

Towards the end of the discussions they had clearly achieved a more open attitude towards each other. There was a plea from business that the adversarial relationship between business and the unions should be played down so that they may arrive at a point where everyone saw themselves as stakeholders in companies. JCI chairman Murray Hofmeyer maintained his position that business needs to take advantage of any opportunities it may get to influence the government. It was untenable for business and labour to continue lambasting one another with "recrimination upon recrimination", he said. The time had come for serious dialogue between these two parties in the economy. On the side of the unions there was an encouraging recognition of the importance of the business community in the generation of wealth.

In the closing session of the conference, the vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Professor Stuart Saunders,



UDF national treasurer Azhar Cachalia and Murray Hofmeyer.

highlighted a lesson that was implicit throughout the deliberations. He said although it was generally agreed that negotiation had to come as quickly as possible, it was vital to remember that these negotiations should be aimed at securing the future. The debate on the economy therefore had to be extended as a matter of urgency to investment and participation in programmes to improve of education, health and housing, the critical areas of need in the country.

Breyten Breytenbach, the world renowned South African poet who "master minded" the conference and the lavish reception in Paris of his fellow South Africans, remarked that there was a need to strengthen the dynamic process between our methods and what we are aiming for. "We should try to take as many people as possible with us."

At the end of the Paris indaba, one was left wondering how long Idasa could continue to play a role in initiating debates of this nature beyond the borders of the country. Clearly everyone at the conference was feeling the effects of this dimension of the South African schizophrenia. Everyone wanted the ANC to come home soon, not only to end the personal suffering of the individuals concerned, but also so that their remarkable vision of the future can be shared among all South Africans.

## NEGOTIATION

# World watch as NP, ANC manoeuvre for moral high ground

By Pierre de Vos

**ALTHOUGH** both the National Party and the ANC have in principle endorsed the concept of negotiation, it is clear that the two groups hold profoundly different views on what the result of these negotiations should be.

Both groups would like to see their constitutional framework adopted as a starting point. At present, both parties are manoeuvring themselves into a position which would enable them to gain the initiative for the moral high ground without a commitment at this stage to sit down at the negotiating table.

The eventual outcome of this game may hinge on the government's willingness to accept a negotiated settlement that would culminate in the handing over of power from the white minority to the majority of the people in South Africa. This in turn may depend on whether the opposition forces would be willing to sacrifice at least some of their principles to entice the government into striking a bargain.

At present the possibility of such a historic compromise seems most unlikely - not the least because this would entail that the present government would then become the first power in the history of the world to voluntarily negotiate themselves out of power.

But in the rapidly changing world in which we find ourselves almost anything seems possible. Despite the very conservative record built up by State President FW De Klerk before his election as leader of the NP, he started talking about the promotion of a climate for negotiations shortly after ousting PW Botha.

But the fact that the once mighty and rigid National Party has transformed itself into a flexible and, some would argue, much more dangerous opponent, does not mean that the party is on the defensive and on the brink of going into "surrender talks".

According to Prof Hennie Kotzé, head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Stellenbosch, the state of the economy had a lot to do with the way De Klerk acted during his first two months in power. The devastating effect of the economic isolation of South Africa, the difficulty in repaying foreign debt and the absence of a foreign banker for the developing country all contributed to make the government realise that "things can't go on as they used to".

According to Kotzé, the Minister of Fi-

nance, Mr Barend du Plessis, had no final control over government spending before De Klerk took over. "He could not bring the reality of the economic situation home to the Cabinet. But that is all changing now."

The government's skilful handling of the Commonwealth summit in Kuala Lumpur and the successful re-negotiation of their foreign debt demonstrated a new understanding of the political and economic realities they find themselves in. "De Klerk knew he had to deliver something to stave off the sanctions threat in Kuala Lumpur," says Kotzé.

The question remains, however, whether De Klerk's tenure in office won't be a repeat performance of that of former President Botha. Will the new president turn out to be a smiling version of the previous NP leader?

James Selfe, Democratic Party member of the President's Council and DP research officer, is one of many people involved in Parliamentary politics who believe that De Klerk is qualitatively different from his predecessor. "It might even be that the man had a ideological change of heart after coming into office. He is definitely far more clever than PW. Intellectually he has accepted that the present regime is unacceptable."

### Tactics

Whatever the political make-up of President De Klerk may be, his new tactics have forced both the MDM internally and the ANC externally to change their tactics. The ANC and the MDM met in Lusaka in July to thrash out a position on negotiations.

New Nation, a newspaper which supports the MDM, commented recently that the Lusaka meeting came out of the realisation that "the imperialists and the regime" hoped to win new space and regain the initiative by launching a negotiation initiative with which they plan to confuse, divide and demobilise anti-apartheid forces.

Titus Mafolo, a member of the UDF executive, explained that the MDM also viewed negotiations as a weapon used by both sides to advance their interests and positions. "Thus it is important that we see negotiations as part of struggle to be waged simultaneously with other forms of struggle. Some liberals argue that negotiations will solve all our problems. But this is based on the mistaken view that conflict between the NP and the ANC is based on a misunderstanding.

