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Facilitation and Mediation in South Africa: Three Case Studies

Abstract

Excerpt

In this paper I discuss three case studies of facilitation and mediation in South Africa: 1) facilitation between the South African apartheid establishment and the African National Congress in exile from 1963 to 1989; 2) facilitation that eventually led to mediation between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front in Natal over 10 months from 1985 to 1986; and 3) mediation between the African National Congress and the Afrikaner Freedom Foundation (Afrikaner Vryheidstigting, also known as Avstig) over 18 months from 1991 to 1993.

Keywords: *African National Congress (ANC), Inkatha Freedom Party, mediation, National Party (South Africa), Nelson Mandela, Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), peacemaking, political leadership, South Africa*

Author Bio(s)

Hendrik van der Merwe is Emeritus Honorary Professor and retired Director of the Centre for Conflict Resolution of the University of Cape Town, pioneered Conflict and Peace Studies in South Africa. He has lectured extensively in the United Kingdom, the USA and Germany. A Quaker "by conviction," he is on the board of the Quaker Peace Centre in Cape Town.

FACILITATION AND MEDIATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: THREE CASE STUDIES

Hendrik W. van der Merwe

Introduction

In this paper I discuss three case studies of facilitation and mediation in South Africa: 1) facilitation between the South African apartheid establishment and the African National Congress in exile from 1963 to 1989; 2) facilitation that eventually led to mediation between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front in Natal over 10 months from 1985 to 1986; and 3) mediation between the African National Congress and the Afrikaner Freedom Foundation (Afrikaner Vryheidstigting, also known as Avstig) over 18 months from 1991 to 1993.

I attribute the success of these interventions to the favorable international setting existing at the time, the high quality of political leadership in South Africa, and the following features of the intervention process: the human face of the mediator, the high quality of the services rendered by the mediating body (the Centre for Intergroup Studies), and the principle of reconciling apparent opposites (by showing that often issues which appeared to be mutually exclusive were in fact complementary).

One important distinction is between two types of intervention: impartial (that of the mediator), and partisan (that of the activist or change agent promoting empowerment of the weaker party). But perhaps the most important distinction is that between the role of facilitator and the role of mediator. I have come to the conclusion that at times when one or more of the parties were not ready for formal mediation or peacemaking, the quiet process of facilitation of communication helped unobtrusively to pave the way for an eventual negotiated settlement. It is thus important to acknowledge and encourage the role of the facilitator in apparently intractable conflicts which seem to leave no room for the mediator.

South African Politics: Situating the Case Studies

The National Party (NP)

The National Party (NP), under the leadership of Dr. D. F. Malan, came into power in 1948 and implemented the racial segregation policy of apartheid. A successor to Malan, Dr. Hendrik F. Verwoerd (seen by many as the grand architect of apartheid) gave the policy more ideological content and enforced it on all walks of life, to the extent of implementing rigid geographic

separation. In 1960, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the major predominantly black anti-apartheid political opposition groups, were banned.

Both the ANC and the National Party had been in existence for about fifty years when the ANC was banned in 1960. Many of its leaders left the country and continued the organization in exile. Others went underground and many, including Nelson Mandela, were imprisoned. The leaders of the Pan Africanist Congress, which before its banning had split off from the ANC, followed the same course after the banning.

During the 1980s, State President P. W. Botha made pragmatic adjustments to accommodate the colored people and Indians, yet maintained white hegemony at the expense of the black majority. Botha was succeeded by F. W. de Klerk in 1989. In a surprise announcement in February the following year, De Klerk unbanned the ANC and other banned political parties and released political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela. The National Party, under De Klerk's leadership, entered into a series of multi-party negotiations which resulted in a new democratic constitution and the first national democratic elections in 1994.

The ANC won this election and Nelson Mandela became the President of South Africa, heading a government of national unity. Former President de Klerk was appointed Deputy President of the new South Africa.

It was ten years before these events took place, in 1984 and after 24 years in exile, that the ANC had asked me to help them meet unofficially with the government. This constitutes my first case study.

Inkatha

Inkatha, the Zulu-based cultural organization under the strong leadership of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi had good relations with the ANC in exile until 1979, when relations soured. The sharp difference that emerged was a conflict about means rather than goals. Chief Buthelezi would not support the ANC's policy of the armed struggle and economic sanctions as strategies to bring down the white South African government. The ANC in exile saw Inkatha as being an undermining influence, and after the formation of the pro-ANC United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983, political violence between the two organizations in Natal gained momentum. This violence escalated during the rest of the decade and continued until the election in 1994, when the Inkatha Freedom Party decided to participate in the election. In terms of the election agreement and the constitution of the government of national unity, Buthelezi became Minister of Home Affairs, and on a number of occasions, has served as Acting State President.

In 1985, during the escalation of political violence in Natal, I was asked by church leaders to mediate between the two groups. This constitutes the second case study.

Afrikaner Freedom Foundation

When President Botha made pragmatic changes to accommodate colored people and Indians, the right-wing Conservative Party, strongly committed to the principles of Dr. Verwoerd to keep the

white race pure, split off from the National Party to eventually become the formal opposition in the last white Parliament. When the National Party under President de Klerk entered into a series of multi-party negotiations from 1990 to 1994, the Conservative Party refused to participate. This party included a wide range of groups advocating some form of white homeland for ethnic Afrikaners. They split up during the four years of transition. One group, the Afrikaner Freedom Foundation (Afrikaner Vryheidstigting or Avstig) which propagated a white homeland in the Northern Cape Province, joined the Freedom Front under the leadership of General Constand Viljoen and participated in the elections becoming active members of the new government.

In 1991, the Afrikaner Freedom Foundation asked me to help them to meet with the ANC to enable them to enter into negotiations. This constitutes the third case study.

Personal Background

In 1968 I became the first Director of the Centre for Intergroup Studies, now appropriately called the Centre for Conflict Resolution, at the University of Cape Town. In this capacity I was on one hand an academic who did research and published articles and books, and on the other hand a practitioner who, over three decades, made consistent efforts to promote communication between conflicting groups. During the 1970s and early 1980s I was often involved in anti-apartheid protest actions, but gradually my major role became that of political facilitator, and sometimes mediator.

As an Afrikaner and having attended an Afrikaans university and been active in the Dutch Reformed Church, I had many personal contacts in the apartheid establishment. However, my opposition to apartheid and my association with liberal English-speaking groups estranged me from the establishment, and it required special efforts on my part to keep channels of communication open. Although an elder in good standing in the Dutch Reformed Church, it was also well known that I was an active member of the "radical" Christian Institute of Southern Africa, which members of the Dutch Reformed Church regarded as communist.

In the early 1970s I became acquainted with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) through their service arm, the Quaker Service Fund. In 1974, when my term as elder ended, I left the Dutch Reformed Church to commit myself wholeheartedly to the Quakers. I formally joined the Society in 1976, and from 1979 to 1985 was Clerk of South Africa General Meeting.

