

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

- 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

New demands, new opportunities

IF ANY doubt existed concerning State President De Klerk's determination to move swiftly away from apartheid towards a new dispensation, the earth-shattering events which took place in the first two weeks of February must certainly have dissolved it.

Mr De Klerk proved himself to be not only a good reformer but also a good politician. What he was actually announcing was the bankruptcy of apartheid and the need to put the clock back some 30 years, if not 42 years, to when the National Party took power. But he did it with such style that he has been, very understandably, hailed as the new saviour of South Africa. There were many of us, myself included, who did not believe that he had either the courage or the vision to deal so decisively with most of the obstacles to genuine negotiation. Therefore let us take nothing away from his quite remarkable shift away from traditional National Party policy.

What he has signalled is essentially that the National Party, unlike in 1948, has now decided that South Africa belongs to all her people, black and white. It follows therefore that apartheid must end and that a new dispensation must be introduced. How can this be achieved? Through negotiation politics. What stands in the way of genuine negotiation? Certainly the international community and in particular those who have opposed apartheid for so long have made that very clear. He in turn has responded by removing most of the major obstacles in the way of negotiation politics. Where he would like to see it end is anyone's guess. But that will slowly emerge when the dust has settled and the first glimpses are seen of what form negotiations are going to take and in particular how one is going to arrive at who should be at the negotiation table.

In the meanwhile one thing is very clear: the new wine which President De Klerk has poured into the vacuum of South African politics is going to bring about far-reaching changes. Therefore we can expect the collapse of many long-revered and established institutions; old leaders will move from the centre and new leaders will emerge to take their place. There will be realignments, new coalitions, fresh ideas because at long last we can begin to ask the fundamental questions and begin the road towards a new democracy. That the road is going to be bumpy no one will want to deny. That it is extremely exciting and full of new opportunity is something all of us must grasp.

Can the events in Eastern Europe be repeated in South Africa? No. The major reason why this is not on the cards is that the security forces are in place and loyal to the National Party and to the state. Thus despite all the announcements and shifts, De Klerk and his government are securely in place and South Africa's journey away from authoritarianism and repression towards a new society will take a very different route from that experienced by most of the countries in Eastern Europe. This in itself will bring its own agenda of problems because expectations are very high following the dramatic unbanning of organisations, release of political prisoners and in particular the release of Mr Nelson Mandela.

Idasa has played a modest role in changing the perception of the government and whites towards the ANC and its central role in any future scheme of things. It is too early to have a clear picture regarding the future role of Idasa. Inevitably, however, its future and its role must be re-evaluated in light of the significant changes which have been in-

JA-NEE

Kom reg, John

Cape Times columnist John Scott, commenting on the ironies in SABC-TV's coverage of Mandela's release, remarked of TV newsreader Marietta Kruger: "Her cleavage showed she has freckles on her chest. You notice things like that at times of high drama."

- Yet another commentator with an eye for the

sexist obscure. Or is Mr Scott suggesting the need for an SABC cover-up?

The perils of nationalism

The Kappie Kommando recently tried to disrupt a memorial service for Emily Hobhouse when members of the crew and cast of the movie, "That Englishwoman", paid tribute to the Boer War heroine at her grave at the Women's Memorial in Bloemfontein. The Kappie Kommando claimed their folk heroes were being used for political gain

and Afrikaner culture eroded.
- Sorry, ladies, the causes of humanity and reconciliation will never be the prerogative of any one nation.

The fickle media

A picture of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, his wife Leah and his advertising agent son Trevor celebrating the release of Nelson Mandela was captioned in the Sunday Times: "Archbishop Desmond Tutu, wife Leah and a friend do the toyi-toyi as they celebrate the news."

- Hope the ad agency is doing better than his anonymous public image suggests.



roduced and the new dynamic which is being experienced.

Suffice it to say that Idasa did not come into being simply in order to bring about the unbanning of the ANC or the release of Mr Mandela. It came into being to focus on a democratic alternative to the present system. The present system still exists and the need for a democratic culture to underpin the moving towards negotiations which could lead to a democratic and non-racial South Africa is something which cannot be exaggerated.

