

# DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

## EDITORIAL

# Pitfalls of focusing on divisions in SA

IDASA's goals are:

- To encourage South Africans of all races to reject apartheid and discover an alternative that is non-racial and democratic in the true sense of the word.
- To assist people to accept and work for a post-apartheid society as a way of allaying their fears.
- To mobilise the skills, knowledge and experience of all those who can assist the communities in the crisis areas of South Africa.
- To provide forums and opportunities on a nationwide basis to find democratic solutions to South Africa's problems.
- To assist in creating a climate for genuine negotiation towards a non-racial and democratic South Africa.

### IDASA Offices

**HEAD OFFICE:**  
Hill House, 1 Penzance Road, Mowbray, Cape Town, 7700 (Tel 021-473127; Telefax 477458)  
**WESTERN CAPE:** 6 Faircape House, Orange Street, Gardens, Cape Town, 8001 (Tel 021-222150; Telefax 237905)  
**JOHANNESBURG:** Fifth Floor, Norvic House, 93 De Korte Street, Braamfontein, 2107 (Tel 011-4033580/1/2/3; Telefax 3395301)  
**PRETORIA:** 203 Hatfield Forum, 1077 Arcadia Street, Hatfield, 0083 (Tel 012-3422335/6; Telefax 3421926)  
**DURBAN:** 1206 Sangro House, 417 Smith Street, Durban, 4001 (Tel 031-3048893; Telefax 3048891)  
**PORT ELIZABETH:** Fourth Floor, Standard House, 344 Main Street, Port Elizabeth, 6001 (Tel 041-553301/2/3; Telefax 522587)  
**EAST LONDON:** Sa Stephenson Street, East London, 5201 (Tel 0431-430047; Telefax 438682)

Elsewhere in this issue you will read a defence of bi-communalism by Professor Hermann Giliomee in which he raises a number of questions relating to an Idasa conference and remarks made by me at that conference.

Firstly, Prof Giliomee and I are in agreement that the national question is of critical importance and should be debated. Secondly, I am in agreement with his suggestion that Idasa should hold a conference on this question and we are already in the planning stages of such a conference to be held in 1990.

The subject is not only important but it is also extremely complex. Prof Johan Degenaar suggests for example that there are at least nine philosophical approaches to the question of nation-building in South Africa! However, it is not necessary to wait for the conference and a few preliminary remarks in response to Prof Giliomee are in order.

### Contradictions

It is my view that Prof Giliomee's arguments are riddled with contradictions. He suggests, for example, that "we must explore how an Afrikaner/white nation and an African/black nation can co-exist peacefully in South Africa" and yet immediately goes on to suggest that peoples of South Africa should become "engaged in a process of nation-building in which we try to construct a transcendent South African nation with its own distinctive set of symbols and values". How can you construct a "transcendent South African nation with its own distinctive set of symbols and values" if you start from the need for two separate nations, racially constructed, to co-exist peacefully in South Africa? The more you hold on to the need for two nations to "co-exist peacefully", the more difficult it becomes to achieve "a transcendent South African nation with its own distinctive set of symbols and values".

### White coherence?

It must also be asked of what does the Afrikaner/white nation consist? In the current election, support is almost certainly moving away from the National Party to the Democratic

Prof Giliomee's article appears on Page 7

Party on the left and the Conservative Party on the right. So much for Afrikaner/white coherence! The critical question is: is Afrikaner/white nationalism on the wane or not? Voting patterns at least suggest that it is. If we add to this a number of sociological factors such as white urbanisation, materialism, the upwardly mobile Afrikaner yuppie, the thousands of young Afrikaners who support the new Afrikaner culture of Johannes Kerkerrel and the Voëlvry Toer, it hardly speaks of Afrikaner/white coherence.

