

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

THE OFFICIAL NEWS BULLETIN OF THE INSTITUTE FOR A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE FOR SOUTH AFRICA

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Why the mission to Dakar?

The answer is twofold. Firstly, our initiative arose out of deep concern for our country which is so hopelessly divided and the victim of escalating violence. At present there exists a stalemate. The state cannot govern without a state of emergency and all the state apparatus which is so visible in the total society, and in the townships in particular. On the other hand, the Black majority cannot overthrow the state by force.

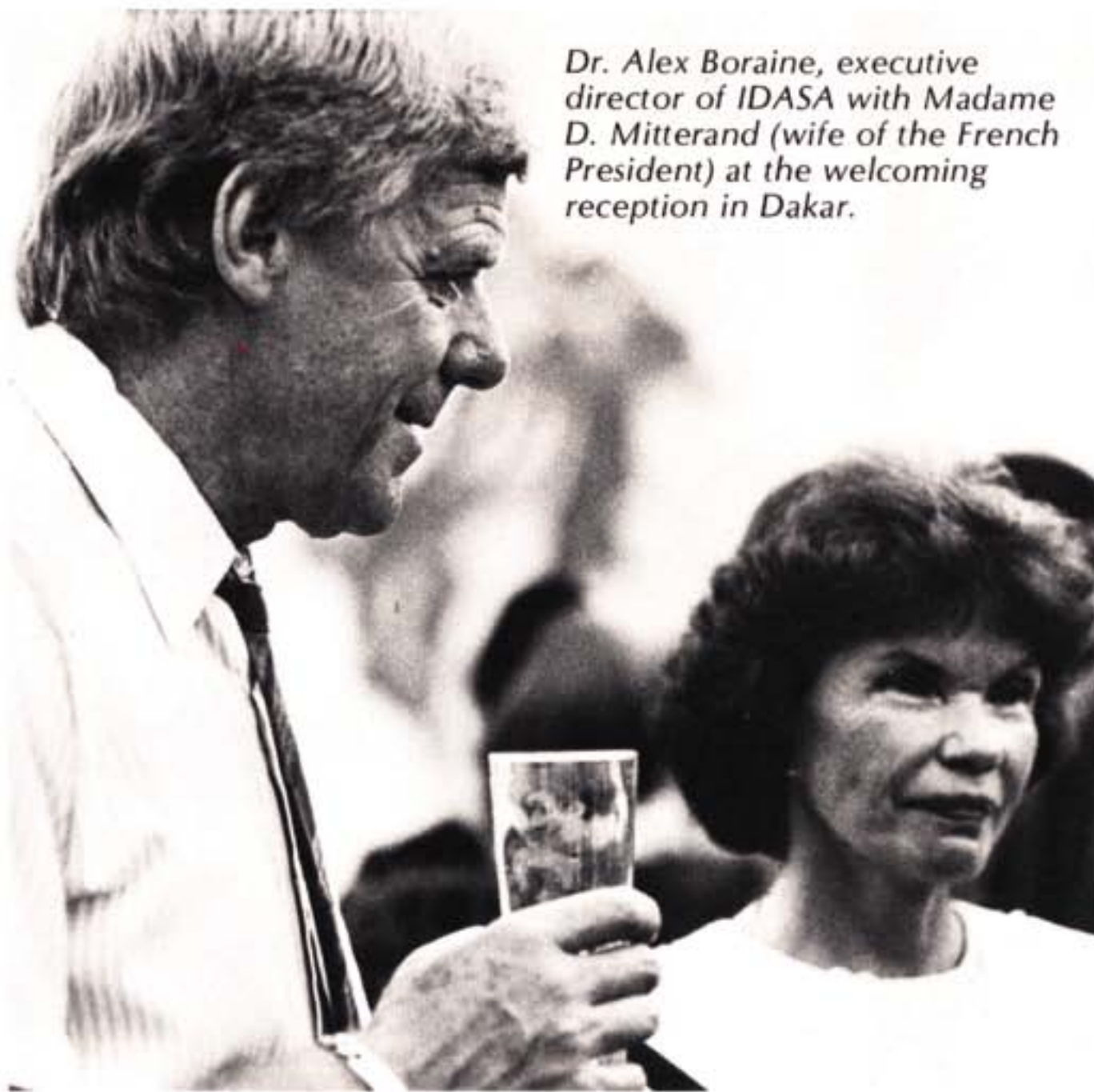
The second reason why we went to Dakar arises from our experience in talking with leaders of the Black community and with organisations in those communities. It is quite clear that the ANC is the largest single political party in South Africa. We are committed to the politics of negotiation and as the national executive of the ANC are forbidden from returning to South Africa, we arranged to meet with them in Senegal.

But Don't You Give the ANC Credibility in Meeting With Them?

