A lot can still happen in the next three weeks, including a miracle. That, increasingly, is what it is going to take if the Democrat is to reverse his present fortunes.

The conventional wisdom at this writing is that vice-president George Bush will win by a landslide, at least in terms of the electoral college votes cast by each state on a winner-take-all basis. He will sweep the south, despite Texas senator Lloyd Bentsen's presence on the Democratic ticket, the west including California, and a fair proportion of the northeast and midwest: all told, perhaps as many as 40 of the 50 states.

The conventional wisdom tends to be like a man who has lost his higher memory functions. It re-invents and re-explains itself daily, completely oblivious to what it said a few hours previously. But let us assume that it holds true in its current shape. What is the explanation?

Primarily, Dukakis has never really understood what it is the electorate is looking for in a president, believing the job to be a sort of glorified governorship for which managerial talent and the ability to solve problems are the chief requirements.

He has thus sold himself in terms of his competence. He has less and less of the world in a word, at the Atlanta convention, at which Congress has moved to usurp his traditional position as the federal program manager and constitutional partner. Whatever the country's mood, it is not the country that he is pleading to the bushes, but the bushes that he is pleading to the bushes.

bate, forget the "labels". The result is that he appears to have the soul of a Times watch, which would be fine if the American voter wanted cheap and reliable way to tell the time. The problem, as Ronald Reagan has been demonstrating so brilliantly for the past eight years, is that nothing could be further from said voter's list of criteria.

So vast and devolved has the apparatus of state become, so autonomous in most respects the economy, and so powerful the legislative branch of government, that the presidency's long since dissipated. Presidents, however popular (and popularity is nine-tenths of their authority), simply do not have it in their office to make decisions that directly impact on people's lives.

In a sense, the cancerous growth of the bureaucracy, the almost manic self-interest and aggression of Congress and the more basic diffusion of power to the state and local levels have all combined to filter the president out of the mechanics of government.

He has less and less of the world in a word, at the Atlanta convention, at which Congress has moved to usurp his traditional position as the federal program manager and constitutional partner. Whatever the country's mood, it is not the country that he is pleading to the bushes, but the bushes that he is pleading to the bushes.

tution in this country more feared than the IRS. Any promise to unleash it further, if only at a narrow sector of society, is likely to be seen by the majority as a generalized threat.

The same majority also feels, with some reason, that the public schools to which it sends its children have deteriorated seriously since it was at school. It senses teachers aren't teaching, that discipline isn't being kept, that its children are being exposed to drugs and other pathologies. In brief, it is worried.

Bush's approach has been to call for teachers to lead their pupils in the pledge of allegiance every morning, just the way most of those who will vote in this election were led when they were schoolchildren and things, as they remember them, were better. This is not simply a matter of crass, simplistic jingoism. The candidate is reaching down into the psyches of millions, letting them know he is one of them; that he shares their values and nostalgias.

This is an especially effective task because Dukakis vetoed a move by his own legislature to have a referendum on the issue. His motives may have been impeccable, but they also showed a feeling much less sympathetic for the country's voters.

Rightly or wrongly, and in my view rightly, because it reflects the diffusion of power away from any single individual, or elite, or vicereine, what this election is about is the country's need to appeal to the gut, to whose instinct he must appeal. Dukakis is not, in my view, a man who understands, nor, like "He sees a country that must take its medicine" him. It is that there is no medicine.