First Case Study: Extended Facilitation Between The Apartheid Establishment And The ANC-In-Exile

I was a student at the University of California in Los Angeles when the ANC was banned in 1960. On my return to South Africa by sea in 1963, the ship docked in Southampton

and I spent 10 days in London with my wife and child. In response to a natural urge (see Jaster and Jaster, 1993) I visited both the South African Embassy and the office of the ANC, where I, as a white Afrikaner, was received with great suspicion by the two black men frowning behind their desks at me. While they must have been wondering as to my motive, I cannot recall having had any motive, vision, expectation or ambition in making this visit, except the wish to do something about the conflict. There was no follow-up visit.

When I met the ANC leaders in London in 1963 I did not have much of a track record to commend me to them. Thereafter, however, I became involved in a wide range of protest actions during the sixties and seventies which partly accounted for achieving some credibility in the black community. I was therefore pleased and not surprised when the ANC representative in London approached me during a conference of the British Council of Churches in 1980 and welcomed me in Afrikaans as "*een van ons*" (one of us). During 1980 and 1986 I taught at Woodbrooke, the Quaker college in Birmingham, England. During these periods I built up warm personal relations with several ANC leaders who are now in top positions in the South African government. British Quakers and their service arm, Quaker Peace and Service, also established links with the ANC. During these periods I also regularly met with senior officials in the South African Embassy, some of whom I had known in South Africa.

In 1984 a fellow academic, Thomas Carter, introduced me to the acting head of the ANC Mission to the United Nations in New York. On this occasion I met Gertrude Shope, a member of the ANC Executive Committee. She invited me to visit their headquarters in Lusaka, Zambia. I took up this offer in August 1984 when I attended a meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Zambia. I was at that time Clerk of the South Africa General Meeting. On this occasion I also visited President Kaunda of Zambia accompanied by Ronald Watts, the Clerk of the Zambia Monthly Meeting of the Quakers (Van der Merwe, 1997a). The President emphasized the need for dialogue between the South African government and the ANC and encouraged us to continue with the kind of work done by the Quakers and the Centre for Intergroup Studies. On a subsequent visit to him he offered his official country lodge as a venue for a meeting I was trying to arrange between the government and the ANC.

When I told Dr. Zach de Beer, a senior executive of the huge multi-national corporation, Anglo-American, of my proposed visit to the ANC in Lusaka, he arranged with their managing director in Zambia, Mr Vernon Webber, to make an office available for my use. During the morning, a delegation of the ANC Women's League came to see me. In the afternoon I received a visit by Thabo Mbeki and Alfred Nzo. I had not been a great student of the ANC and, to my embarrassment, had to ask them their positions in the organization! Alfred was their Secretary General, and Thabo the Head of the Department of Information and Publicity. The President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, was in poor health and lived in London. I soon found that Thabo was the crown prince in the organization. (He is currently the Deputy President of South Africa and is expected to succeed Nelson Mandela in 1999. Alfred is currently Minister of Foreign Affairs).

Probably partly due to my close relationship with Winnie Mandela, the wife of the imprisoned Nelson Mandela, and my contact over the previous four years with ANC leaders in exile, I was received with great openness and warmth and we had friendly discussions (Van der Merwe, 1997b). I had argued in talks and publications over the previous years that ANC leaders genuinely desired a termination of the armed conflict so they could return to their own country and share in the responsibility of governing their own land. My new experiences in Lusaka confirmed these impressions--they wanted a settlement through negotiations.

The meeting proceeded in a manner that was to be similar to my other meetings with ANC leaders in exile. For more than an hour they wanted to know from me, as an Afrikaner who had personal contact with Nationalist leaders, what was going on in the inner circles. I assured them that there was a change of heart and a genuine desire among many top leaders to come to a negotiated settlement with the ANC, even though they were not yet ready to admit it in public. To this Thabo replied, with a big frown reflecting his scepticism: "If what you are telling us is true, they must be willing to talk to us?" Without hesitation I responded, "Yes." Then Alfred asked: "Will you help us to talk to them?"

While they confirmed the precondition stated by their President, Oliver Tambo, that there should be clear indications of genuine change on the part of the government before they would have official discussions, they did not set any conditions for private, unofficial discussions with Nationalist government leaders. They urged me personally to arrange such meetings. In response to my question whether we should make use of the good offices of President Kaunda to be host or chairman of such meetings, they said no; they accepted me as mediator and I had direct access to them. They wanted to know how soon I would return to Lusaka.

In August 1984 any question of communicating with the ANC was viewed by conservatives as "selling out to the terrorists." One could not even raise the suggestion in a public meeting without evoking a hostile response from Afrikaners and Nationalists.

I never kept any of these meetings secret, but I had to be discreet. I usually wrote confidential reports of these contacts and shared them with my colleagues and the Board of Governors of the Centre for Intergroup Studies. I sometimes shared my reports with government officials, politicians and on a few occasions with the Security Police, with whom I did not have an easy relationship. They obviously watched me closely, and had already told me that they knew with whom I had met in Lusaka. They also knew of the ANC's wish to talk but either did not believe it or did not want it to be true. They warned me that I was playing with fire and was being used by the ANC for their own purposes. The chief of the Security Police at the time, General Johan van der Merwe, although receiving me cordially, emphasized the fact that his speaking to me should not be interpreted as approval of my actions.

In this particular case I shared my confidential report with Mr Ray Killian, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria. This kind of sharing was an essential part of my bridge-building task, which was to promote communication and better understanding.

Pursuing my contact with Nationalist leaders, I found two Nationalist members of Parliament, Wynand Malan and Leon Wessels, who were willing to go and meet the ANC in Lusaka. We

decided that this should be kept very quiet and certainly out of the press, realizing that this daring and risky enterprise might cost them their positions in Parliament. They decided to go on a low-profile visit and then report back to President Botha on their return. But all to no avail; one Sunday morning the *Sunday Times* reported on rumours of such a visit and promptly asked President Botha whether, if they were true, he would allow it to take place. Of course he condemned it outright and ruled that no member of his party could go and talk to the ANC "murderers." We canceled the trip.

I continued with my efforts to find Nationalists in good standing, apartheid supporters, moderate or radical, who would be willing to talk to the ANC. Since no members of Parliament or the Cabinet were allowed to go, I approached others in the inner circle. Among these were Willie Esterhuysen and Sampie Terreblanche, two prominent professors at the University of Stellenbosch who were close confidants of Cabinet Ministers and advisors to the President. They expressed cautious interest and decided to send out feelers to their mentors. But no sooner had they begun doing so, the President had them on the carpet: "I hear that Van der Merwe is trying to get you to talk to the ANC," he said. Almost pointing his finger in their faces, he shouted: "I will not let you talk to murderers!" And that was the end of that attempt.

