

Slabbert, IDASA and the DP

WHITE opposition politics in the parliamentary system, and parliamentary politics generally, finds itself at a critical stage.

The rightwing is running into the predictable consequences of its unrealistic politics at local government level. The so-called liberal opposition is re-grouping and re-assessing strategies and tactics and the ruling party is locked in a crisis of succession that reflects deeper underlying tension as to new initiatives and policy shifts to get out of its own created constitutional cul de sac.

The new Democratic Party has asked four people to act as specialist advisors in helping it to devise strategy and policy: As I see it my role as specialist advisor is to concentrate on the link between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary policies, to explore how dialogue in this area can be promoted and how the struggle for a non-racial democracy can be broadened.

Obviously the Democratic Party is under no obligation to accept the advice of its experts nor are they bound by the policy positions of the party. They do not hold elected positions nor do they have any specific mandate from the party other than the request of the leadership to give advice from time to time on specific issues.

IDASA is in no way party politically compromised by my advisory role to the Democratic Party, but to the extent that I will concentrate on the issues spelt out above, I will be promoting also those ideals for which IDASA stands. Whether IDASA becomes involved in any efforts to promote dialogue and contact between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary organisations is entirely in its own and the hands of such organisation.

F. van Zyl Slabbert
IDASA Director of Policy and Planning



DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT

Mtonga murder: judge slates police abuse of power

CISKEIAN security policemen had abused their powers to such an extent that people regarded them as enemies of the community.

This devastating commentary on the actions of security policemen was delivered earlier this month by Ciskei's chief judge, Mr Justice Pickard, when he sentenced six security policemen who were connected to the death of IDASA's co-director in the Border area, Eric Mntonga, to a total of 31 years' imprisonment.

The judge again remarked on the fact that the Mntonga case would never have come to court if IDASA had not intervened. A Ciskei inquest originally found that Mr Mntonga was killed by "persons unknown". Towards the end of last year, however, IDASA's Executive Director, Dr Alex Boraine, conveyed details of the murder and names of suspects to President Lennox Sebe and charges were brought against six security policemen, including two generals.

The judge said one of the generals (both were convicted of defeating the ends of justice) was more keen to know who Dr Boraine's informant was than starting with the investigation. This policeman, Major-General Witness Ngwanya, had in fact known of Mr Mntonga's death since the day after the event, and the state had proved beyond reasonable doubt that he had instructed the other policemen to keep quiet.

Mr Mntonga was tortured and died at the Mdantsane security police offices in Ciskei on July 24, 1987. His body was dumped on a deserted road near Zwelitsha in Ciskei. In his judgement, Mr Justice Pickard said Mr Mntonga had been subjected to "extreme trauma" over a long period and that he was "killed slowly". He also suffered fear and degradation at the hands of the police.

Commenting on the conduct of the security policemen, the judge said the police, who were called upon to protect society, enjoyed many privileges as they were protected by the law. Security policemen, he said, were more privileged than other policemen in that they had a right to detain people without trial and could not be over-ruled by the courts. They therefore had a higher responsibility than other police branches.

The court had noticed that soldiers and police abused their powers and society could not allow that to continue, said Mr Justice Pickard. The security forces should adhere to the requirements and aspirations of society and, if they stepped out of line, "they should be put back quickly".

The judge emphasised that assaults, let alone killing, during interrogation could not be tolerated.

Visit to Soviet Union planned for April

FOLLOWING a visit by Alex and Jenny Boraine to Moscow in July 1988, a tentative invitation was extended to IDASA to send a small team to the Soviet Union during 1989.

This was discussed by the Soviet/ANC/South African delegations at Leverkusen in West Germany in October last year. Professor Solidovnikov, who was the leader of the Soviet team, has now formally invited IDASA to send such a delegation to the Soviet Union in early April.

The delegation will be led by Dr Van Zyl Slabbert, Director of Research and Planning for IDASA, and other members of the team will include Professor Jakes Gerwel, rector of the University of the Western Cape and member of IDASA's board of trustees, Professor J. Degenaar, professor of political philosophy at the University of Stellenbosch, and Mr Enos Mabuza, Chief Minister of Kangwane.

The visit will last about 10 days and discussions will take place with political, academic and cultural leaders. In addition, it is hoped that the team will visit universities, factories and farming projects.

The delegation hopes to take further the in-depth discussions which were held at the Leverkusen conference regarding the resolution of conflict in Southern Africa.