

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE INSTITUTE FOR A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE FOR SOUTH AFRICA

FEBRUARY 1990

Time for a new agenda

By Barry Streek

ONE OF the most significant of Nelson Mandela's statements shortly after his release from Victor Verster prison was also one of the least reported: his emphatic commitment to democratic practices.

He was, hopefully, not only demonstrating his own beliefs but was also pointing a finger at those in the struggle who call the attainment of power, "democracy", and call their strategies "democratic" when in actual fact they are anything but that.

Indeed, the struggle now should not only be about majority rule, but also about establishing true democratic principles and practices on all levels of South African society.

Sadly, however, some of the practices of the internal movement leave one in serious doubt about whether real democracy is even on the agenda, let alone a priority.

Mr Mandela made a special point in his speech on the Grand Parade on the day of his release to put his beliefs on this issue on the line: "On the question of democratic practice I feel duty-bound to make the point that a leader of the movement is a person who has been democratically elected at a national conference.

"This is a principle which must be upheld without any exception."

The next day at the Bishopscourt press conference, he was asked about his role in the ANC and replied: "No person has the right in our organisation to determine what his role is in the course of the struggle. We are loyal and disciplined members of the organisation. It is the organisation that will determine what role we should play."

No one, he might have gone on to say, has the right to be a leader or to assume leadership. They must be elected by the membership, as represented at a national conference.

Fundamentally, this is the question of answerability. It is also a question of internal

To Page 4



Beverley Haubrich

Back in circulation . . . Nelson Mandela with Cape Town mayor Gordon Olivier before his first public address in 27 years.

Lifting the lid on democracy

Sue Valentine

IT MAY have been a fortuitous choice, but in the light of recent announcements from parliament it was appropriate that Idasa's first conference of the 1990s focused on the need for democratic responsibility and accountability in public life.

Just what does it mean to be democratically accountable, who are "the people", who is accountable to whom, what sort of democracy are we talking about? These and other issues were raised during the two-and-a-half days of "Responsible Democracy: Ethics and Accountability in Public Life", held at the University of Cape Town

from January 18 to 20.

One of the key people behind the conference was UCT political philosopher Professor Andre du Toit who pointed out that institutions beyond a universal franchise were needed to build a fuller culture of democratic accountability.

"Even more difficult and pressing questions arise if we realise that building a culture of democratic accountability cannot be postponed until a future post-apartheid society will be achieved," he said.

In order to focus the discussion, conference speakers looked at specific issues and case studies in a variety of fields, including

To Page 9

inside

No time for
empire builders
-page5-

Agreement in
Namibia
-page7-

Integration or
collapse
-page13-

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

- 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.

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: 5a Stephenson Street, East London, 5201 (Tel 0431-430047; Telefax 438682)

EDITORIAL

New demands, new opportunities

IF ANY doubt existed concerning State President De Klerk's determination to move swiftly away from apartheid towards a new dispensation, the earth-shattering events which took place in the first two weeks of February must certainly have dissolved it.

Mr De Klerk proved himself to be not only a good reformer but also a good politician. What he was actually announcing was the bankruptcy of apartheid and the need to put the clock back some 30 years, if not 42 years, to when the National Party took power. But he did it with such style that he has been, very understandably, hailed as the new saviour of South Africa. There were many of us, myself included, who did not believe that he had either the courage or the vision to deal so decisively with most of the obstacles to genuine negotiation. Therefore let us take nothing away from his quite remarkable shift away from traditional National Party policy.

What he has signalled is essentially that the National Party, unlike in 1948, has now decided that South Africa belongs to all her people, black and white. It follows therefore that apartheid must end and that a new dispensation must be introduced. How can this be achieved? Through negotiation politics. What stands in the way of genuine negotiation? Certainly the international community and in particular those who have opposed apartheid for so long have made that very clear. He in turn has responded by removing most of the major obstacles in the way of negotiation politics. Where he would like to see it end is anyone's guess. But that will slowly emerge when the dust has settled and the first glimpses are seen of what form negotiations are going to take and in particular how one is going to arrive at who should be at the negotiation table.