Although there had been no other prominent newspaper publicity, it became known that I was scouting for "*verligte*" (progressive) Nationalists to meet with the ANC. I had a call from Dr. Piet Muller (whom I had not yet met), deputy editor of *Beeld*, then the largest pro-government Afrikaans daily paper in South Africa. He wanted to know whether the ANC would be willing to receive a pro-government journalist, something they had refused to do in the past. I phoned Thabo Mbeki who assured me he would be welcome. On December 4, 1984 Piet and I had five hours of sincere and frank discussions with Thabo Mbeki and colleagues.

Piet and his editor had the courage to report favourably on his impressions of this meeting. In two articles in this pro-government Afrikaans paper, he argued that the ANC and the National Party had much in common. An editorial urged the government to talk to the ANC (*Beeld*, December 11 and 12, 1984).

With the ban on the ANC then 24 years old, these reports received world-wide publicity and were seen as a breakthrough. The *Cape Times* commented on the *Beeld* articles and editorials thus: "Although hope of talks between the government and the ANC is not new in some Nationalist Party circles, the idea has never before been widely expressed in public" (*Cape Times*, December 13, 1984: 2).⁽¹⁾

At the request of Barry Streek of the *Cape Times* and other anti-apartheid English morning papers, I arranged meetings for him with President Kaunda and the ANC in Lusaka. The *Cape Times* reported extensively on his visit and especially on attacks by President Kaunda on the South African government. While these reports greatly contributed to opening up the debate, they did not improve government attitudes towards either President Kaunda or the ANC. In 1985, I explored other options with the ANC. During one visit with them, they referred me to newspaper reports about political change and criticism of apartheid among Afrikaner students at the Universities of Potchefstroom and Stellenbosch. "Is this genuine?" I was asked. "Of course; and it's the same in the inner circles of the government--as I have told you," I replied. Their

response was eager: "Won't you bring them [these Afrikaner students] to meet our Youth League?" Back in Cape Town I pondered how to handle this. I had no contacts with students, and after the embarrassing experience of the two prominent professors, I did not expect many faculty members would be eager to associate with me publicly. I could not walk onto the campus and simply say: "Who wants to talk to the ANC?" So I decided to abide by the good old Quaker principle: "Way will open." And so it did.

One morning, three weeks after my return from Lusaka, two students from the University of Stellenbosch, Grové Steyn, a long-standing friend of my family, and Stefan Malherbe, News Editor of the student paper, *Die Matie*, walked into my office. "We believe you have contacts with the ANC," they said. "The student leaders of our university want to know if you can introduce them to the Youth League of the ANC in exile."

I went to meet with the eight student leaders, the elite of the University. They were accompanied by the University Chaplain of the Dutch Reformed Church! You could not have asked for a more select group of Afrikaner youth in good standing in top Afrikaner circles. They were astonished, but also greatly encouraged, to hear that I had a standing invitation for them to meet the Youth League in Lusaka. I undertook to arrange the visit on two conditions: that it be kept out of the press, and that we inform the government beforehand. They obtained funding from Johan Rupert, the son of the great Afrikaner entrepreneur, Anton Rupert, who lived in Stellenbosch.

I arranged the visit with the ANC office in Lusaka over the telephone. The casual way in which I regularly contacted the ANC by telephone or telex continued to surprise my colleagues and embarrass my conservative friends. By the time our plans had taken firm shape, I phoned Maurice van Greunen, a personal contact in the National Intelligence Service (a body that was not part of the police and which reported directly to the President), and whom I had always kept informed of my movements, to tell him about this mission. He thanked me for informing him, but told me with a smile that the Security Police had already done so! He warmly endorsed our plan and wished us good luck.

A few days later I opened *Die Burger*, the local Afrikaans pro-government paper. There, on the front page, was a report on the student group's proposed trip, even going so far as to list their names! I never found out whether it was an enterprising student journalist or the Security Police who had been responsible for this report. Within a day, each student had been confronted by an official from the Department for the Interior and had his passport confiscated. Even the chaplain, visibly upset, was called from a meeting of the Church Council and taken home to collect his passport. This event received wide press publicity.

This came as no surprise. President Botha was the Chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch and for the student leaders at "his" university to embark on such a "betrayal" was just too much of an embarrassment for him to swallow. And so he had ordered his Minister of the Interior, Mr Stoffel Botha, to revoke their passports.

It was to save the President from this embarrassment, at least temporarily, that I'd tried so hard to keep the trip quiet and out of the newspapers. Eventually, of course, it would become public knowledge, but until then I would have liked to adhere to the good mediation principle of not

unduly embarrassing any party involved. I had already had enough trouble keeping on good terms with the government.

Two courageous leaders of this group, Phillip Verster and Hennie Bester, asked for and were given an interview with President Botha on October 22, 1985. They explained to the President that they were responsible citizens and wanted to convey to the ANC the views and position of the Afrikaner youth. The President warned them that they were playing with fire. Botha argued that the ANC was ruled by the Communist Party and that their purpose was to break down the established order in South Africa and to replace it with a communist system. Botha told them several times that his position was well-known and that he would not allow them to talk to the ANC. They repeated their own conviction that it was the right thing to do. The President's final words, "I will *not* allow you to go. I warn you and your group to consider the consequences," were followed by a long silence. The only assurance they gave him in return was that they would convey his views to their group. I strongly believe that these students, by being refused permission to meet the ANC, eventually had a greater impact on public opinion than they would have had, had they been allowed.

The pro-government Afrikaans Sunday paper *Rapport* sent a reporter to interview each of the students and the chaplain, and published detailed resumés of their brilliant careers, which included distinguished military service during conscription. The paper also quoted from the editorials of all pro-government daily papers in South Africa, which, for the first time to my knowledge, unanimously disapproved of the President's action. *Rapport* also interviewed Minister Stoffel Botha who had ordered the removal of the passports. The reporter asked: "But Mr Botha, you have not removed the passport of Professor van der Merwe?" His reply was, "I believe Professor van der Merwe must reconsider his program." All through the years, that is about the harshest criticism I ever received from anyone in government circles.

The students received further publicity. A courageous publisher, Taurus, commissioned enterprising academic Gerrit Olivier to interview them all and write a book. It was published in Afrikaans under the title *Praat met die ANC* (Talk to the ANC). The students subsequently received nationwide sympathy and support. If they had been allowed to see the ANC as they wished, they would have met with much harsh criticism and prejudice which would have made them very much less successful than they were in conveying a message to their own people.

There was another very positive development. In response to all this publicity the students received a message from Soweto: "Why do you want to travel to Lusaka to meet black youth. Here we are, in the same country! Come and talk to us." The students enthusiastically accepted this invitation and with Johan Rupert's sponsorship toured the country, making valuable contacts across the colour line. This event was of great political significance because it acknowledged black leadership within the country.