We met with them because they *have* credibility! They have been in existence for 75 years; they have missions in thirty-three countries; have met with leaders, foreign secretaries, heads of state in numerous countries, have given evidence before the House of Commons and are generally well known in most parts of the world. Furthermore, they cannot be isolated to Lusaka and London. Their real base is in South Africa, and their support is growing. In other words, we met with them not to give them credibility but because they have credibility.

What Have You Achieved?

We stressed from the outset that we were in no position to negotiate. We have neither the power nor the mandate to do so.



Dr. Alex Boraine, executive director of IDASA with Madame D. Mitterand (wife of the French President) at the welcoming reception in Dakar.

But we were able to enter into serious discussions on many of the crucial issues facing South Africa. And we have demonstrated that discussions can be constructive. It is possible to meet around a table with the ANC rather than on a battlefield where there are no winners.

Secondly, we showed that Africa is open to South Africans, Black and White, who have abandoned apartheid and are genuinely

searching for a non-racial democracy. Thirdly, the assistance afforded us by Madame Mitterand clearly indicates that the West wants to assist and that the only onslaught which exists is the onslaught against apartheid, not against South Africa.

But we have also struck a blow for *negotiation politics*. In the course of the last year, the government has mounted an intensive campaign against the ANC, depicting them as a terrorist group living in Lusaka with no constituency and a commitment to violence at all costs. We have tried to break the cycle and to point towards the possibility of a negotiated settlement which will end the violence which has become endemic.



IDASA continues to deal with the remarkable impact and repercussions of the recent Dakar initiative. The delegates who travelled from South Africa under IDASA's auspices have been inundated with requests to share their experiences with a very wide range of interest groups. In particular, Dr. Slabbert and I have travelled far and wide, meeting with small and large groups to outline the reasons why we went to Dakar and the possible benefits which might flow from such a meeting. In general, the response we have received has been overwhelmingly favourable. However, there is another side to it.

The State President delivered a very scathing attack on IDASA and on the Dakar meeting when he spoke in Parliament recently. Leaving aside the rhetoric, he made several announcements concerning possible action. These

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

included, firstly, the appointment of a select committee of Parliament in order to examine the activities of IDASA and other extra-Parliamentary organisations.

Whilst we know full well that such a select committee will be heavily weighted in favour of the National and Conservative Parties, IDASA has nothing to hide and we will simply have to handle whatever flows from that committee. The State President has also warned that if further Dakar initiatives with the ANC are undertaken, the state will have to reconsider granting passports to those who wish to participate. Implicit in his warning was the possibility of taking away passports of those who already hold them. This is a very serious threat

and will not make it easy for IDASA to arrange any further encounters with the ANC, so that the stress on the importance of negotiation rather than violence may suffer.

Thirdly, the State President issued a clear warning that he is considering cutting off all overseas funding of IDASA. This would affect IDASA's work fundamentally and we should not take this threat lightly.

In the final analysis, it is very difficult for IDASA or any other organisation to resist state action. If the state is determined to block any initiatives other than their own, it has the power to do so.

I very much hope that wisdom will prevail and IDASA will be allowed to continue doing work which we believe is vital to the resolution of the ever-deepening conflict in our society.

In particular, we intend to embark upon a major internal fundraising campaign in order to offset possible problems arising from overseas funding being prevented by the state. This will not be easy because the State President's overwhelming attitude will clearly influence a lot of people inside South Africa who are already very nervous about risking the state's disapproval. I hope, however, that those who are committed to a non-racial, democratic future will withstand the government pressure and will continue to support initiatives like those undertaken by IDASA in its attempt to help White South Africans, in particular, to seek a democratic alternative to the present system.

The board meeting, involving the trustees of IDASA, gave full support to the IDASA staff; and it is encouraging to know that we have their full backing.

In a polarised society, where there is much suspicion, anger and distrust, it is very difficult to achieve anything of significance. Despite all the forces working against a commitment to a peaceful, secure and just South Africa, IDASA remains firm. We will continue and we have no doubt that there will be many in the total South African community, and beyond our borders, who will join with us in making a new society possible.

Dr. A. Boraine,
Cape Town,
24 September 1987.



Thaabit Albertus

The full IDASA staff assembled for the quarterly Board Meeting on 31 August 1987.

Streamlining of Organisation

AT the recent board meeting, consideration was given to the structure and organisation of IDASA as it has developed over the last nine months. It was decided that in order to facilitate smooth running and to clearly identify line management, Dr. Alex Boraine would be the sole Executive Director responsible for the daily running of IDASA, in terms of administration, organisation and contact with the public and the press. Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert, who is heavily involved with the promotion of IDASA as well as

running specific projects, will now be Director of Policy and Planning.

Dr. Boraine was also authorised to consider the total organisational structure as it involves other staff members and to restructure, if necessary, in the interests of the greatest possible efficiency, so that the ultimate goal of a non-racial democracy can best be served. Consideration of these and other developments will be the prime focus of a staff residential weekend during November.

The Directors.