### Dynamism

Further, the enormous debate taking place within the Dutch Reformed Church is a sign of a dynamism which can hardly be equated with historical coherence. What does Prof Giliomee make of the hundreds of Afrikaners who have over the last two years not only been willing to meet with the African National Congress but have stated publicly the enormous shift which has taken place in their own socio-political experience as a direct result of these encounters? What I am speaking of is not so much a disintegration of Afrikaner/white nationalism but a greater openness to consider a broader nationalism which is inclusive rather than exclusive. Prof Giliomee sells his fellow white Afrikaner short in suggesting that he is determined to remain forever in the laager of narrow Afrikaner nationalism.

### Unity

By implication, Prof Giliomee suggests that I have certain political and academic qualms and this informs Idasa's determination to "get away from the institutionalisation of two nations". One of these qualms is that nationalism is by its nature exclusive. But I have never suggested that nationalism is necessarily exclusive. It is true that some nationalisms are

## Ja-Nee

### Foute agter geslote deure

Volgens die Minister van Finansies, mnr Barend du Plessis, sal die Nasionale Party nie weer sy fout van 1983 herhaal deur sy grondwetlike planne op die tafel te sit, om net te sien hoe hulle in die openbaar uitmekaar getrek word nie. Die regering, sê mnr Du Plessis, sal sy planne vertroulik hou en hy sal in vertroulik-

heid beraadslag — oorspronklik agter geslote deure.

— Dit lyk asof daar nog meer demokrasie-op-eie-houtjie-agter-geslote-deure oppad is!

### Biltong's shares plunge

The former State President's venison delivery drew critical comments from at least two Afrikaans newspapers. *Beeld* said it would be unworthy of his high office if the incident were repeated. *Rapport* commented, in lighter vein, on the diligence of the police force: "Biltong is a national delicacy but not a national priority."

— Not that one couldn't have led a nation with a consignment of that size.

### Rock-around-the-pulpit

Two Dutch Reformed dominees have crossed swords in *Die Kerkbode* over the desirability of the message in Johannes Kerkerrel and Co's "Voëlvry" record album. Dr Jannie Malan, known for his curious habit of playing records backwards to check for possible satanic verses, says the record is undiluted evil — bent on undermining Christian society. A colleague from another Johannesburg congregation, Ds Zachie le Roux, thinks differently. In fact, he





FW de Klerk....  
 Who wants to speak to Kenneth  
 Who can't speak to Nelson,  
 Who couldn't speak for  
 30 years,  
 but was spoken to by PW,  
 Who's angry with Pk,  
 Who didn't speak to him  
 about Kenneth and FW,  
 Who hasn't been on speaking  
 terms with PW for 3 months  
 Who would be speaking  
 to whom about what  
 after September 6?

exclusive, but some are not. The political task as I understand it is to identify those which are not and then to support them through practical and theoretical means. This does not imply "down-playing the ethnic factor". What it does mean is identifying the forces for change in South Africa and working within these forces. Non-racialism for example does not imply a rejection of the demands and rights of black nationalism. In fact it suggests that national unity cannot be built until these historical claims are dealt with in an inclusive way: "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white". The stress therefore is on a democratic future realised in a democratic process involving maximum participation and negotiation. It is incorrect to equate white Afrikaner nationalism and black African nationalism — the former is exclusive, the latter (at least the non-racial democratic position) is inclusive and non-chauvinistic. The greatest hope for South Africa is the fact that most people subscribe to the non-racial democratic position as opposed to ethnically-defined nationalisms or exclusive nationalisms. This means that the problem in South Africa is not how to resolve two competing nationalisms (à la Giliomee) but how to build on the existing non-racial position which is very strongly held and has been fought for by many different organisations over a very long period of time.

What Idasa is doing is trying to help whites to understand, experience and ultimately accept existing non-racialism in practice and so help build the new South African nation which is already under construction.

Therefore it is valid to focus not so much on the very real divisions which exist and the fears and prejudices which underpin them, but on the post-apartheid South Africa of the future. This does not mean ignoring the national question; on the contrary, I would argue that you cannot focus on what is meant by a post-apartheid South Africa without giving serious attention to the national question.