During the following two years more than two dozen delegations of white and black South African businessmen, academics, church leaders, and others met with the ANC in Lusaka.⁽²⁾ In a public opinion poll published by the Afrikaans Sunday paper, *Rapport* (July 20, 1986), nearly 50% of whites favoured talks with the "Nationalist" (as opposed to the "Communist") faction of

the ANC. This trend became stronger, leading to a climate favourable for the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990.

The first important and publicized meeting in 1985 with the ANC in Zambia, with President Kaunda acting as host, was that of a group of businessmen, mainly from Anglo-American. (I was not involved in this meeting.) It contributed greatly to better understanding on both sides and helped liberalize some conservative business perceptions. On their return to South Africa the businessmen were branded as traitors by the government.

The largest meeting between white South Africans (consisting mainly of Afrikaners), and ANC leaders in exile was organized in 1987 in Dakar, Senegal, by the Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA). This event aroused a tremendous furore and much public debate in South Africa. It probably contributed more than any other event towards a new orientation in white thinking in favour of talks with the ANC. Not unexpectedly, the government again went on a rampage against the people they felt were challenging apartheid policy and threatening the status quo.

Most of the groups making contact with the ANC were severely criticized, and often threatened and harassed, by the authorities and the police. In most cases, as in the case of the IDASA group, these delegations were highly critical of apartheid and were actively working for change, some specifically for the downfall of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Related to my contacts with the liberation groups in exile (I also made contact with the PAC) were extensive contacts with the black groups within South Africa. (Some of these are referred to in the second case study.) In addition I also had the rare privilege, on Monday October 8, 1984, of meeting Nelson Mandela in Pollsmoor Maximum Security Prison. This was a "family" and not a political visit, resulting from the friendship that had developed between his family and mine. Winnie stayed at my home when visiting him in prison (Van der Merwe, 1997a and 1997b).

In November 1984 the private secretary of Mr Kobie Coetsee, Minister of Justice, phoned to make an appointment for me to meet with the Minister on December 6. During this meeting we had a very friendly discussion during which I reported to him on my visits to Lusaka and to Mandela. He then asked me if I would be willing to pay another visit to Mandela in the near future "at his request." I agreed, but never heard from him again.

In 1986 I attended an international conference in Tanzania. *The Star* in Johannesburg reported on March 17, 1986 under the heading "Tanzania lifts ban for SA Peacemaker," that after almost 25 years, Tanzania had waived its strict ban on anybody traveling on a South African passport. I was described as "a prominent Quaker and active conciliator" who was "warmly welcomed by the three ANC delegates."

In 1988 I was invited to present a paper at a conference in Amsterdam in the Netherlands but, under pressure from the anti-apartheid movement, the sponsors of the conference would not allow me, as a white South African, to participate. However, the conference organizers then wrote to the ANC in Lusaka and received a letter (dated November 15, 1988) from the Assistant

Secretary General, H G Makgothi. He informed them: "We are of course familiar with the work of Dr. H. W. van der Merwe and his Centre for Intergroup Studies. Though we differ fundamentally on a whole range of issues, we recognize his opposition to apartheid as genuine and sincere." They had no objection to my participation and would inform their supporters in the Netherlands of this decision.

On December 11, 1989 my wife and I had lunch with Nelson Mandela in his comfortable modern house in Victor Verster Maximum Security Prison. There was no evidence of guards or security measures in the vicinity and there were no restrictions on our discussions. He repeatedly asked me my opinion of De Klerk (whom he was to meet three days later) and I assured him that he was a man of integrity whom he could trust. By this time Mandela had been meeting freely with his colleagues and was obviously putting his shadow cabinet together.

I continued my role as political facilitator but never acted as mediator between the ANC and the government. During the late 1980s, contacts between government supporters and black leaders in exile increased, and so did discreet meetings of Nationalist Cabinet members and senior government officials with Mandela in prison. In February 1990, President F. W. de Klerk, in a surprise announcement, unbanned the ANC, releasing political prisoners and inviting them to return and negotiate a new South Africa. They soon held official meetings without mediators and initiated a four-year transition period of multi-party negotiations which would lead to the democratic national election in 1994 and the establishment of a government of national unity.

Second Case Study: Intervention between Inkatha and the UDF

In mid-1985, I was invited by the Rt. Rev. Denis Hurley, the Catholic Archbishop of Durban, on behalf of the churches in the province of Natal, to recommend a researcher to undertake a study of the violent conflict in Natal between Inkatha, the traditional, predominantly Zulu organization, and the United Democratic Front (UDF), the two-year old anti-apartheid organization consisting of people with pro-ANC sympathies drawn from Zulu, Indian and white groups. Because of the preponderance of Zulu people in Natal, the escalating conflict became known as "black-on-black" violence. As I have already explained, both organizations were opposed to the apartheid government, but they differed fundamentally on strategy and means, especially on issues such as economic sanctions.

Almost every kind of conflict and violence between individuals, clans, tribes, communities and race and ethnic groups, whatever the cause, had become politicized and, in numerous cases, antagonists, offenders and victims became associated, without any good reason, with either Inkatha or the UDF. Prominent church, community and business leaders who tried to intervene were suspected of being sympathetic to one or other of the parties and were therefore unacceptable as impartial mediators. Archbishop Hurley himself, one of the most prominent Catholic and civil rights leaders in the country, was seen by Inkatha as being pro-ANC and pro-UDF because of his close association with the South African and Natal Councils of Churches.

The Centre for Intergroup Studies, although outsiders because of being based at the University of Cape Town in the Cape Province, had the benefit, however, of being known among political leaders in Natal. The Centre had taken the lead in developing a national training program in conflict resolution for community leaders. With the help of the well-known American consultant, mediator and trainer Richard Salem, and his wife Greta, we had just completed a series of training courses for both UDF and Inkatha leaders. While we managed to have some leaders of both groups together on a course in Cape Town, in Natal, however, we had to offer two separate courses in different locations for the two parties.

I also had the benefit of having met the top leaders of both sides on previous occasions. I first met Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, President of Inkatha, more than ten years previously when my wife was a regular visiting pottery instructor at Rorke's Drift, a well-known Zulu art and craft center. We had a warm relationship and I had delivered messages between him and Winnie Mandela. Additionally, I had met some Indian leaders of the UDF from Natal when they came to see Winnie Mandela during the times she stayed at my home in Cape Town while visiting her husband in prison. Over the years I had numerous contacts with a wide range of other leaders in Natal.

The initial request from the Natal churches was only for research assistance--to conduct an investigation and to present analysis and interpretation. I appointed Rob Evans, a recent graduate of the University of Cape Town, for two months as research assistant to conduct the investigation. Funds were obtained by Archbishop Hurley. I proposed that the research should focus on two aspects: interest groups (their goals, policies, ideological leanings, major alliances and divisions) and major issues (the sources of conflict, and a few case studies).

