



VOOING THEM...a taste of things to come at the Goodwood showgrounds in the Cape where the NP recently hosted a family day for voters.

Campaign battles begin

Every trick in book awaits confused voters

By BARRY STREEK

RAZZMATAZ, mass rallies, slogans, posters and banners, 'sweeties' and plain lies will dominate South Africa's first real elections. On the surface.

Undue pressure, whether in the form of straight intimidation, 'mass' mobilisation or breaking up meetings, is also a likely feature of these elections, unless by some miracle the various parties can agree on the rules and monitoring...and then get their supporters to abide by them.

The ANC and the NP will build their campaigns around their most marketable assets; their leaders. Every opinion poll and all the evidence shows that Nelson Mandela and F W de Klerk are far more popular than their organisations.

This will result in highly personalised campaign strategies by two of the major parties. South

Africans can expect a heavy dose of Mandela and De Klerk photographs on posters, advertisements and pamphlets.

The other political parties will also use their leadership figures. Mangosuthu Buthelezi of the Inkatha Freedom Party, Clarence Makwetu of the PAC, Zach de Beer of the Democratic Party and Andries Treurnicht of the Conservative Party all have their assets as political leaders, but they do not have the same charismatic appeal as a Mandela or a De Klerk.

The IFP will undoubtedly attempt to use Buthelezi in the same way, particularly because the KwaZulu Chief Minister so dominates his organisation, but his poor television image and confusing statements will not make him a vote-

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Campaign battle

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winning personality except among IFP loyalists.

And votes cast in the ballot box, not the glamour or profile, are what count in elections, as indeed Idasa's executive director, Alex Boraine, and its policy director, Van Zyl Slabbert, learnt very quickly when they entered active politics in the 1974 elections and the subsequent Pinelands by-election.

The voters, election workers throughout the world soon discover, are ordinary people who do not in general go to public meetings or join parties or attend committee meetings. To win them over, parties need the unsung heroes and heroines of any successful campaign: the canvasser. The person who night after night goes and knocks on doors to canvass support and win votes.

The National Party used to be very good at this, developing in many constituencies a virtual cell system to keep constant tabs on voters. In a constituency like Piketberg on the West Coast, more than half the voters were actually signed up members of the party.

This machine created an impenetrable wall in most white areas, until the Conservative Party split

divided it and its arrogance of power alienated it from its support base. The DP were also good at canvassing in their strongholds.

But those committed DP supporters who actually walked the streets in safe Nationalist seats trying to persuade ordinary (white) people to accept what the NP now takes to be self-evident know what elections

What the polls foretell

Most polls predict an ANC victory in a democratic election. The organisation itself claims that independent surveys and its own research give it at least 53 percent of the vote. A range of pollsters, including the HSRC, predict the following:

- National Party 20-21%
- IFP 4,5-5% (HSRC says 10%)
- PAC 5%
- DP 3-5%
- Azapo 1%

are all about. It takes real commitment to knock on doors on a cold, wet night and face apathy, antagonism and abuse.

That, however, is how elections are won, whatever the media and the experts might say. Campaign strategies, charismatic leaders, image, money and resources all count, but in the end the voters do the voting.



THE PROTEST...mass rallies will dominate on the surface.

In South Africa's first democratic elections, the credibility and image of political parties may count more than in later elections because this time the majority of the people will be voting for the first time and the issues will be more important than day-to-day concerns, but even then the voters will still ultimately count.

So, the party that can best combine its political message and campaign strategies with effective grassroots structures throughout the country should win.

And at this early stage, the ANC has, on paper, a head start. It has announced plans to transform its 1 400 branches and 900 000 members into an election team of 14 regions, 94 sub-regions and 180 000 election workers and canvassers, roughly one worker for 100 voters. It also has an election budget of R180 million.

It is estimated that South Africans will have 6 000 to 9 000 polling stations with between 2 000 and 4 500 voters each. If, as has been proposed, voting is held over five days, the nationally-based parties will have to organise party support operations at every one of those polling stations.

That operation would stretch the resources of any political party and the ANC is the only party to have revealed national cam-



THE REAL THING...votes cast are what count in elections.

campaign plans. The NP and the DP have also developed national plans and more modest fundraising targets – the DP, for instance, has set a target of R25/R30 million – but their campaign plans are not as (publicly) developed as the ANC's.

The IFP, PAC and CP have yet to reveal much about their election strategies, but unless the Cosag grouping can be transformed into an election alliance, the CP cannot hope for anything but a miniscule role if it is only going to campaign among rightwing whites.

