

# DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

## EDITORIAL

# SA waits to judge FW - by his actions

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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In trying to assess the extent of change we can expect from Mr F W de Klerk's leadership as newly elected State President, we have to distinguish between rhetoric and action. If we are to judge purely on the former, then there is considerable room for encouragement. Mr De Klerk's style and language are critically different from those of his predecessor, Mr P W Botha. It is understandable, however, that his fine promises have been received with considerable scepticism for South Africans have been on the receiving end of so many promises over so many years.

Mr De Klerk himself acknowledges this in stating that his government "shall set everything in motion to bridge the deep gulf of mistrust, suspicion and fear between South Africans". The system of apartheid has left us with a quite terrifying legacy of distrust and suspicion so that even statements made with apparent sincerity are almost rejected out of hand by those who have been on the receiving end of harsh repressive measures. Whilst the changing of laws is of paramount importance, there is going to have to be a supreme effort to change attitudes as well if South Africa is not going to be torn asunder in the next few years.

### Time limited

Mr De Klerk is under considerable pressure both from the international community and more especially from the growing demands of the majority of South Africans for actions which go beyond promises and rhetoric. It is interesting that there has been a convergence of demands both from inside and outside of South Africa which call on the new State President to firstly lift the state of emergency, secondly release political prisoners, thirdly unban banned organisations, fourthly establish a climate for political participation and fifthly negotiate the end of apartheid and the beginning of a non-racial, democratic South Africa. Mr De Klerk will be judged therefore not in terms of his words, eloquent and encouraging as these are, but in terms of how many of the conditions stated above he is prepared to accept and to act upon. **The only commodity that Mr De Klerk doesn't have is time.**

Mrs Thatcher who has resolutely refused to

impose sanctions on South Africa will be under considerable pressure at the Commonwealth conference during October and will need some sign from the State President that he really means business. The fact that she does not accept the sanctions strategy in no way changes her demands for the release of political prisoners, the unbanning of organisations, etc. The major pressure however, is coming from and will continue to come from the majority of South Africans who are very near to the end of their patience as far as their political rights are concerned.

### Clear message

The defiance campaign led by the Mass Democratic Movement shows no sign of running out of steam; on the contrary, they have been encouraged by the response from a wide section of the community in support of their struggle and their expectations have been raised by Mr De Klerk's "reasonableness" towards peaceful marches, which have now been staged all over South Africa. The message is clear: the time for rhetoric is over and the time for action is now.

Against this background what can we reasonably expect from Mr De Klerk? Firstly, he will do everything he can in an attempt to buy time. He can do so by appointing parliamentary committees or commissions to look into the particularly hurtful apartheid legislation such as the Group Areas Act, the Separate Amenities Act and the Population Registration Act. He can then justifiably claim that he is doing something about this but that it is to be done in an orderly and constructive manner! He can also claim that Dr Gerrit Viljoen will be giving urgent attention to all the constitutional options which are at the disposal of South Africa and that this too will take time and cannot be done overnight. But if he is wise, he will know that beyond the appointment of commissions and persons for specific responsibilities, there must be actions which confirm the promises he has made.

He will have to act on the question of political prisoners and in particular on the release of Mr Nelson Mandela. On the other hand, it would be almost counter-productive to release Mr Mandela into a state of emergency where

## Ja-Nee

### A banner is a banner

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.

### Kyk hoe konsekwent!

"As die regering die Ossewabrandwag verbied dan sê ek dis tyd om halt te roep, dan is die Afrikaner geen gehoorsaamheid aan die regering verskuldig nie. As die hou van vergaderings verbied word, sal ek my volle morele ondersteuning aan burgerlike ongehoorsaamheid gee. Ek is bereid om sulke vergaderings by te woon en daaraan deel te neem wat die gevolge ookal mag wees."

— Laat 'n mens wonder of iemand FW de Klerk dalk onlangs aan dié woorde van Dr DF Malan (by 'n NP-kongres in 1940) herinner het?

### Lastige kinders

Luister 'n bietjie na die kommentaar van een van die "agbare lede" van die parlement by Kaapstad se vredesoptog (waar hy natuurlik net 'n toeskouer was). Volgens hom het die deelnemers gelyk na 'n "klomp skoolkinders wat nie weet wat hulle doen nie".

— Van hierdie "kinders" gaan nog baie meer gesien — en gehoor — word.