I soon became involved as supervisor of the research project, and also as mediator. In order to obtain approval and support for the project from local and provincial leaders of both parties, I first set out in writing the goals of the project, and then met personally with a number of leaders.

Between October 1985 and July 1986, I paid five visits to Natal. During this period I not only met with the leaders of these two major contending groups, but also pursued further contacts with the people we had trained in conflict resolution.

Another major development reinforced our efforts and promoted the public visibility and reputation of the Centre for Intergroup Studies as a respectable force for reconciliation in South Africa. In July 1986, the Centre organized the First National Conference on Negotiation and Mediation in Community and Political Conflict at the University of Natal in Durban. It was well attended by academics and community leaders from all over the country and two sessions focused specifically on the Natal conflict.

In one session two prominent members of Parliament, Peter Gastrow and Pierre Cronje, reported on their efforts to mediate between Inkatha and the UDF in the community of Hambanathi. Originally I had been asked to intervene in this particular community. However, I argued that, while they were unable to find mutually acceptable mediators within the province for province-wide conflicts, they should be able to find acceptable mediators who were outside the community but still within the province for a single community conflict. After some enquiries

we found these two highly regarded white members of Parliament who were able to mediate. While neither of the two men alone were acceptable to both parties, they were acceptable as a team because each was acceptable to one party.

This conference, which brought together community leaders and academics sympathetic to both parties, gave public respectability to the exercise in mediation, and credibility to the Centre for Intergroup Studies. At this conference we also decided to establish the South African Association for Conflict Intervention (SAACI).

While Rob Evans and I were well received by both parties, attitudes were guarded and support was qualified. There was a marked difference between the two in their approach: Inkatha wanted meetings with the UDF leaders to discuss a negotiated settlement without delay. The UDF, on the other hand, did not want to meet. Their stated reason was that many of their top leaders were imprisoned by the apartheid government whom they suspected of being pro-Inkatha.

A number of community leaders were quite explicit about their views on my role. Although they wanted a reduction of violence, they clearly stated: *"We want no peacemaking."*

While such comments are extremely discouraging for any would-be peacemaker, and enough to cause the faint-hearted to want to pack up and leave matters to run their course, I realized that my approach and strategy would have to respect their fears and accommodate their position. I realized further that I had to play down the peacemaking. I then formulated and distributed my proposal to undertake an investigation (and later made a press statement). It stated clearly that the purpose of the project was to constructively accommodate conflict and reduce violence. It aimed to find common ground between conflicting parties and to suggest ways in which differences could be overcome. It should also help parties overcome past mistakes and take measures to prevent future irregularities.

My proposal made it clear that the investigation should, as far as possible, avoid any confrontation with, and any embarrassment of, either of the parties, and should avoid unnecessary publicity and public exposure of the mistakes or errors of any parties.

The statement emphasized that the investigation had to have the approval and support of both parties. Evidence of violence, irregularities and intimidation found by the investigator should not be made public. The investigator should first discuss the evidence with the party responsible and give them an opportunity to respond. But what was even more important, the investigator should provide the opportunity for parties to make amends and avoid recurrence of violence.

I emphasized that my task was not peacemaking or mediation. It was a specific and practical task to explore with the leaders various ways of reducing the level of violence. It was a technical task, less concerned with the moral and ethical issues usually associated with mediation and peacemaking.

It was only after my second visit that I began to appreciate the position of the UDF. Community-violence at that time was largely a battle for turf. There existed a tradition in Inkatha, the ANC and the PAC of exclusive community control by one party. Such communities became known as

"no-go areas" for other parties. The party that dominated a certain community tolerated no opposition in that community. Should the opposition dare organize or arrange a public meeting in such a community, it would be silenced or ousted by violence.

At that particular time the UDF felt that Inkatha had gained an unfair advantage in several communities. The UDF believed that, owing to superior physical power and police support, Inkatha had gained control of a number of communities where the majority of inhabitants were actually pro-UDF. They feared that any negotiated settlement or peacemaking at that time would leave Inkatha in control of those communities. A truce or peace would therefore institutionalize the current relationship of inequality. It would be a superficial peace without justice.

This concern was consistent with strong feelings in the overall anti-apartheid movement that the struggle should continue and that premature peacemaking overtures should be resisted. It represented a typical situation of a party, while not ready for mediation, being ready for some other form of intervention. While the UDF did not want a truce or peace that would terminate the struggle, they were deeply concerned about the escalation of physical violence and the loss of life and property.

After further consultations with leaders of both sides, we formulated rules of conduct for certain activities such as political rallies. One such activity was the common practice (which was the frequent cause of extensive violence) of the busing in of opposition supporters from other communities into an enemy stronghold in order to outnumber them at a rally on the enemy's own turf. These events inevitably led to violence. Both parties agreed that this practice had to be stopped.

But after a few months, UDF leaders complained that Inkatha was not honoring this rule. In our discussions they realized (I did not have to point it out) that this matter could not be resolved without meeting the "enemy." They suggested that we needed a Joint Monitoring Committee. It was acknowledged that a joint committee would include representatives of Inkatha. But nobody specifically proposed definite action on this issue. I did not want to press the issue and waited for them to take the initiative. I could see, however, that they were not psychologically ready for this breakthrough. So I returned to Cape Town after my fourth visit to Natal, waiting for them to act on this new insight.

Soon after my return I received a phone call from Paddy Kearney, Director of Diakonia (an ecumenical body closely associated with the UDF), asking me to come back the next day "for a meeting with Inkatha." I took an early flight on July 25, 1986 and on arrival met with leaders of the UDF who showed me the list of people who had been invited for that afternoon. I expressed my surprise that they were all UDF supporters. They agreed, and explained that they had hoped I would invite the Inkatha leaders.

The first Inkatha leader I phoned was an unusual and remarkable man: a white lawyer who had been banned and jailed for his communist sympathies. He happened to have other top Inkatha leaders in his office who jumped at the opportunity of meeting with their elusive enemy. When they phoned back a few minutes later they had even more Inkatha leaders keen to come to the meeting than the UDF would feel comfortable with so I had to restrict the numbers. The meeting

took place in the home of the Archbishop, with the Archbishop as host and me as chairman/mediator.

It should be noted that this was my fifth visit over a period of ten months, and that this was the first time the leaders of the two groups had had a face-to-face meeting with me present as mediator.

Inkatha was represented by Rowley Arenstein, Musa Zondi, Chairman, and Mtwe Mafole, National Organizer of the Inkatha Youth Brigade. The UDF was represented by Archie Gumede, National President.

The meeting was also attended by a number of church and community leaders who played a mediating role, even though they were fairly closely associated with the council of churches which had close ties and sympathies with the UDF. This group included Paddy Kearney, the Revs Athol Jennings and Doug Muller (who played important roles in the peace process) and also Professor Dudley Weeks of Chapman College in California, who was offering courses on conflict resolution under the auspices of the Methodist Church.

