



Nelson Mandela lends an attentive ear to Jacob Zuma who was later elected deputy secretary general.

# MAKE PEACE!

ANC militants chose moderates for their new top team. As a result the prospects for an end to violence and democracy are far brighter.

**T**HE African National Congress must be taken much more seriously after its Durban conference. That comes through loud and clear after the week-long deliberations.

It means yet another course-correction by the white-dominated establishment of South Africa, and the electronic media which primarily influence it. In years past, the establishment has had to adjust its thinking about the ANC many times. Past derision is becoming current respect.

Self-congratulatory assertions in Nationalist newspapers that F.W. de Klerk's team is the only competent player on the political scene will have to be re-thought. The ideology of indispensability which has been growing under De Klerk takes a knock. And the unctuous lectures delivered to the ANC by newspapers over how it should be playing to the rules of the game will have to be curtailed.

The ANC has squared up, with competence and realism, to the crucial business of negotiating a new South Africa with the government. It has held a remarkable exercise in grass-roots democracy, elected an able top team and

by  
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survived holding a conference under the very nose of rival Inkatha.

Even the downside factors, such as over-secret discussions and the stultifying alliance with a rather toothless Communist Party, did not seriously detract from the success. But both will have to be attended to if the ANC wishes to offer itself in elections as a potential government. It will simply be impossible to be coy about admitting to membership of the CP. And if the ANC is to be the

party offering Democracy with a capital D, it will have to convince voters that this applies not only in its own councils, but in the reporting thereof.

Peace, ironically, seems closer now in spite of the continuing violence in South Africa.

Although the ANC conference was a militant mass occasion, with plenty of sabre-rattling directed at the government, it undoubtedly nudged the negotiation process ahead. There was a healthy mix of radicalism and realism, with the delegates possibly more militant than their chosen leaders.

The ANC emerged with a newly-elected leadership widely recognised in South Africa as strong. If you doubt this, just place the following against one another in national negotiation teams: De Klerk, Gerrit Viljoen, Pik Botha, Stoffel van der Merwe, Roelf Meyer; and, on the other side of the table,



# Something quite new for the social face of Durban

Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Cyril Ramaphosa, Chris Hani and Thabo Mbeki.

Quite apart from the question of negotiating skills, it is difficult to forget that the former have enjoyed years of cosseted white rule; the latter have endured ennobling hardship, yet are rational and not bitter. And they are new faces. The chances are that, given real access to the media for a change, they will bowl many people over.

I found it a conference to remember, an occasion that would not have been possible a mere year or two ago. It plastered something quite new over the face of Durban.

Consider the incongruity: Soviet and PLO officials rubbing shoulders in hotels with kugels dolled up for the "July". The culture mix was mind-boggling.

A city which bore the brunt of ANC guerilla attacks in the 1980s acted host to the very forces it had grown to fear and hate: guerillas who now seek peace — but who threaten to go to war again if negotiations falter.

A conference "first" was the extensive voting, which was for the ANC office-bearers. For many Africans present, this was the only meaningful vote exercised in their lives; and they queued up at the booths, taking this business very seriously. I saw them in long queues, including grave-faced men and women in their seventies or older, doing what had been denied them by the white government all their lives. Before long, maybe, they will be voting for a new government, along with their currently voteless president, Nelson Mandela.

The conference was a truly non-racial event. Though Africans were dominant, I gather other races contributed extensively and distinctively to discussions — yet not self-consciously. Ethnic and cultural differences were there, but — from accounts — these were unifying and not divisive factors. "Klein" Jannie Momberg, son of the Simonstown MP, looked as much at home as the rest of the Stellenbosch ANC who arrived by Chilwan's bus at the University of Durban-Westville.

Yet, behind the pioneering surface events of the conference lay a sense of urgency among the leadership. Contrary

to suggestions in some quarters, it seems that the ANC leaders want to begin substantive talks with the government as soon as possible — certainly before the momentum of their march from exile to legality flags.

The top leadership have every reason to get talks going with De Klerk before they pass physically from the scene. Obstacles exist, but if De Klerk really does want to get talks under way promptly, they can surely be overcome, or reduced.

The ANC's task in this its first major conference inside the country since its 1960 banning, was a difficult one.

It had to begin the process of transforming itself from being an underground guerilla force into a legal, open political movement or party. Yet it had, for all intents and purposes, given up one card it had held since 1961: armed struggle. And it was losing another card. It knew international sanctions against Pretoria were eroding, so it took due

account of this by, in effect, accepting a phased withdrawal of sanctions depending on progress in South Africa. And its finances must be a worry — particularly in view of the drying up of foreign funds for anti-apartheid causes.

