

Youth to the rescue

SOUTH Africa's leaders of today could do well to heed the deliberations of the Idasa-organised National Youth Conference on Peace and Reconstruction, held at the World Trade Centre near Johannesburg in July. After two days of debate one thing was clear: differences notwithstanding, the youth of this country are willing to listen to each other's often opposing views with patience and tolerance – and they expect their leaders to do the same.

SA youth leaders set tone for reconciliation

BY CHRISTELLE TERREBLANCHE

Idasa's Simon Ntombela, chairperson of the conference steering committee, at the end summed up the mood: "The fact that youth of political parties over such a wide spectrum could agree to disagree was an important step for democracy, the seeds of which will yet germinate."

All was not plain sailing, however. A disappointing note was sounded at the close when a draft resolution on the way forward was not endorsed by all delegations, although an "extremely high degree of consensus was reached in the four commissions".

But a firm commitment to work for an end to the violence in this country, and to talk about ways and means to reach a political dispensation that would satisfy most people, emerged throughout as tangible evidence that this unprecedented occasion could be termed a success, possibly even a breakthrough. Most of the delegations concurred that a firm foundation of agreement on basic principles was secured, with an almost unanimous signal sent out to their seniors to resume talks for an early negotiated settlement and interim structures leading to a constituent assembly.

This empathy would in future ensure that the youth wings of the different parties and organisations could engage in meaningful discussion – even bargaining, as an ANC youth delegate observed – over their differences, whether bilaterally or in multi-party structures.

In one of the opening addresses, Dr Frank Mdlalose of the Inkatha Freedom Party suggested the conference could provide a shortcut to a non-partisan youth forum, and that the



Photo: Eric Miller

Challenge to power

Power lines impose on a poorly developed Khayelitsha. Similarly, a narrow political negotiation process in South Africa is dominating the agenda while the broader issue of national development could hold the key to eliminating conflict. See Special Feature on development, Page 10.

"youth may yet lead us to the *sonum bonum* (maximum good for the maximum number of people)".

It was an upbeat note to start the conference, signalling the high expectations with which the 13 dele-

gations started out, but over the two days youthful energy was sapped, and the almost naive eagerness and openness at the opening made way for some disappointment and a

To Page 6

INSIDE



**SA hospitality
fails refugees**

- PAGE 8 -

**Pressure is on for
affirmative action**

- PAGE 18 -

From Page 1

touch of cynicism among the newly initiated. The ANC delegation emphasised afterwards that "significant polarisation" remains between groups.

The conference was the result of nine months of behind-the-scenes hard work, initiated by Idasa, to organise a platform where the concerns and needs of youth could be aired. National crises, like the failure of Codesa II after the Boipatong massacre and other party-political hitches, frequently threatened to derail the conference, but the delicate deliberations eventually won the commitment of a spectrum of parties more representative than Codesa.

The steering committee comprised the ANC Youth League (ANCYL), the Democratic Party Youth, the National Party's Youth Action and the IFP's Youth Brigade. Other participants were the Intando Yesizwe Party Youth League from KwaNdebele, the Labour Party Youth, the Dikwankwetla Youth League from QwaQwa, the Inyandza Youth Congress of Kangwane, the Ximoko Progressive Party Youth Wing from Gazankulu, the African Democratic Movement's Youth from Ciskei and the United People's Youth League. The PAC and Azapo youth declined invitations to take part. Observers included youth delegates from the Afrikaanse Sakekamer, the Greek Students' Movement, the Junior Rapportryers-beweging, most church organisations and some language and cultural organisations.



ANC Youth League delegates at the conference

Youth to the rescue

The conference will probably be remembered as the first representative political platform attended by the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging Youth as well as the so-called "New Right" Afrikaner Jeugfront (AJF) representing the group that recently broke away from the Conservative Party. "Now the right-wing youth cannot turn their backs on negotiations any more. They have lost their virginity, so to speak," an observer said.

The AWB Youth made it clear from the start that they were attending with the sole purpose of stating their views, and "not to negotiate or even discuss" them. The AJF, on the other hand, took an active part in the discussions and continued to convince the more

sceptical representatives that they are not only willing, but eager, to negotiate their future and, more specifically, their right to self-determination and, eventually, a "volkstaat".

The commissions concentrated on four issues: democracy, peace and reconciliation, education and economic growth and development.