In the meanwhile one thing is very clear: the new wine which President De Klerk has poured into the vacuum of South African politics is going to bring about far-reaching changes. Therefore we can expect the collapse of many long-revered and established institutions; old leaders will move from the centre and new leaders will emerge to take their place. There will be realignments, new coalitions, fresh ideas because at long last we can begin to ask the fundamental questions and begin the road towards a new democracy. That the road is going to be bumpy no one will want to deny. That it is extremely exciting and full of new opportunity is something all of us must grasp.

Can the events in Eastern Europe be repeated in South Africa? No. The major reason why this is not on the cards is that the security forces are in place and loyal to the National Party and to the state. Thus despite all the announcements and shifts, De Klerk and his government are securely in place and South Africa's journey away from authoritarianism and repression towards a new society will take a very different route from that experienced by most of the countries in Eastern Europe. This in itself will bring its own agenda of problems because expectations are very high following the dramatic unbanning of organisations, release of political prisoners and in particular the release of Mr Nelson Mandela.

Idasa has played a modest role in changing the perception of the government and whites towards the ANC and its central role in any future scheme of things. It is too early to have a clear picture regarding the future role of Idasa. Inevitably, however, its future and its role must be re-evaluated in light of the significant changes which have been in-

JA-NEE

Kom reg, John

Cape Times columnist John Scott, commenting on the ironies in SABC-TV's coverage of Mandela's release, remarked of TV newsreader Marietta Kruger: "Her cleavage showed she has freckles on her chest. You notice things like that at times of high drama."

- Yet another commentator with an eye for the

sexist obscure. Or is Mr Scott suggesting the need for an SABC cover-up?

The perils of nationalism

The Kappie Kommando recently tried to disrupt a memorial service for Emily Hobhouse when members of the crew and cast of the movie, "That Englishwoman", paid tribute to the Boer War heroine at her grave at the Women's Memorial in Bloemfontein. The Kappie Kommando claimed their folk heroes were being used for political gain

and Afrikaner culture eroded.
- Sorry, ladies, the causes of humanity and reconciliation will never be the prerogative of any one nation.

The fickle media

A picture of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, his wife Leah and his advertising agent son Trevor celebrating the release of Nelson Mandela was captioned in the Sunday Times: "Archbishop Desmond Tutu, wife Leah and a friend do the toyi-toyi as they celebrate the news."

- Hope the ad agency is doing better than his anonymous public image suggests.



roduced and the new dynamic which is being experienced.

Suffice it to say that Idasa did not come into being simply in order to bring about the unbanning of the ANC or the release of Mr Mandela. It came into being to focus on a democratic alternative to the present system. The present system still exists and the need for a democratic culture to underpin the moving towards negotiations which could lead to a democratic and non-racial South Africa is something which cannot be exaggerated.

There can be little doubt that there is a strong need for organisations and individuals to keep the focus on the central thrust of democracy, namely a multi-party state, an independent judiciary, a bill of rights, and accountability of those who govern towards those who are governed. In the meanwhile, there is much work to be done in assisting whites in particular to come to terms with the new demands as well as the new opportunities, which await them and all South Africans.

Alex Boraine,
Executive Director

Negotiating differences

THE Johannesburg newspaper City Press comments as follows on recent events:

"They say the genie is out of the bottle in South Africa. There is no turning back now as far as political reform goes.

"We as a nation have to continue changing our ways. The distance is nothing. It is the first step that is difficult.

"It may be that the ANC's Thabo Mbeki is correct. He says in a recently-published book about the ANC: 'The fortunate thing about the length of our struggle is that we are late in coming to our liberation.

"We have had the opportunity to learn from the mistakes and experience of others on the continent who achieved freedom before us. We will benefit from studying where others have tried and failed. We are not going to repeat their mistakes."

The newspaper continues: "The situation in South Africa resembles a stalemate rather than a crisis... But polarisation, is growing and it is trailing a crisis in its wake.

"Yet there are grounds for hoping that South Africans will begin to negotiate their differences peacefully. We are a society in flux. The country has entered a critical stage in its history."