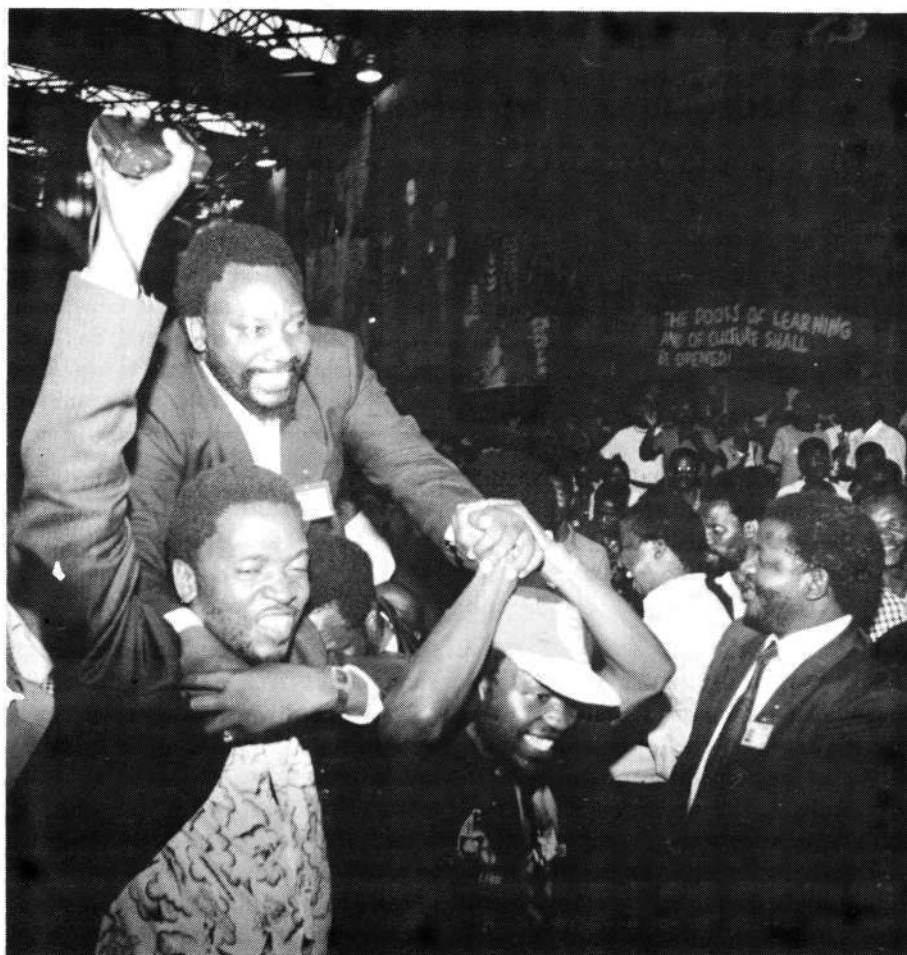
Moreover, it had the paradox of an aged leadership and radical youthful supporters. I heard one youth on going to the voting booth: "One man, one vote, but for the same old team." Yet the sheer all-round respect for the elderly leaders won the day.

But surely the degree of secrecy about the conference proceedings was unnecessary. One delegate, Albie Sachs, even expressed disappointment that the media was not present to hear the high level of debate.

Yet, in spite of its problems and the ideological "baggage" it carries, the ANC broke new ground and became an established part of the legal political scene as never before.

One illustration of the changed climate:

In November, 1985, as Editor of the Cape Times newspaper, I interviewed ANC exile leader Oliver Tambo in London and published a full-page



Cyril Ramaphosa's moment of triumph. He is the new secretary general.





Chris Hani has a word of advice for Winnie Mandela

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account of his remarks. I was arrested by the security police in my office and charged in court for quoting a person silenced by official decree. Last week the selfsame Tambo — though handicapped by a stroke — walked and talked freely in Durban.

A tapestry of formerly forbidden political faces and events displayed in South Africans' living rooms, as a matter of routine reporting, by government-controlled TV and radio services apparently out to be less biased than in the past. Till recently, the same services had demonized the ANC. The course-correction was remarkable — and encouraging for the future.

So much for the conference.

Where do we stand as a nation? What are the prospects for peace and democracy? They are far better. The decks have been cleared for negotiations that lie ahead. A flagging economy sends urgent signals to all concerned to reach agreement quickly, and get on with the task of reconstruction.

One point about negotiations. From the applause and general responses at the conference, the delegates were more radical and militant than the top leaders chosen. The fact of a hawkish following and a dovish top leadership might

produce a dynamic combination which will lead to greater realism on the part of the De Klerk government in dealing with the ANC.

Mandela, who has discretionary powers and enough esteem to carry his followers into historic agreements with De Klerk when he wishes, can threaten, when in an awkward spot, to refer matters back to his more militant movement. De Klerk would know what THAT means. It could concentrate his mind, and make him continue to value Mandela's "moderation". This could strengthen the cement binding the two together; and that cement is arguably one thing which stands between South Africa and chaos.

The major and immediate obstacle to constitutional progress remains the violence in black townships as politically-emergent groups fight for turf. The ANC accuses the government and police of fomenting violence, and not doing enough to stop it. This the government denies. Whatever the truth (and I, for one, cannot believe that military destabilizers can be transported to angel status overnight), the violence must be reduced appreciably before constructive talks get under way.

Nothing that happened in Durban changes that reality. ●

## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE WHITE LIBERALS?

LOOKING around the guests and other observers at the ANC's national conference in Durban, I was struck by how few white liberals there were. Especially English-speaking liberals.

Official invitations were sparse, I know, and perhaps English-speaking liberals are too genteel just to turn up and take pot luck the way many folk did. Even so, their numbers were so meagre as to provide an index of a troubling feature of our political life — the failure of the liberals, now that apartheid is on its way out, to come forward and embrace its alternative.

Helen Suzman was there briefly and so was Zac de Beer. They were the only "old Progs" who formed the Progressive Party in 1960. I saw no members of Alan Paton's old Liberal Party. By contrast there were a number of what might be called Afrikaner dissidents: Jannie Momberg, Pierre Cronje, Jan van Eck, Braam Viljoen (twin brother of the former Defence Force chief, Constand Viljoen), even UNISA's indefatigable Willem Kleynhans.

Foreign visitors outnumbered the local liberals.

It is a phenomenon I first noticed during the great black uprising of the mid-1980s, long before F.W. de Klerk and his *Pretoriastroika*, this reticence on the part of white liberals as the prospect of majority rule began to loom before them as something that might actually happen.

As the townships raged and P.W. Botha intensified the state of emergency, the liberal reaction became increasingly ambiguous: while they disapproved of

*Their absence  
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