It was agreed that the meeting would be completely informal, that discussions would be off the record, that nobody would be committed to any decisions, and that each person was there in his personal capacity.

We had barely completed introductions when accusations were made by both parties, accusing each other not only of specific incidents, but also of starting the conflict in general. I intervened and made a firm request: "Please accept that there is responsibility and guilt on both sides. Let us rather admit failures on our own side, and, for this afternoon, not accuse the other party. We all know, and they know too, that they are guilty. We will not rub it in this afternoon."

There was immediate approval on both sides and we proceeded to discuss constructive steps to reduce violence. It was agreed that we shared the common goal of getting rid of apartheid and the common concern about the damage done by physical violence. We were interested in finding viable alternative strategies.

It was agreed that talks between conflicting groups on all levels were necessary, but that official, open and public talks were not always possible, and were not advisable while so many UDF leaders were either detained or in hiding.

At the end of a very successful meeting it was agreed that further unofficial talks such as this one were highly desirable and that they should be organized. I agreed to circulate to all present a brief report on this meeting. Paddy Kearney was appointed by the UDF and Mtwe Mafole was appointed by Inkatha to make arrangements for further meetings. It was noted that I would be leaving South Africa the following week for one year on long leave, and Archbishop Hurley expressed his doubts about having a meeting without an impartial mediator. I suggested names of some of my colleagues with good reputations. The response was distinctively negative, however. It had taken me ten months to build up relations of trust and understanding to arrange this first

meeting and nobody seemed to think any newcomer could merely proceed onwards from the position we had reached at the meeting.

As it turned out, they did not meet again for the next eighteen months. The major lesson I learned from this was never to undertake long-term mediation as an individual. For the sake of balance and continuity, it should always be undertaken as a team.

Third Case Study Mediation Between the ANC and Avstig

The third case study is of the mediation that took place between the ANC and conservative Afrikaner leaders. In this case, mediation was necessary and was asked for (Van der Merwe and Johnson, 1997).

Race and ethnicity have been major sources of conflict in South Africa for centuries. In its efforts to consolidate its power, the white apartheid government promoted ethnic as well as race divisions. The victims of apartheid hated the oppressors' use of ethnicity as a divisive tool. Because of the international stigma attached to the apartheid ideology, progressive academics and politicians distanced themselves from any thinking which accorded significance to ethnicity. The "ethnic taboo" effectively silenced South African academics (see Bekker, 1993). This bias was, of course, not a peculiarly South African phenomenon (see Connor, 1994).

It is therefore no surprise that the only white political grouping which used to focus on ethnicity as a key issue in South Africa was the right wing, chiefly represented by the Conservative Party (CP), but also including a number of smaller far-right parties and less conservative groupings. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of ethnic nationalism in Eastern Europe boosted their morale. They argued cogently in favor of political independence and autonomy for "ethnic Afrikaners." They believed that only a *white Afrikaner* homeland (volkstaat) would ensure their survival as a distinct group, preserving their language, culture and religion. They saw the new integrationist policies of the National Party under De Klerk's leadership as a major betrayal.

The best known and most detailed proposal for a white Afrikaner homeland was that of Avstig (Afrikaner Freedom Foundation), headed by Professor Carel Boshoff (son-in-law of the late Dr H F Verwoerd), which grew out of the cultural movement, the Afrikaner-Volkswag. Until mid-1991 Avstig, like the Conservative Party, believed there was little room for compromise. They insisted on complete political independence as a *pre-condition* for negotiations, and refused to participate in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) where the new dispensation for South Africa was being negotiated.

In due course a group of Avstig leaders realized that they were becoming isolated and would have no impact on the formation of the new South Africa. Because of their "racist" reputation, no leading black politicians were willing to have formal and open talks with them.

In my persistent efforts to involve in my program people from all political groups, including the Afrikaner right wing, I had invited Eleanor Lombard, a CP candidate in the parliamentary elections in one of the local constituencies. She reluctantly attended two seminars during the 1980s, but having felt uncomfortable she thereafter stayed away.

More than a year after the unbanning of the ANC, Mrs Lombard phoned me and asked if I would help them make contact with the ANC. The first ANC leader I talked to was Johnnie Issel, whose enthusiastic response was: "I have just come out from underground where I tried to sabotage this government because they would not talk to us. We will soon be in government and I do not want these people to sabotage us because we refused to talk to them! Let us talk."

The first meetings took place in my office, Eleanor bringing with her Pieter Grobbelaar, a wealthy local farmer who was chairman of the Western Cape branch of Avstig. Johnnie brought Reginald September, an elderly returned exile and devoted Communist. While I had been bringing such people together for over two decades, such meetings were still rare in South Africa. At one stage, when Eleanor appeared shocked, Reginald turned to her, declaring: "Yes, I am a Communist. Have you ever talked to one?" Later expressing surprise at her tone he asked: "Am I talking to someone who will take up arms against us?" "Yes," replied Eleanor with a spark in her eye, "if you do not grant us our homeland!"

Over a period of about eighteen months several meetings were held. More people were brought into the discussions, including Kader Asmal and Dullah Omar who subsequently became Cabinet Ministers, and Albie Sachs who became a judge of the Constitutional Court. We soon added a social dimension to our official talks and met in homes--a most revolutionary experience for many of the participants. Albie Sachs (1993) suspected that the first meetings must have been difficult for the Afrikaners: "...we were a totally strange phenomenon that they knew about only in terms of a concept, in terms of an enemy."

Eleanor Lombard explained: "When we finally met with the ANC, both groups were willing to listen to the other's point of view. Although there were many differences, these did not lead to confrontation. Each and every discussion made both groups feel that there was a need to continue" (1993).

During a series of meetings over a period of more than a year, an ever-widening number of regional and national leaders from both sides established close contact and developed relationships of respect and trust. During this period Avstig announced several major policy shifts.

Instead of propagating the racist concept of a *white* homeland, they now advocated an *Afrikaner* homeland (to be situated in Orania in the Northern Cape Province). It was a cultural concept: a homeland for Afrikaans speakers regardless of race or colour.⁽³⁾ They also decided to participate

in the negotiation process without rigid preconditions (Van der Merwe, 1993: 4, Lombard, 1993: 5).

In these discussions between Avstig and ANC leaders, the latter emphasized that ethnicity could never be acceptable as long as there was any trace of "baasskap" (domination) associated with it. Ethnicity could only be acknowledged if it were guaranteed that "baasskap" had been eliminated (Sachs, 1993: 5, 16).

Eventually the leaders from both sides decided that they had established a clear understanding. They asked me to arrange a meeting between Nelson Mandela, President of the ANC, and Professor Carel Boshoff, national leader of Avstig. The meeting took place in the offices of the ANC in Johannesburg on March 12, 1993 and was attended by a delegation of about eight people on each side. I attended but Mandela chaired the meeting.