"The ANC and the government represent classes whose objective interests are in

conflict. The conflict between the white ruling bloc and the oppressed cannot be resolved by discussion, but only when the system of white minority rule is replaced by a national democratic state."

Mafolo said the challenge to the MDM was not a simple one.

"We cannot just reject negotiations. If people sense that we have ignored the chance to end the conflict in our country peacefully, we will be isolated," he said.

The document drawn up at the Lusaka meeting argued that negotiations could only follow once discussion had taken place "between the liberation movement and the South African (government) to achieve the suspension of hostilities on both sides by agreeing on a mutually binding ceasefire". This process, it was agreed, could only take place if certain pre-conditions were met by the government. These included:

- the unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees;
- the lifting of all bans and restrictions on organisations and individuals;
- the removal of all troops from the townships;
- the ending of the State of Emergency and all legislation which curbs political activity; and
- the end to all political trials and executions.

Although both the MDM and the NP agree that the climate for negotiations will have to be created, the MDM sees these conditions as necessary to create the space within which to organise, to build and strengthen their organisations.

"One cannot negotiate from a position of weakness," explains Barbara Frieman, a member of the Executive of the Cape Democrats and involved with the Five Freedoms initiative.

"The defiance campaign must also be seen in this context. It is a conscious effort by the MDM to show to the world that it is a force to be reckoned with." This helped to get the ANC's framework for negotiations accepted, first by the Frontline states and later by the Organisation for African Unity (OAU).

While the ANC and the MDM were accepting negotiations as part of the struggle, the NP stated that the only pre-condition for negotiation should be that the people sitting around the table with them "should be committed to a peaceful process of political change", according to the Deputy Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, Mr Roelf Meyer. As is the case with the ANC however, they envisage the parties sitting around *their* table working with *their* agenda.

"The government is prepared to negotiate a new constitution to include all South Africans," says Meyer. "We have not finally decided on the specific type of political system that will be accepted. This will be the result of negotiations and we would not want to be prescriptive in this regard.

"But we have committed ourselves to



President FW de Klerk . . . A smiling version of PW Botha?

certain principles such as powersharing and the protection of minority rights and the provision of equal vote to all South Africans. We are in favour of a system that will provide equal sharing of power between voluntarily formed groups. We are not in favour of a system whereby all the power would be vested in the hands of the majority - or the minority - whereby domination could take place."

#### Group rights

He acknowledged that the government felt strongly about the protection of minority rights. "But we are prepared to put this on the table and, for example, to negotiate about the definition of a 'group' as well as what rights should be protected in which way.

"We are not rigidly bound to certain non-negotiable views regarding group rights. In return, potential negotiating partners should not have their own non-negotiables; for example that they would only negotiate about the transfer of power or about the one-man, one-vote system in a unitary state. Negotiation is, after all, a process of give and take where positions are mutually shifted in order to come to an agreement," he said.

The necessity of compromise during the negotiation process is also accepted by MDM leaders like Titus Mafolo who warns that negotiations always involve compromise. "If an enemy was so weak that no compromises were necessary, no negotiations were necessary either," he says.

The big question now hinges on the rigidity with which the parties cling to their "non-negotiables" which in return depends on the relative weakness or strength of the parties. At this stage it is not clear what the government is prepared to relinquish, but it may be forced to make

choices not even contemplated at present.

"From the ANC's perspective it would therefore be imperative that the NP makes some concessions to the organisation to enable the organisation not to go into the process empty handed," says Kotzé. "Both parties could actually gain something if the government decided to make some concessions that were within its reach."

According to Dr Pierre du Toit, a lecturer in Political Science at the University of Stellenbosch, any talk about negotiations must be viewed as premature. In order for real bargaining to take place deals will have to be struck by the parties involved; there will have to be mutual profit for the parties involved and there will have to be mutual acceptance of the other parties involved.

At present no such common ground exists between the agendas of the ANC and the NP to make this bargaining possible. "The ANC doesn't talk about making compromises. Both the ANC and the NP are prepared to negotiate from within their own framework. The ANC from their viewpoint as enumerated by the Freedom Charter and the NP from within the framework of their five-year plan. Because the two agendas do not overlap there are no common ground at present to make negotiation a possibility."

Du Toit says although talk of democracy is being bandied about by all and sundry, the content given to the term differs. "The Charterist form of democracy is based on substantive justice, implying equity and a redistribution of wealth. Liberal forces and even the National Party are talking about procedural democracy, implying a constitution based on the rule of law, and a Bill of Rights with independent judiciary."

The implicit acceptance by both the NP and the ANC of the importance of the world opinion in their manoeuvring for a stronger position if or when negotiations start, points to the real way in which the negotiation process could move.

"The Western powers could hold the key to a negotiated settlement in South Africa," says Dr Du Toit. "They are the ones who have the grip on the holders of power."

But why would the international community want to do this?

"They want to make South Africa safe for venture capital and they would like to see a stable conservative black government. They would like to see a conservative ANC government taking over with some guarantees given to whites," Du Toit argues.

In a world dominated by the capitalist economic system the seven Western powers could almost, if they wanted to, dictate government actions. "For a historic compromise to be reached these powers will have to operate behind the scenes in a very direct way proposing their own framework within which negotiations will then have to take place."