

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

IDASA's goals are:

- 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.

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EDITORIAL

The best and worst of times

"The best of times, the worst of times," - so it seems in South Africa at the moment. Violence rages almost out of control in Natal, signs of it flash in other parts of the country. Extravagant, irreconcilable demands are made on the polar opposites of the political spectrum; those who drive the centre towards "talks about talks about talks" get bogged down in position bargaining and internal constituency urgencies, and so on. And yet, come to think of it, we are complaining about more interesting, relevant things now than we did last year this time.

Then PW Botha ruled and "the total onslaught" was still in place. Now our pain and trauma can be related to the birth of a "new South Africa". All the major factors that shape our future are geared towards a positive outcome: the international community wants negotiations to succeed; the region desperately needs it, and domestically, despite the distressing signs of conflict and tension, we find the major players still committed to avoiding catastrophe and finding a workable consensus for transition away from domination towards democracy.

We must not lose the long view now. What makes our dilemma compelling is not the prospect of failure - societal skeletons lie strewn around us - it is the tantalising possibility of success. The consequences of us "making it" will reverberate through our continent and around the world. Those of us who are in a position to help dare not flag now.

We must point out that harbouring unrealistic euphoric expectations complicates the matter. Too many people treat the Mandela-De Klerk saga like a

TV soap-opera - two fireside chats and a handshake and away we go. They epitomise the history of struggle for liberation and political domination - the one intimately intertwined with the other. But they also give hope of resolving the conflictual dynamics of that history in shaping a common future.

The experience of oppression and struggle and the comforts and insulation of domination do not evaporate overnight. We are beginning to move from structural inequality and discrimination towards liberalisation and democratisation. Only beginning. It is going to be a painful learning process for all concerned - and we have no option but to go through it.

Idasa as well. We played an important role in preparing the climate for liberalisation, that is, getting ostensibly irreconcilable and hostile individuals/organisations to talk to one another. Now we have to anticipate the problems of democratisation, in other words, how do competitive political organisations with differing agendas and charters shake out constituency-wise and resolve their differences democratically rather than through protest, intimidation and violence.

Idasa must seek to provide a forum for such resolution without becoming partisan and part of the problem. This does not mean that we are above the battle or apolitical. Our commitment to our core values, stated repeatedly in this publication, remains the same. But this commitment must now be tested and reflected in anticipation of our country's shift from the "normalisation" of politics to democratisation.

Van Zyl Slabbert
Director Policy and Planning

JA-NEE

Cold comfort

TIMES are hard for Idasa organisers. A rushed written report from one of us, about a particularly gremlin-fraught township tour (the bus didn't pitch, catering was tricky, tempers were frayed) concluded with the observation: "I put the perishable staff in the fridge."

-Better to be out to lunch?

It's a start

WOMEN are not exactly overwhelmed with gratitude at the inclusion of Cheryl Carolus and Ruth Mompati in the ANC delegation for talks about talks with the NP government. But it's a start.

- Where are your token women, FW?

Champagne heir

A PROMINENT Cape Town gynaecologist and his wife, sparkling after summer luncheon on a friend's Boland estate, stood next to their gleaming white Mercedes Benz out-

side Paarl to wave at the cavalcade carrying Nelson Mandela to freedom. One of a group of farm workers standing nearby waved a fist at the gynae and said: "Amandla, baas!"

- Merce you think.

Gravy-training?

WAS IT coincidence that a week before Education and Culture minister Piet Clase announced that white schools could be opened to accommodate pupils of all races, the Teachers Federal Council left on a trip for the United States and Europe to look at the privatisation of schools?

-A ministerial sillybus?