Following this meeting Mandela made a public statement in which he expressed his sympathy with the wish of the Afrikaners to retain their language and culture, and invited them to participate in the multi-party negotiations and to submit their case for a homeland for Afrikaans-speakers. The leaders of Avstig subsequently became actively involved in the negotiation process.

A new interim constitution was adopted at the end of the multi-party negotiations in 1994. It contained a clause in terms of which a Volkstaat Council was established. The task of this Council was to advise the government about the advisability and practical implementation of an Afrikaner homeland. Even though this Council produced no meaningful results by the beginning of 1996 (and seems to have no future), it was included as part of the final constitution which was adopted in May 1996.

Avstig, advocating an Afrikaner homeland (Orania) in the Northern Cape, became an important partner in the Freedom Front, the major political party representing "right-wing" or "ethnic" Afrikaners in Parliament. Eleanor, Pieter and Johnnie, and most members who participated in our meetings became members of the provincial and national legislatures.

Conclusions

The International Context

South Africa's success story (or miracle, as many see it) should first be interpreted within the international context existing at the time which greatly facilitated a negotiated settlement. The fall of communist rule in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe removed a real and imaginary threat. The universal rejection of racism that accompanied the rapid process of decolonisation following World War II eventually penetrated into the conservative Afrikaner mind. The very

late revival and acknowledgment of ethnicity as a positive cultural force distinct from race was another universal factor that helped South Africans break out of their rigid frames of mind.

Quality of Leadership

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Mandela and De Klerk came as an appropriate tribute to the quality of leadership of not only these two men, but of many of their colleagues and followers. I would single out the qualities they showed of trust, respect and tolerance as the most important. A major contribution of De Klerk was a show of respect to black people, and especially his deference to Mandela. But the most striking example of the power of respect was that by Mandela toward the Afrikaner right-wing symbol of a homeland, at a time when their idea of a separate homeland was rejected and ridiculed (especially and most painfully) by the National Party and De Klerk himself. A distinguishing feature of the relationship between the ANC and the Freedom Front is the respect Mandela has shown to their leader, General Constand Viljoen.

The Human Face Of Mediation

One of the most important qualities of a mediator is impartiality. However, impartiality and neutrality can be interpreted as cold detachment, or a lack of feeling, care and concern. Is it possible for an impartial mediator to show a human face, to express concern for the human suffering undergone by a victim, without estranging the party which caused the suffering?

I have documented several cases where I have found this possible (Van der Merwe, 1989: 90-94). Over the past decades I have felt, and have been able to express, genuine sympathy for the fears of conservative Afrikaners who felt "besieged," and for the suffering of black people who were being oppressed. Concern for suffering can be expressed as distinct from support for a party. I have also learned from the Quakers that one can distinguish between an act which one denounces as objectionable, and the person who committed that act whom one respects as a person. I have often denounced apartheid in strong terms, without necessarily attacking the politicians or the officials involved. Adam Curle argues that it is through "concerned impartiality" that mediators are able to remain on good terms with both sides (1986: 19).

In 1990, with several colleagues, I formulated a number of principles of effective and sound mediation⁽⁴⁾

(Van der Merwe, et al, 1990: 231-233). They included two related principles: (1) the mediator must display concern for human suffering (concerned impartiality) rather than cold detachment, and (2) the mediator must be sensitive to the positions and needs of the parties involved, and of the situation.

Different situations require different responses. The intervener must be alert to these challenges. As the communication process continues, the conditions and needs of the parties are likely to change, and under these circumstances a change in the strategy of the intervener may become necessary. To illustrate: I went to Natal on the first visit to mediate, but found that one party had important needs other than mediation.

Another principle of mediation is *to help parties who have been guilty of misbehaviour, or who have talked themselves into a corner, to get out of the predicament while saving face*. No party in a conflict wishes to see its beaten and retreating opponents get away with honor. There is in most of us a certain vindictive element. It is exactly this element that often constitutes the main obstacle to a negotiated settlement. The task of the mediator is to help the guilty or losing party save as much face as possible. An important part of my task in Natal (even as a sympathetic facilitator) was to help parties who were obviously guilty of violent acts to retain their dignity while admitting and not denying their guilt. In the case of Avstig I anticipated and encouraged the fundamental changes they made during the negotiations.

Quality of Mediation Services

While the human face of the mediator is important, it is equally important that the mediator has expertise in skills and techniques acquired through study and experience. Conflict accommodation is both an art and a science. The art refers to the more spontaneous and natural inclination to intervene. The science refers to the skills, techniques and expertise acquired through study and experience. Goodwill is not enough; expertise is essential.⁽⁵⁾

The Centre for Intergroup Studies had a good national and international reputation (see Chan and Jabri, 1993: xix, 160, 161; Jaster and Jaster, 1993; Goodwin and Schiff, 1995: 376-382). The quality of its wide range of community services, especially training of community leaders in conflict handling, and the organization of local, regional and national workshops and conferences, was widely recognized.

The Credibility Of The Mediator

A further important principle is this: *the mediator must have credibility with all contending groups*. The credibility of the Centre for Intergroup Studies was supported by the quality of its wide range of community services. I have pointed out how in the case of Natal my earlier personal contacts, together with the high visibility of the Centre for Intergroup Studies, promoted the intervention process. Thanks to my Afrikaans ethnic background and mother tongue, I held some credibility with the establishment. Owing to my earlier activist role, I was also trusted by the ANC.

Reconciling Opposites

Interveners in conflict situations are constantly faced with contrasting options which, unfortunately, often appear to be mutually exclusive or irreconcilable. A major lesson I have learned in South Africa is that apparent opposites are often complementary (Van der Merwe, 1988). There is a complementary and contrasting relationship between justice and peace as desirable goals in South Africa, and between the problems that inhibit their attainment and the means by which they are pursued (Van der Merwe, 1990: 1-3; Van der Merwe, et al, 1989).

Three observations must be made about these goals: The first is that they are ideals for society and are in fact unattainable in absolute terms. The second is that they are complementary--we cannot have one without the other. The third is that they stand in a relation of tension to each

other. This tension is especially evident between the means of coercion to obtain justice and the means of negotiation to obtain peace. But coercion and negotiation are not mutually exclusive; coercion, in fact, often constitutes an integral part of the political negotiation process. Coercion and negotiation can complement each other in the communication process.

Disagreements about the rate or pace of change is often the most important source of conflict between adversaries and can very often split groups which share the same goals. This is often due to a false or unnecessary view of conflict between short- and long-term strategies. Incremental steps can be accommodated within a radical fundamental change program. *Incremental steps can be reconciled with radical goals.*

A major obstacle which often prevents parties from coming to an agreement is the contrast between private and public views of leaders on both sides. The sensitive mediator will sympathize with representatives of conflicting parties who are willing to make concessions and who express this in private talks, but who nevertheless claim the opposite in public because their constituencies are not yet ready to make concessions.

