

More talks with ANC needed, says Volksblad editor

HENNIE van Deventer, editor of Volksblad and a great admirer of F W de Klerk, returned from the Paris indaba committed to drawing other members of the Afrikaner establishment into discussions with the ANC and leaders in extra-parliamentary politics.

He felt enriched by the discussions and found it particularly valuable to hear how members of the ANC motivate and defend some of their "unpopular" positions in debate. "I am in a much better position now to authoritatively deliver comment on extra-parliamentary politics," he said.

He admits to having felt uncomfortable with some aspects of the discussions, but agrees that being in a position to "put faces to names" takes some of the sting out of impressions based on press reports.

Van Deventer, editor of Volksblad for the past 10 years, believes that Afrikaans newspapers should inform their readers more fully on the views of extra-parliamentary groups to overcome their extensive ignorance in that area.

Afrikaner intellectuals too should be more receptive to the views of the democratic movement, and also use opportunities for dialogue to voice their own aspirations to that community.

As far as his own role as newspaper editor is concerned, Van Deventer plans to step up the content of Volksblad on black views. "I will certainly make more information available to my readers, but it will not necessarily be sympathetic reporting. In fact, I have returned with some ammunition to still defend some of my earlier viewpoints."



The editor of the Bloemfontein newspaper Volksblad, Mr Hennie van Deventer, and Mr Thabo Mbeki, the ANC's director of international affairs.

From Page 1

contradiction there can only be stagnation and no development," he said.

As the conference drew to a close, however, an ANC leader cautioned that constant focus on strategies to end apartheid should not overshadow the actuality of what is happening on the ground in South Africa. In spite of many positive developments, repression was continuing along with reform in the country, and there was enormous suffering among millions of people in the region. "We have an urgent task to end the hunger, to end the poverty, to end the death," he said, also focusing again on the need for unity among all South Africans. "None of us acting alone will be able to end the system of apartheid. We have to act together and find out what we need to do together to get to that commonly defined future."

Perceptions differed sharply on the motivating force behind the more liberal management style of the new National Party leader. At the one end of the spectrum MDM and ANC leaders insisted that F W de Klerk had not had a change of heart, but that he was acting under the pressure of internal and external forces mobilised by the democratic movement, and indeed merely shifting the line of defence. It was not apartheid that De Klerk wanted to save but power and control, argued the director of the Legal Resources Centre in Port Elizabeth, Fikile Bam. "In the process De Klerk is even prepared to put apartheid in jeopardy," said Bam.

At the other end of the spectrum, the editor of the Bloemfontein-based Volksblad, Hennie van Deventer, maintained that De Klerk's initiatives were not a "cynical exercise to maintain strategic advantage" but the result of a moral

"It is almost magic that we leave this conference with not one of us showing a scratch from another."

awakening of consciousness among the Afrikaner leadership who sincerely wanted to establish a just and equitable society. In this context Idasa's director of policy and planning, Van Zyl Slabbert, cautioned against the rarefication of any particular form of struggle to end apartheid, stressing the importance of both the planned and unplanned forces of change. "The whole South African situation is driven by an internal dynamic," he said.

As the debate shifted to negotiations, Dr Willie Breytenbach of the African studies department at the University of Stellenbosch stressed that there was an inherent danger for the ANC in the De Klerk government's apparent readiness to allow mass mobilisation inside the country. "The more the government allows mass mobilisation, the higher its international credibility will grow and the ANC might well be seen as intransigent and to be delaying the process of transition," he said.

The ANC countered that its insistence on a normalisation of the political process inside South Africa was being misconstrued as pre-conditions for negotiation. Their demands for the unbanning of the

ANC, releasing of political prisoners and the lifting of the state of emergency in fact merely amounted to the creation of a climate for negotiation. But there was concern too that the ANC was approaching negotiation as a "trick used in the revolutionary paradigm". Slabbert said negotiation would unleash a dynamic which would create a completely new situation on the ground and neither side would have complete control over the agenda. Jay Naidoo of Cosatu argued that there was an inextricable link between revolution and negotiation in resolving the South African conflict, and that the one would not be possible without the other. Democratic Party co-leader Wynand Malan made a plea for flexibility on both sides. "The problems of the past will only be solved by the politics of the future," he said.

Idasa's executive director, Alex Boraine, noted the importance of the process of local level negotiations that has started in several centres of the country. Community structures were in this way beginning to challenge the power base of white councils and all parties were learning valuable lessons for future in the process.

ANC and MDM views on the participants at the national negotiating table proved interesting. While some argued against the presence of groups like Inkatha (because it is not active in the struggle against apartheid) in a formal negotiating forum, it appeared that there may be room for all significant groups at the table but that it will consist basically of two sides - with those who share the vision of ANC and MDM on one side and the rest on the opposite side.

There was a tentative exploration too of the concept of an honest broker to super-