

Lala ngoxolo Comrade Pro

The recent murder by masked gunmen of one of Idasa's former staff members, Pro Jack, near his home in Nyanga, Cape Town on June 19, 1991 shocked, outraged and saddened us all.

Pro Jack joined Idasa in July 1987 as one of our first fieldworkers in the Western Cape where he worked as a regional co-ordinator until January 1990.

He joined at a time when the institute was under extreme pressure from the government and other right wing sources. His contribution to facilitating contact between white and black South Africans was greatly valued.

In Cape Town circles Pro Jack was probably most widely known for the "township tours" he organised which allowed hun-



dreds of diplomats, foreign visitors and ordinary South Africans to encounter township life firsthand.

Pro Jack's assassination is a further indication of the deep political divisions that continue to exist in our country. It is Idasa's firm belief that the creation of a culture of democracy and political tolerance is a prerequisite for a peaceful transition to a stable political environment.

Actions of this nature can only exacerbate the violence that has permeated our political life for so many decades. Unless the powers that be put all their efforts into rooting out - from all quarters - the perpetrators of such actions, the spiral of violence, revenge and destabilisation of South Africa's political life shows no sign of ending. □

Tours show pupils' hardships

The last time I was in a classroom was over nine years ago. Even then we felt we were getting a "raw deal" as black pupils - despite the many lives lost in the '76 revolt. When I left Alexandra High School in 1982, conditions were still bad - but there was always hope that the situation would improve in the near future.

Going back to the classroom, this time not as a pupil but as a tour guide during the Alexandra Education Tours arranged by Idasa in collaboration with the *Weekly Mail*, proved the situation to be far from improved.

The very first tour took place on May 21 and involved 10 participants. Two further tours, involving some 60 people, took place during May. Participants get an opportunity to visit schools and observe conditions and meet with representatives of major education groups and other organisations in the township.

Among the schools visited were the Eastbank High school, Minerva High, Skeen Combined School and the Dr Knak primary school.

Skeen Combined School is a dilapidated two-storey brick building where 700 pupils are crammed into 12 classrooms. In its poorly furnished classrooms, most with broken windows and leaking roofs, about 100 pupils share plastic chairs during lessons. The school has had problems with blocked mobile toilets on its premises for over two years, creating unpleasantness for both pupils and teachers.

The new high school, Eastbank High, started out on a very bad note in the beginning of the year - without a school building, the result of delays by the builders. It now appears that the school will only be ready next year, meanwhile the school is "squating" in different buildings that are a kilometre apart. Teachers have to move from one end of the township to the other during change of periods.

A teacher took us to a classroom where Std 7 pupils were sitting five to a desk, 120 of them in the room. About 80 percent of them didn't have any textbooks. The classroom was without windows, had dirty walls and the roof was ripped apart at one end of the rplight of the black pupils and their quest for

Bookings for the Alexandra education tour can be made at Idasa offices at 39 Honey Street, Berea (Tel (011) 484-3694/7) or The Weekly Mail (Tel (011) 331-3321) □

Patrick Banda
Regional Co-ordinator

Learning to be self-critical in Germany

At our very first meeting with our hosts, I was struck by the almost obsessive concern of the German federal government with the need for political education.

I suppose it does make sense when one remembers that Nazism was able to take root precisely because of the lack of political education amongst Germans at the time. Yet, the insistence of the government that its constituency must be kept informed of political issues and developments was a rather mind-boggling and new concept for me.

Our meetings with the Deutsche Industrie und Handelstag (DIH) and the Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI) dealt with the issue which seems to permeate all of German society - the free-market social economy. In the meeting with the BDI it became clear that the West was simply transplanting its systems into the five new states of the old GDR.

This was somewhat disappointing since there seemed to be no regard for what the new states actually wanted. Also, there seemed to be no systematic way of analysing and determining a development policy for the new states. This contradicts what I had learnt about the German systems - efficient, systematic and organised!

In Germany things are either white or they are black - there is no grey. You are either within the system or you are outside of it; you cannot be in-between. The constitution provides for strict regulation at all levels: from federal to municipal government, edu-

The Friedrich Naumann Stiftung recently hosted an Idasa group in Germany. VINCENT WILLIAMS records a few impressions of the visit

cation, finance and so on. However hard I probed, I could not find a single flaw in the system. Everything seemed so perfect!

Clearly, the Germans want to avoid a recurrence of their past and they are desperately searching for ways of doing so. However, it appears as if they have already made some mistakes with the process of unification.

My concern was that there seems to be too much optimism; almost to the extent that potential problems are being ignored. Everyone is aware that the process of transition in the ex-GDR will not be easy, but the absolute faith in the ability of the German system concerns one.

We met with two East German political personalities who were both clearly aware that there were problems in the GDR and that something needed to be done, but this was superseded by their sense of loyalty to their country. The lesson to be learnt here is the need to be self-critical; critical of our own personal beliefs and the systems which we advocate as an answer to the problems of our country. □

Vincent Williams is a regional co-ordinator of Idasa in the Western Cape.