**Tragedy**

The tragedy of white Afrikaner nationalism is that it says to all other whites "if you want to be really part of my nation, you have to be an Afrikaner", and it says to the so-called coloured, the majority of whom are Afrikaans-speaking and who share in the religious and cultural heritage of the Afrikaner, "you must be white".

It is surely ironic that when Mr F W de Klerk and the National Party as a whole (at least in terms of rhetoric) has moved away from the idea of several nations to a commitment to "one nation", Prof Giliomee spends so much of his time and energy on defending bi-communalism which in my view does institutionalise the concept of division, and therefore of conflict. Idasa is committed not only to one nation but to a united South African nation which is non-racial and therefore inclusive and which is democratic and therefore a process which invites and seeks the participation of all South Africans in the fight to achieve these goals.

**Alex Boraine  
 Executive Director**

identifies with the revolt of the "alternative" Afrikaner musicians.  
 — A fresh breeze after all the pulpit jazz.

**Hulle vat 'n kans**

Nog slim (maar minder wyse) woorde uit kerkkringe kom van Woord en Daad, spreekbuis van die Reformatoriese Beweging van Suider-Afrika. "Sonder om ons eksplisiet agter die Nasionale Party te skaar, wil ons in dié stadium vra: gee die man F W de Klerk 'n kans in hierdie ronde. Ons kan hom en sy party in 1995 by 'n volgende verkiesing weer weeg, nie aan wat hy dan sê hy gaan doen nie, maar wat hy in sy

ampstermyn vermag het."  
 — Soveel tyd, soveel verskonings.

**Slaan 'n nuwe blaadjie om**

Niemand kan by *Die Burger* kers vashou op die gebied van propaganda nie. Nou word hulle nog meesters van onderbektoneering ook. In die verleentheid rondom die NP-advertensie wat gebaseer was op 'n (*Vrye Weekblad*) foto van DP-leiers in die teenwoordigheid van Joe Slovo en Johnny Makatini, verwys *Die Burger* maestro Alf Ries smalend na die alternatiewe Afrikaanse koerant as 'n "linkse blaadjie".  
 — Klink na suur druive van 'n regse handleiding.

**Letters**

Address your letters to  
 The Editor, Democracy in Action,  
 1 Penzance Road, Mowbray 7700

**Tolerance and understanding**

I read your newsletter with great interest and I deeply appreciate the wonderful work Idasa does towards a non-racial democratic South Africa. I think your contact with the extra-parliamentary mass-based organisations, such as the UDF and the ANC, is of tremendous value. I also understand that black South Africans, because they are excluded from the constitutional process, are understandably hostile towards parliament and everything connected with it, even opposition parties in parliament.

In your April newsletter, Mr Wayne Mitchell mentions tolerance and understanding and says "this must be between all parties and organisations working for change" — the sort of change you are working for.

All parties include the Democratic Party because their main aim is also a non-racial, democratic South Africa. When members of the DP recently met in Cape Town, UDF tolerance was completely absent and the UDF apparently refused to enter into discussions. This seems to me to be arrogant and unreasonable and I wonder if you could stress the need for tolerance and understanding because without it there can be no negotiation — something which we are all so keen on.

**H C Parkes  
 Somerset West**

**No way to build a free SA**

The recent disruption of meetings at the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Durban-Westville, which also affected Idasa director Dr Van Zyl Slabbert, must be deplored.

Idasa's attempts to create a climate in which democracy can take root, are directly affected by actions such as these. The democratic future that many of us are striving towards, seems to be so unattainable at times like these. If we subvert our basic principles in our fight for a free South Africa, we compromise everything that we stand for.

Democratic values cannot be created overnight in society. One must work at it. One must nurture the democratic culture and strive to conduct the struggle in such a way that these values are ultimately given an honorary place in the fight for freedom and justice.

Real democracy encompasses respect for the freedom of speech of any individual. The blatant disregard of this fundamental freedom by the students who disrupted these meetings does not bode well for the kind of society that will replace the present regime.

To Page 13

**Contributors to Democracy  
 in Action may express  
 opinions that are not  
 necessarily supported by  
 IDASA**