### Take a risk . . . or two

So who was trying to flog souvenir medallions of Dr Danie Craven at Ellis Park during the



he is not able to exercise political leadership together with the considerable support which he enjoys inside and outside of South Africa.

This is a key test for Mr De Klerk and his government and the possibility of peace and the potential of increased violence hang very much on what he does in this regard. Whilst it would not solve all of South Africa's many and complex problems, what a difference it could make if Mr De Klerk went to visit Mr Mandela himself and negotiated his release so that Mr Mandela can begin to exercise his well known abilities towards the resolution of conflict. A morning or an afternoon spent at Pollsmoor could transform the climate of conflict!

### Hostile right

The urgency for action by Mr De Klerk is highlighted by the fact of the growing realisation on the right wing that it cannot win electorally. As this sinks in, it is more than likely that elements on the right will resort to increased hostility and violence. Already they will have been angered and distressed by Mr De Klerk's allowing marches to take place and it is only a question of time before their counter marches

and statements boil over into vigilante action and other forms of violence. This is one of the toughest tests awaiting the new leadership in the National Party government. Will the security forces take action against white right wing violence with the same kind of diligence and fervour as they have taken in the past against the opponents of apartheid? Will we see not only policemen offering flowers to left wing protestors but also white policemen taking action against right wing white South Africans? This is the core of the more refined debate about whether or not Mr De Klerk is going to come down on the side of the securocrats or of a shift towards a more civilian type of government.

No one who understands anything about the intensity of the conflict will underestimate Mr De Klerk's tasks as he assumes leadership of the South African government. The majority of South Africans are deeply concerned for peace and justice. Most would be prepared to forgive the past and work towards a non-racial and democratic South Africa if they could believe that this was Mr De Klerk's intention. The only test is not more promises and fine lofty words; Mr De Klerk will be judged by his actions.

## Letters

Address your letters to  
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### Caving up the economic pie

It is interesting to observe the note of post-socialist realism that is beginning to enter into the debate over the structuring of a post-apartheid South Africa/Azania.

I refer here specifically to the emerging realisation that the well-worn theme of "redistribution of income" so much favoured by the "old left" has failed to deliver the "goodies" predicted of it.

The real practical experience of socialism over the last 70 years appears to indicate that "redistribution" invariably meant a switch in the wealth from the hands of the displaced elite into the hands of a new bureaucratic elite.

In South Africa the arguments for redistribution ignore the fact that the current crisis in the country's economy results in part from the actual process of redistributing wealth from productive to non-productive sectors of the polity.

It is of course accepted that much of this redistribution has been geared to the fulfilment of fundamentally irrational political objectives. However, these objectives are not more irrational than the proposal of President Ceausescu of Romania to demolish 3 000 traditional villages and "remove" the occupants to a series of collective establishments without any amenities.

It was therefore refreshing to read Gavin Maasdorp's observation in the July issue of *Democracy in Action* that a post-apartheid government needed to concern itself more with "economic empowerment" than with the policies of redistribution.

The priority throughout the world for the rest of the century should be the creation of wealth and not the sharing of the ever-diminishing pie. The future South African government should therefore not concern itself with carving up the economic pie. It should work on strategies to make this country so wealthy in order to create the opportunities for all to solve their own problems.

N P Williamson  
Johannesburg

(Letter shortened)

### Wanted: visions for future SA

I would like to suggest that organisations such as Cosatu, Black Sash, SACC, SACBC and others are given some space in your monthly newsletter *Democracy in Action*. They could use the opportunity to spell out their vision of achieving a democratic South Africa.

Some of the most useful few lines that I have

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recent second Test match? No one other than Trevor Tutu.

— The young Tutu has obviously not lost his faith in supply and demand. His characteristic *chutzpah* seems intact too. Free enterprise at an "abnormal" sports event. Really.

### Net 'n banier?

Selfs voormalige AWB-lede was erg ontevrede met die aanstootlike woorde "Hang Mandela" op een van die AWB-banier by die onlangse Kerkplein saamtrek in Pretoria.

— 'n Mens wonder hoe lank so 'n banier op die

*plein sou bly wapper het as dit 'n soortgelyke lot vir, byvoorbeeld, die NP-leier aanbeveel het?*

### The amazing Bothas

At the Johannesburg peace march a police reservist, Const Phillip Botha, stunned the crowds by holding aloft a placard that read "Police against police abuse". Botha told reporters that joining the protest was one of the most frightening experiences of his life, but he could no longer delay making his brave stand.

— A rare chance to say "Well done, Botha!"