The commission on democracy, facilitated by Professor Willie Esterhuyse, philosophy lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch, reached "strong consensus" on the need to review or restructure Codesa. According to a written report endorsed almost unanimously (the exception being the AWB, who excused themselves for the last plenary session), it was felt that the negotiation process "should be inclusive in order to be democratic". This commission debated the meaning and implications of terms like "volksdemokrasie" and "self-determination", and came to a general agreement that the process towards a democratic dispensation should be "phased", and that it should include, among other features, an interim administrative body which would lead to an elected body with a constitution-making function and certain governing functions.

The most heated debate in this commission arose over the issue of regionalism. The delegates agreed on the need for "some sort of negotiated decentralised structure", and also noted the importance of a constitutionally defined power for regional authorities. However, at the plenary the ANC withdrew its support and registered a dissenting view that these powers, as well as the functions and duties of regional authorities, should be entrenched in a constitution-making body, saying that this point was omitted in the original document. Esterhuyse maintained that it was a difference of interpretation of the agreed-upon report.



Keeping things on track: Paul Graham of Idasa with Sean Cleary, Jabu Maphalala, Prof Willie Esterhuyse and Prof H Vilakazi.



AFRIKANER JEUG FRONT

Two members of the Afrikaner Jeugfront

'If all you can bring into this conference is the national divisions of your elders' cynicism, then you undervalue yourselves'

This difference had an unfortunate turn behind-the-scenes when the NP Youth Action released a press statement – after the commission reportback, but before the plenary discussion and endorsement – commending the ANCYL's purported move in the direction of federalism and remarking on its "hotheaded" attitude in the past. Whether this was in anticipation of the ANCYL backtracking on certain commissions' decisions, or simply an attempt to score political points, the step was criticised by some observers as "pre-emptive". Nevertheless, the ANCYL – who described the press statement as "vicious politicking" – was advised to resolve the issue with the NP through bilateral means, due to lack of time.

At this point it became clear that conference participants had not, as hoped, managed to move beyond the boundaries of current power divisions. Sean Cleary, a trustee of the South African Foundation for Conciliation, attributed this "block-forming" towards the end to the "overwhelming and differing views, not normally part of their own realities" that delegations were confronted with during the discussions.

The commission on peace and reconciliation, which Cleary facilitated, emphasised

the "willingness of all parties to display tolerance for the views of others while presenting, often vigorously, their own perceptions of reality and political beliefs". In this commission, issues like violence, security force actions and private armies caused heated debate among delegates, with observers from various cultural and religious organisations contributing forcefully. Nevertheless, all felt a substantial degree of agreement was achieved – both on the causes of violence and on requirements for ending it. The commission also agreed that peace and reconciliation required "an early, negotiated transition to a broadly representative interim

government of national unity" as well as elections for a constituent assembly.

'The experience amounted to a spiritual liberation that helped to bridge the divide between us and them'

Only the AWB held back, saying it would not bind itself unreservedly to the commission findings, while the AJF added the proviso that none of the findings should be interpreted as restricting their right to press for self-determination in a volkstaat, which they regarded as "essential if future violence was to be avoided".

Also, in the plenary session, the ANC and some other parties objected to the term "private armies", preferring "political armies" which includes the SADF, and wanted the resolution that called for the disbanding of all private armies to be changed to a call for them to be placed under joint control.

Cleary commended this group for emphasising that "leaders of our civil society must assume their responsibility to play a leading role in all areas of socio-economic reconstruction and development". He stressed afterwards: "One of our biggest problems is the fact that our political leaders still seem very jealous of their role and don't want independent outsiders to play a role."

When the conference threatened to fall apart over disagreements and block formation, Cleary intervened: "I don't think you must underestimate how many eyes in South Africa are on you, the youth, during this time when a strong sense reigns that the

To Page 8

ADVERTISE IN DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

and reach 11 000 readers nationwide

RATES:

- Loose insertions (single A4 sheets only)
R250 per 1000
- Full page R1 800 ■ Half page R1 000
- R30 per column-cm: 2 columns x 10cm...R600
1 column x 10cm...R300 (column width = 6 cm)

*Only black and white adverts available.
Book for next issue by October 5*

Contact Ronel Scheffer at 021-473127 to place ads.

Youth to the rescue

From Page 7

country is sliding into an abyss, locked into positions we cannot escape.

