

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

Breaking down walls to build bridges

RECENT successful Namibian elections and the remarkably reasonable start to the debate in the territory's Constituent Assembly focuses once again on the necessity of negotiation politics for a successful resolution of South Africa's internal conflict. While it is conceded that South Africa is very different from Namibia and that there is a lot of hard work ahead before formal negotiations can start, there is nevertheless a growing commitment among many South Africans to move more rapidly than ever before towards the negotiation table.

One of the fundamental problems facing successful negotiations is the difference in perception between the leadership of the black majority on the one hand and the De Klerk-led government on the other. The former is clear that fundamental change is demanded, leading to a new government where the majority of faces in that new government will be black. Insofar as the state is concerned, one cannot escape an uncomfortable feeling that at the end of the day, there is a perception not only within government but in the minds of most whites that while the ugly face of apartheid will disappear white control in some form or another will remain. In other words, there is a yawning chasm which exists between the two major protagonists.

Informal negotiations

Is it possible to narrow the gap between these two poles in order to make formal negotiations a reality, and if so, how? The essential first step is to create a climate of informal negotiations at every level in our society - and here we can learn from events in Europe.

The crumbling of the Berlin Wall, which so long divided East and West, has significance far beyond West and East Germany and even Europe. In many ways South Africa is a divided society and whatever else is true, the reunification in spirit which is

beginning to take place in Germany is a necessary prerequisite before successful negotiations can take place. We too in South Africa have built not one wall but many walls which have successfully divided one group from another in every walk of life. These walls will have to come down.

Ordinary people

In Berlin *ordinary people* rejoiced and joined hands and sought to break down not only the physical wall but the barriers which have existed for so long. It was one of those unusual, totally electrifying moments when *ordinary people* take over and all the professionals from politicians to border guards quietly stand aside and get out of the way. If we are to have a similar breaking down of walls both actual and imagined, then the *ordinary* South African, black and white, must play a major role. Fortunately there are already signs of spontaneous action from people who for so long have remained in the closet of their own prejudice, confusion and weakness. Those who were fortunate enough to participate in the recent marches in the major centres and in many small country towns of South Africa, marvelled at the fact that so many people who stood watching later joined in the marches and experienced a sense of participation which in itself is liberating. In many small communities there are growing numbers of ordinary South Africans who are determined no longer to wait for government decisions, for Acts of Parliament, but are prepared to begin to break down the walls which divide their own particular part of the South African society.

Reconciliation

To change the metaphor, in the pre-negotiation era in which we are living, there is a desperate need for bridge-building to take place at every possible level. One of the exciting new factors in our society is the discernible desire of many white South Afri-

JA-NEE

All things to all people

Upholding its fine record of giving all sides of the story regardless of the consequences, the Sunday Times recently printed a rather offensive set of fantasies on the world's most famous prisoner - concocted by a British columnist appropriately named Peter Simple.

Speculating elaborately about the reasons why Nelson Mandela should be re-

sisting release from his "cosy court" at Victor Verster prison, Mr Simple concludes that to Mr Mandela this setting was preferable to facing "the shrill screaming of Archbishop Tutu" or "the tasteless antics of Winnie Mandela and her football team" outside prison.

-Nice constructive stuff that will keep some customers happy no doubt.

No room for race

The term "non-racial" clearly means different things to different people. Take for instance the response of a Boland hotel re-

ceptionist when asked if her hotel was non-racial. "Yes, lady," came the friendly reply, "we are . . . we don't take blacks and coloureds."

-Reserved for a non-race, perhaps?

Gierige gode

Xau!, die San-ster van The Gods Must Be Crazy I en II, is gesien by die stembus in Namibia, geklee in 'n Swapo T-hempie. Hy het aan 'n joernalis vertel dat sy bydrae tot die twee films hom 'n skamele R7 000 in die sak gebring het. En ja, hy voel die filmmakers het hom "verneuk" in die

LETTERS

Address your letters to: The Editor, Democracy in Action, 1 Penzance Road, Mowbray 7700.

Radical mouthpiece shows true colours

YOUR propaganda writers must surely be congratulated for their excellent command of the written word in order to manipulate people's thoughts and thinking.