LETTERS

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

The 'second-class' bus

WE GOT on to the "second-class" bus, and started to read the description of Winterveld handed out by Paul Zondo of Idasa. The trip was long. We travelled through central Pretoria, Marabastad, and the white suburb to the north-west of the city that used to be Lady Selborne - once a black freehold township. Once we had driven over the Magaliesburg, along the highway, through Soshanguve and into Bophuthatswana and Mabopane, we turned off the main road towards a horizon where the green and gold of summer acacias and Transvaal grassland was no longer visible. Instead, drab grey-brown hovels huddled interminably.

Paul stopped to show us a creche, one of many local attempts to provide a safe environment for the little children of the slum. Bright-eyed and smiling, the rows of uncomprehending little faces before us recited "Twinkle, twinkle, little star".

After meeting the Sisters of Mercy at the Catholic Clinic, who introduced us to members of the Winterveld Action Committee, we visited another creche. This one was a small, dark room in a hovel off an alley. The children gazed at us in the hot afternoon, and the expression in their eyes stayed with me.

Our last stop was the rubbish dump. Here, a whole community lives and works, collecting bottles, paper and whatever else can be salvaged. We picked our way through the fly-covered terrain, where the stench of rotting matter was overwhelming. Here, hovels were constructed of plastic and whatever other material would provide shelter from the heat, the rain, the dust. I looked down, trying to avoid stepping into the worst of the garbage. The rotting pile at my feet reminded me, painfully, of my own world, as I glimpsed a discarded "BASF Flexydisk" box, and the squashed remains of a packet of "Trim" biscuits.

Lynda Gilfillan, Pretoria

Los die kuns uit!

'N **VERSLAG** van die Konka-vergadering in die Desember uitgawe van Democracy in Action, oopper die saak van mense wat politieke voogde van die kunste wil wees.

Het ons in Suid-Afrika nie al genoeg onder die soort van ding gely nie? Laat die kultuur- en kunsmense bymekaar kom, maar die blatante gebruik van die kunste vir politieke oogmerke gaan mense net weer onnodiglik van die kunste verdryf.

Beswaard, Kaapstad.

Opinions expressed in Democracy in Action are not necessarily those of Idasa.

Double-speak

Is it the same man? Not too long ago acting ANC president Alfred Nzo admitted that Umkhonto we Sizwe was somewhat lacking in capacity. But a few weeks later, on the eve of the NEC three-day meeting, he was reported as saying: "We must now move forward and intensify our all-round offensive against apartheid. For this purpose our glorious people's army must be given all the necessary and possible assistance to enable it to enhance its conduct capacity."

- True to the democratic process, even the acting president is hauled over the coals sometimes!

Some evolution

And now for a completely different perspective on how it all happened. Writing in the Sunday Times, Willem de Klerk, the president's brother, commented (rather proudly):

"It is not a flash from out of a clear blue sky, nor is it an about-turn. What happened on February 2 was an unavoidable consequence of the way policy has always evolved in the National Party."

- Well done, but final extinction is decades overdue.

Dismal notes amid the joy

By Shauna Westcott

THE day Nelson Mandela "strolled to freedom" will go down in history books as a milestone on the long march to democracy in South Africa – and it was. But it was also a day of huge disappointment.

It was a day marred most obviously on the Grand Parade in Cape Town by gangs of young thugs, whose heedless violence caused one death and injuries to many, including marshalls hurt in the cross-fire as they struggled unarmed to preserve the peace and safety of 80 000 people. But there were other dismal notes whose echoes will return to haunt us if they are not recorded and addressed.

The question being asked – by committed activists, not enemies of the struggle – is: what has the National Reception Committee been doing for its period of office?

True, the final confirmation of Mandela's release gave them only 24 hours to implement plans for a rally. True, it is impossible to book stadiums over a weekend at such short notice. Granted, controlling such a huge crowd would have taxed even the most superb organisation.

But they had weeks, even months, of warning. Why were they so ill prepared? Why were contingency plans not in place to ensure at least that absolutely vital communications equipment – a crowd-proof PA system and walkie-talkies to link marshalls – was not only available but in place?



Marchers gather in Cape Town on the day of the opening of Parliament.