Any party, however, that is serious about the election will have to campaign nationally if it wants to feature in the new democratic parliament, particularly if a minimum 5 percent threshold is laid down for representation in an interim multi-party cabinet.

With some 55 percent of the estimated 21 million voters located in three predominantly rural regions – Border/Ciskei/Transkei, Natal/KwaZulu and Northern Tansvaal – those grassroots structures throughout the country are going to be vital for any serious political party.

'On paper, the ANC has a head start at this stage'

Another logistical nightmare for the somewhat staid party structures and their relatively old leadership is that, according to Development Bank figures, half the voters will be under the age of 30 and half the African voters will be between 18 and 25.

Within those realities, the ANC will market its role as the leader of the liberation struggle and the people's party, the NP will stress its ability to give people security and stability, the PAC will emphasise black solidarity against white economic power, the DP will promote its commitment to human rights and democracy as well as its clean image, the IFP will sell itself as a moderate and national grouping and the CP will tell whites that they have been sold-out and should fight for their rights.

The ordinary voter may well be confused by all this and the effective canvassing machines will try to resolve their confusion by promoting their parties.

Don't be surprised however, if the NP does not yet resort to 'sweeties', its time honoured practice of announcing good news, like tax cuts and civil service salary increases, shortly before the polling date – unless the interim government can eliminate the use of this shameful tactic to win votes...

Barry Streek is on the political staff of the Cape Times.

From excitement to optimism... to gloom

Democracy in Action asked a few 'ordinary people' how they felt about the forthcoming general election. Here's what they had to say...

KHAYELITSHA

MR XX is a trader in Khayelitsha who is not sure exactly what the elections might bring, but is nevertheless keen for the day when he can cast his vote.

'Most people are not scared of what election day might bring, they are excited and they will vote. I can't be sure what will happen after elections, we don't really know what those people (whites who currently hold power) will do.'

What does he think must change?

'We want apartheid to go, they say it's been scrapped already, but it continues. Then we want to have the same amount of wealth as the whites – without money you can do nothing.'

'Sometimes when you go to court and listen to the cases, you see how apartheid is still there. The white guys get a chance, they're let out on small bail amounts, but the black guys get given large amounts which they know we can't pay or they're held in custody.'

'If a white wants to buy a firearm, then even if he is a young guy, he will get it. Even if I apply for a licence then I won't get one.'

Mr XX is not particularly optimistic about what will happen after the elections.

'I doubt that things can be normal; we are too mixed. There are some white people who don't hate us, they like us, but others hate too much. I don't trust them.'

'Only God can change things, I don't know what we can do.'

'If I come from East London I can't get a job in Cape Town, but a white guy who comes from overseas gets a job and a house. They won't trust me and I'm from just around the corner, but they will give jobs to white guys.'

RONDEBOSCH

A determined optimist is how Joan Smith describes herself in the run-up to the elections. She hopes the imminent poll will bring about a government of national unity, and anticipates that it will be dominated by the

ANC – 'by sheer force of numbers'.

Firmly positive about the future, she says: 'I am the eternal optimist. I think it will work, we will have to make it work. You have to believe that. And I think the world wants it to work as much as we do.'

Smith – not her real name, she was not keen to be identified – recently spent an afternoon observing parliament, an experience that left her sobered, even her optimism tempered.

'I was disgusted watching these rude, uncouth people at work.' She suggests future voters should all be given the opportunity to visit parliament. 'They should see how parliament really works, and where the people they are voting for will be going and what they will be doing.'

She also thinks prospective candidates should undertake extensive training programmes, including visits to countries 'where parliaments and democracy are established and really work'.

She cautioned that there exists a danger that the demands and expectations of the impoverished majority cannot be met. 'People may become disillusioned if their daily lives don't improve. There could be problems in that sphere.'

Also worrying to her is the escalating violence in the country, which she attributes to groups who don't want to see a negotiated settlement succeed. She believes there is a 'sinister element of some kind' at work.

For elections to succeed, she believes there is a need for voter education and training, and welcomes initiatives to establish a national election monitoring organisation.

'It is inevitable that there will be malpractices of some kind. We don't have a history of democracy in this country. It gives me hope to think there could be a group of eminent South Africans monitoring the process.'

WALMER ESTATE

This is how a forty-something 'coloured' receptionist feels about the forthcoming poll:

'I'm not sure that I will vote in the coming