In each of the three case studies, leaders from the contending parties quoted public statements of their opponents to prove that their opponents were intransigent. In almost each case I was able to point out that they were equally guilty of inconsistency between public and private statements. This realization often broke down resistance to having formal talks. The principle underlying this is: *the mediator must respect the popular base of elected leaders and acknowledge the tension between privately-held views and public stands.*

On the basis of personal contacts on a high level, I came to believe that there was an underlying wish among leaders of all parties that talks would somehow come about. I was often encouraged privately by political leaders to say what they dared not say publicly. After the successful meeting of Piet Muller of *Beeld* with the ANC, I was invited for lunch with the Board of Directors of Nasionale Pers, the publishing house that published most pro-government papers, including *Beeld*. More than one top Nationalist and Cabinet Minister congratulated me on what I had achieved and encouraged me to continue the good work.

Opting for Partisan or Impartial Intervention

Intervention forms part of a wider continuum of behavior patterns in which the intervener adopts a variety of roles (Bercovitch, 1984: 16). Intervention can be either impartial or partisan. The purpose of impartial intervention is usually to mediate a negotiated settlement.

Partisan intervention can be motivated by a variety of reasons: to advocate the cause of one party or to assist it in the conflict, to protect the status quo, or to assist and empower the weaker party. The latter is usually the role of the change-agent or activist. Concern about power imbalances between parties is expressed in another key principle: *where there is gross asymmetry of power between adversaries, a process of empowerment of the weaker party is essential.*

One has to distinguish between the intervention of a change-agent having the purpose of changing or eradicating apartheid or some other government policy, and the intervention of a

mediator or facilitator having the purpose of bringing together the government and its opponents. The intervention of a change-agent is partisan. It is in favour of the deprived, the underdog, the banned, and the inevitable result of such intervention is to estrange the change-agent from the perceived oppressor, the government. The intervention of the mediator, however, is more impartial. As peacemaker, he has to try to be on fairly good terms with both sides.

My concern that the middle ground in South Africa was being eroded motivated me to move away from activism towards conciliation and mediation. There is, however, a clear tension between the roles of activist and mediator (Van der Merwe, 1989: 1-3), and the problems of being a mediator in one's own country where one has also in the past been (and to some extent continues to be) an activist, are obvious (see Adam Curle in Van der Merwe, 1989:xiv, xv).

I went out of my way to keep my channels of communication open with the government, especially the police. This was not always easy and not always possible. I was also careful not to embarrass any party, if at all possible. Another important principle was *to be respectful towards all parties, especially towards the perceived perpetrator of violence or oppression*. Those qualities in me of facilitator and mediator, as opposed to those of anti-apartheid activist, probably account for the fact that I could continue talking to the government during all those years when I was also openly talking to the ANC and advocating a negotiated settlement with them in articles, public talks and even on television.

Process vs Goal: Facilitation vs Mediation

Where formal mediation is not acceptable, informal mediation or facilitation of communication may be successful (Van de Merwe, et al, 1990: 225-6). In keeping with this principle, I have found that in situations of extreme polarization, where any form of mediation or peacemaking is rejected, informal facilitation of communication between adversaries can contribute toward better understanding and so pave the way for subsequent mediation.

I make a clear distinction between mediation and facilitation. Facilitation is restricted to one aspect of mediation: the facilitation of communication between conflicting parties. The facilitator does not suggest solutions and is primarily concerned with technical rather than moral issues, that is with the *process* of improvement of communication, rather than the *goal* of reaching a solution. The mediator is motivated to reach that solution. He or she can claim neutrality regarding the stands taken by conflicting parties, but not regarding the outcome of the exercise.

For the mediator, facilitation of communication is a means to an end. For the facilitator, facilitation of communication is an end in itself, in much the same way that one can pursue knowledge for the sake of knowledge, or develop atomic power for the sake of developing power.

Facilitation can take the form of shuttle diplomacy where the contending parties do not meet face to face. Mediation usually refers to a meeting where the parties meet physically in the presence of the mediator.

In my experience with the South African establishment and the ANC in exile, I always maintained that I served as a facilitator assisting both parties to have meaningful communication and gain reliable information. I did not urge the parties to put the knowledge to good use or to make peace. It was up to them to decide how they would use these insights. I believe it was this approach that largely accounted for the positive response I had from both sides. The facilitator is less likely than the mediator to be seen as a meddler or a busybody, a preacher or a moralist. He or she does not offer or attempt to bring the parties together, but, obviously, should the parties be ready to take that step, the facilitator may well be an appropriate person to assist (Van der Merwe, 1989: 95).

The facilitator is not obsessed with peace, and is unlikely to be accused of wanting peace at all costs --an accusation sometimes made of mediators and peacemakers. The facilitator also does not have high expectations, but should have patience in abundance.

It was in 1984, 21 years after I first walked into the ANC office in London, that the ANC asked me to help them talk to the government. It took five visits over a period of ten months before the UDF asked me to arrange a meeting with Inkatha. It took several years of silence after Eleanor Lombard's hesitant attendance at seminars at the Centre before she asked me to arrange meetings with the ANC, and it took more than a year of meetings of regional leaders before both sides asked me to arrange a meeting of their leaders in Johannesburg.

It was as a process-oriented facilitator, and not as a goal-oriented mediator, that I was accepted by the parties, especially during the initial stages.

Notes

1. A prominent profile in *The Argus* of January 9, 1985 was headed "The man who brings SA enemies together" and a report in the *Weekend Argus* of April 30/May 1 (during the national elections) was headed "The man who got the ball rolling."

2. On April 18, 1997 Dr Vladimir Shubin, Acting Director of the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences wrote in a personal letter: "I believe that from 1985 onwards several 'tracks' for contacts between the ANC and SA establishment have been created, though yours was definitely the first."

3. There was ample evidence that these new progressive views of the leaders were not yet shared by their followers. The original settlers who had already moved to Orania still saw it as a white rather than *Afrikaner* refuge.

4. My first attempts to spell out the lessons I learned from these experiences were published as "South African Initiatives" in *New Approaches to International Mediation*, edited by Christopher Mitchell and Keith Webb, in 1988. More systematic formulations of principles were contained in

my *Pursuing Justice and Peace in South Africa*, published in 1989 by Routledge, and by my colleagues and I in "Principles of communication between adversaries in South Africa", pp 216-240 in *Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution*, edited by John Burton and Frank Dukes.

5. While I did learn from experience, I had no formal training in conflict handling. I maintain that appropriate training, especially at an early stage in my career, would have greatly increased my expertise and efficiency. With hindsight I can identify many occasions where I failed to take initiative, to follow through, to consider options - largely through this lack of expertise. From the early 1980s onward I brought many trainers and consultants from abroad (and some of them on occasion participated with great success in my program--I have mentioned Dudley Weeks and Dick Salem), but none of them stayed long enough to become a full team member in any of the three case studies.

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