This lack alone was enough to doom the rally to chaos. Organisers and marshalls were unable to communicate with each other or with most of the crowd. As hours dragged by, rumours flew in the heat and an undisciplined minority surged here and there at any hint of action, toppling a scaffold, crushing others against barriers and disconnecting what sound equipment there was for some time.

As a result the majority were unable to act in accord against the unruly few, whose reckless actions included mobbing Mandela's car (which took a wrong turn), forcing him to retreat when he first arrived for fear of being torn limb from limb. Had organisers been able to inform the crowd, they would have had thousands of instant marshalls co-operating to clear the way for the leader they were all there to welcome.

As it was, only the vast patience and discipline of the majority – together with the courage and dedication of the marshalls –

preserved a semblance of the greeting Mandela deserved, and prevented a disaster that loomed heart-stoppingly close at times.

Other discordant and painful notes were widespread experiences of racism, sexism, sexual harassment and other personal violence – knives pulled on marshalls, two people carrying guns trying to enter City Hall, pickpockets, drunkenness, shoves from youths careless of others in toyi-toyis given more to aggression than to celebration.

Perhaps a minor oversight, but a suggestive one, was the lack of thought for the thirst of the masses who, it seems, are simply expected to roast quietly in the sun while their betters take tea. This was a party. Where were the refreshments for us to buy? Where were the cups to lift to toast our leader? Perhaps the fact that there is only one woman on the NRC lies behind this neglect of an elementary aspect of celebrations – one that men have a habit of regarding as not within their sphere of concern.

The disappointment may be timely, however, and its message is both clear and constructive. Our critical gaze must shift from the old opponent, whose outline anyway is beginning to blur, to "the enemy within". Democratic practice is far from established in our own ranks or in ourselves. The struggle continues.

Shauna Westcott works in the publications division of Idasa.

Time for a new agenda

From Page 1

organisational coherence and discipline.

Of course, the state's repressive methods have made democratic practice extremely difficult, and at times impossible. The mere survival of formal organisations in the face of detentions, police raids, media restrictions, misinformation, bombs and assassinations was difficult enough.

And strategies had to be devised and developed to cope with this situation. Democratic practice, in these circumstances, even though it should have been "a principle which must be upheld without any exception", was a problem.

This however, should no longer be the case. In the wake of the De Klerk reforms, there should be no excuse that the goal of power can camouflage the need for democratic practice and democratic answerability.

What this means in reality is that the challenge should now be about developing structures and organisations, which are responsible to the people and whose leaders are subject to scrutiny and annual election by their members.

Crowds at rallies and marches are part of the democratic process. The right to meet and the right to march are democratic rights, as is the right to a free press, but they are only part of the process.

Within the emotional spirit of rallies and within the intensity of discussion in proverbial smoke-filled rooms, it is easy to talk about "the people" or "die volk daar buite". It is a very different matter in getting them to vote for you in an election.

When activists start walking the streets, knocking on doors of the

ordinary people and canvassing their support, they will find a very different situation from the rarefied atmosphere of in-struggle discussion and slogans.

They may find that rents or crime and gangsterism are closer to the real needs of the people than some of the loftier goals and well-worn slogans of the struggle. They may even find that groups that are dealing more effectively with those perceived needs will be able to win votes.

Then, the thoroughly undemocratic tactic of stoning cars, attacking opponents and groups of toyi-toying youths, apparently regarded by some as the frontline of the struggle, may have political consequences they never dreamed of.

There is also the very basic question of money. Political organisations are expensive and they have to raise considerable funds to be able to campaign effectively. They have to go to their members and supporters to get that money. In terms of the current law, and it is a sensible provision which may well survive the negotiations period, no political party may receive funds from foreign sources.

What this means is that the kind of financial extravagance that was lavished by foreign donors on the one-day Conference for a Democratic Future – publicly about R1,4 million but believed to be more – won't be around when the first post-apartheid elections are held.

Winning votes, raising party funds and commitment to democratic practice, as shown in the lead given by Nelson Mandela, give cause for hope for real democracy and true freedom in the future South Africa. That will be a welcome change from some of the activities of the past.

Barry Streek is on the political staff of the Cape Times.