"There is hope that the youth will find the courage to reach across the divide and find the vision to escape the past. If all you can do is to bring into this conference the national divisions of your elders' cynicism, then you undervalue yourselves".

A substantial degree of agreement was also reached by the commission on economic growth and development, led by Professor H W Vilakazi of the University of Zululand, although the debates on nationalisation and sanctions revealed deep rifts between parties.

Where there was disagreement was on the appropriate policy mechanisms, particularly policy on job creation. Tension also emerged over the effect of sanctions and mass action on the economy, with some delegates recording unconditional opposition, while the ANC and some other parties stressed that it was impossible to separate economics and politics and that mass action and sanctions should be seen in the broader context of the liberation struggle.

The AJF, for its part, stated: "Mass action, sanctions and the like harms the economy, but is a legitimate and democratic right of oppressed people to reach their political goals, although we do not recognise this method as the correct way in the present situation which is one of seeking consensus through negotiations".

Most observers were optimistic throughout the conference - a group of ANCYL delegates stated that the experience amounted to a "spiritual liberation" that helped to bridge the divide between "us and them".

Others noted that the conference might have happened too late. In the closing session the national steering committee moved a proposal that the committee continues to investigate the advisability or possibility of setting up a broad National Youth Forum for youth to address its concerns. The ANC and a few others opposed this on the grounds that the committee was not representative enough and, specifically, because deep divisions still need to be bridged before it could commit itself to a binding structure. After a proposal from the DP the delegates decided to support the proposal to continue without the ANCYL, but to try to persuade it to return to the forum.

Christelle Terreblanche is a journalist based at *Vrye Weekblad*

SA hospitality fails refugees

The human rights of tens of thousands of people are trampled on by South African legislation relating to aliens and the government's lack of policy on refugees. SELLO RAMASALA sketches the dimensions of the problem.

Over 60 000 people were deported from South Africa in 1991 - 75 per cent of them Mozambicans. Their plight is the result of the absence of any government policy on refugees - the term "refugee" is not officially recognised - and of the draconian Aliens Control Act of 1991.

The act regulates the admission of aliens into South Africa, their status and their departure, and also immigration into the country. It gives immigration officers the power to detain and summarily repatriate any person deemed an illegal immigrant.

These are people who are not South African citizens who enter the country at any place other than a port of entry, railway station, border post, airport, or any place specified by the minister where an immigration officer is stationed.

They also include people who do not abide by the conditions attached by an immigration officer to a temporary residence permit. The granting of this temporary permission usually requires payment of a deposit, the amount of which is in the discretion of the immigration officer, theoretically guided by the amount of the return fare to the relevant person's country of origin. A person who breaches any condition of such a provisional stay forfeits this deposit to the state.

The act provides that any person who has been declared a prohibited immigrant shall be informed by the immigration officer of his or her right to make representations to the minister for a review of the declaration. Statistics are not kept in this regard but officials at the Home Affairs Department concede that not a single review occurred in 1991.

This power of review - properly the province of a court - may be delegated by the minister to lesser officials, a situation susceptible to corruption. In addition, representations have to be made within three

days of the declaration, and immediately in the case of persons who arrive by ship. This clearly does not afford the designated prohibited immigrant a fair chance of an adequate review.

There is no provision for legal representation for persons declared prohibited immigrants and all their representations have to be made in writing. Finally, they have the right only to request a review.

While permits for temporary residence are issued by immigration officers, permits for permanent residence are granted by the Immigrants' Selection Board, whose members are appointed by the minister. Either of the two residence permits, permanent or temporary, may be cancelled by the minister. The act makes no provision for appeal against such a cancellation.

Apart from summary repatriation, aliens without the requisite permits suffer other limitations on their rights. They may not be employed, instructed, trained, licensed or authorised to conduct business or carry out any profession or occupation; they may not enter into an agreement or co-operate with anyone in business; they may not be harboured nor may they buy immovable property anywhere in the country.

The Aliens Control Act repealed the Aliens Act of 1937 and the Admission of Persons to the Republic Regulation Act of 1972. The former forbade the Immigrants Selection Board to grant permanent residence to a person who could not within a reasonable period after entry assimilate with the European inhabitants of the Republic. The latter declared as prohibited immigrants persons unable by reason of deficient education to read and write any European language.

Although the statute book is now purged of such provisions, the hearts and minds of immigration officers and those who constitute selection boards cannot be changed by