There can be little doubt that there is a strong need for organisations and individuals to keep the focus on the central thrust of democracy, namely a multi-party state, an independent judiciary, a bill of rights, and accountability of those who govern towards those who are governed. In the meanwhile, there is much work to be done in assisting whites in particular to come to terms with the new demands as well as the new opportunities, which await them and all South Africans.

Alex Boraine,
Executive Director

Negotiating differences

THE Johannesburg newspaper City Press comments as follows on recent events:

"They say the genie is out of the bottle in South Africa. There is no turning back now as far as political reform goes.

"We as a nation have to continue changing our ways. The distance is nothing. It is the first step that is difficult.

"It may be that the ANC's Thabo Mbeki is correct. He says in a recently-published book about the ANC: 'The fortunate thing about the length of our struggle is that we are late in coming to our liberation.

"We have had the opportunity to learn from the mistakes and experience of others on the continent who achieved freedom before us. We will benefit from studying where others have tried and failed. We are not going to repeat their mistakes."

The newspaper continues: "The situation in South Africa resembles a stalemate rather than a crisis... But polarisation, is growing and it is trailing a crisis in its wake.

"Yet there are grounds for hoping that South Africans will begin to negotiate their differences peacefully. We are a society in flux. The country has entered a critical stage in its history."

LETTERS

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

The 'second-class' bus

WE GOT on to the "second-class" bus, and started to read the description of Winterveld handed out by Paul Zondo of Idasa. The trip was long. We travelled through central Pretoria, Marabastad, and the white suburb to the north-west of the city that used to be Lady Selborne - once a black freehold township. Once we had driven over the Magaliesburg, along the highway, through Soshanguve and into Bophuthatswana and Mabopane, we turned off the main road towards a horizon where the green and gold of summer acacias and Transvaal grassland was no longer visible. Instead, drab grey-brown hovels huddled interminably.

Paul stopped to show us a creche, one of many local attempts to provide a safe environment for the little children of the slum. Bright-eyed and smiling, the rows of uncomprehending little faces before us recited "Twinkle, twinkle, little star".

After meeting the Sisters of Mercy at the Catholic Clinic, who introduced us to members of the Winterveld Action Committee, we visited another creche. This one was a small, dark room in a hovel off an alley. The children gazed at us in the hot afternoon, and the expression in their eyes stayed with me.

Our last stop was the rubbish dump. Here, a whole community lives and works, collecting bottles, paper and whatever else can be salvaged. We picked our way through the fly-covered terrain, where the stench of rotting matter was overwhelming. Here, hovels were constructed of plastic and whatever other material would provide shelter from the heat, the rain, the dust. I looked down, trying to avoid stepping into the worst of the garbage. The rotting pile at my feet reminded me, painfully, of my own world, as I glimpsed a discarded "BASF Flexydisk" box, and the squashed remains of a packet of "Trim" biscuits.

Lynda Gilfillan, Pretoria

Los die kuns uit!

'N **VERSLAG** van die Konka-vergadering in die Desember uitgawe van Democracy in Action, oopper die saak van mense wat politieke voogde van die kunste wil wees.

Het ons in Suid-Afrika nie al genoeg onder die soort van ding gely nie? Laat die kultuur- en kunsmense bymekaar kom, maar die blatante gebruik van die kunste vir politieke oogmerke gaan mense net weer onnodiglik van die kunste verdryf.

Beswaard, Kaapstad.

Opinions expressed in Democracy in Action are not necessarily those of Idasa.

Double-speak

Is it the same man? Not too long ago acting ANC president Alfred Nzo admitted that Umkhonto we Sizwe was somewhat lacking in capacity. But a few weeks later, on the eve of the NEC three-day meeting, he was reported as saying: "We must now move forward and intensify our all-round offensive against apartheid. For this purpose our glorious people's army must be given all the necessary and possible assistance to enable it to enhance its conduct capacity."

- True to the democratic process, even the acting president is hauled over the coals sometimes!

Some evolution

And now for a completely different perspective on how it all happened. Writing in the Sunday Times, Willem de Klerk, the president's brother, commented (rather proudly):

"It is not a flash from out of a clear blue sky, nor is it an about-turn. What happened on February 2 was an unavoidable consequence of the way policy has always evolved in the National Party."

- Well done, but final extinction is decades overdue.