I refer to the article "A banner is a banner", under your Ja-Nee column which says the following:

"At the recent beach protest in Durban a racist bully assaulted a middle-aged white woman carrying a banner. It said nothing nasty about the AWB, CP or racism. Its simple message was 'Jesus is Alive'. Even more astounding: 'Policemen, ever vigilant in their defence of Christian values, helped the man remove the banner.'"

Analysis proves the following speculative, inaccurate guesswork. Why should the man have been a racist? If he was then he must have been black, or Indian, or maybe the woman was an Italian and the man an Aborigine. (Refer to the Oxford dictionary for a definition of race and racism.)

Granted the banner said nothing about the AWB or the CP, but neither did it say anything about Margaret Thatcher, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Pol Pot, the DP, Idasa or the SACP. Your writer takes the facts and turns them so that it seems that the man who is called a "racist", based on no facts at all, is a racist because he is a member of the CP or the AWB which is based on the surmise that the assaulting bully is a "white" racist attacking a white woman which is impossible and which is in turn based on no fact at all.

How you manage to pervert facts based on total unknowns astounds me. Why you intend to create divisions in a country already divided astounds me. Why you don't rather spend your money and energy on seeking solutions astounds me. Why you don't rather start development activities amongst the "lesser privileged" astounds me. How come you take South Africans for "bloody fools" astounds me.

If Idasa truly stands for democratic alternatives in South Africa I would expect them to be more tolerant and appeasing and rather seek "alternatives" than incite hate and division.

Obviously it is not your policy to publish nameless letters but even if I did give you my name you would not have seen fit to publish this letter for it shows you for what you are.

A change-committed true South African

(Letter shortened)

(The person in question formed part of a right-wing group that interfered with a protest against beach apartheid. In our book that makes him a racist. - Editor)

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cans in particular to find some way of joining in discussion and in debate with their fellow black South Africans. There is room in the creation of a climate of reconciliation for organisations to use their resources, their expertise, their opportunities to build bridges so as to enable people who have been so long divided to come together.

The Paris conference is one example of providing an opportunity for leading South Africans to talk honestly and openly with each other about their aspirations and their fears and hopes for a new South Africa. But clearly this must happen not only at leadership level but at grass roots as well.

Contradictions

Certainly it is the experience of Idasa that the demands for such opportunities are almost impossible to meet. Whilst the facilitating role has produced encouraging results, we must redouble our efforts in this fragile and hazardous pre-negotiation period. Therefore part of the breaking down of walls and the building of bridges must also include the highlighting of those events and practices which maintain our divisions and make the building of bridges difficult. We must identify openly and honestly the contradictions which still exist. It is not being bloody-minded to remind gov-

ernment that every time one person is detained without trial, this inflames a society and prevents reconciliation; that every time a school seeks to be opened to all children irrespective of race but is frustrated by legislation and bureaucracy, it is one further brick in the wall rather than the breaking down of the barrier. To remind government that there are at least 50 statutes which are based on race is not to be cynical or even uncaring about reforms which have already been introduced. It is simply a desire to speed up the process so that genuine formal negotiations can take place sooner rather than later.

There are of course reservations and fears among many who watch the accelerating changes take place, not only in Eastern Europe but in South Africa. Changes which are being welcomed by many cast long shadows in the minds of the fearful. But these are yesterday's people and tomorrow belongs to those who want to see the end of repression, of discrimination and the fundamental denial of basic human rights. Tomorrow belongs to those who are prepared to break down walls and build bridges today.

Alex Boraine
Executive Director

proses.

-Dalk is daar nou 'n tjekkie in die pos vir Swapo.

Praatkoors

Op dieselfde dag dat President F W de Klerk vir die AWB-leier, Eugene Terre'Blanche, te woord staan, sien Mandela 'n pas vrygelate PAC-leier vir 'n paar ure.

- Die droewe en wyse land in perspektief.

Strand toe met julle

Wees nie bevrees nie, die strande is nou oop en Rapport merk op dat Suid-Afrikaners wat

vir soveel jare uiteen gehou is, die somer mekaar op die strande kan begin vind.

- 'n Mens wil nou nie lugkastele op sandkastele begin bou nie, maar alle bietjies help seker.

Superbright

Dr Van Zyl Slabbert - along with other South African luminaries like Ken Owen and Alex Jay - made Style magazine's list of the country's 100 brightest people. How did Idasa's director of policy and planning qualify for this exceptional accolade? Too astute for parliament, said the magazine.

- A minor achievement, some would say.