

# DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

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## Democracy - the dream and reality

By Sue Valentine

Throughout the world in the 1990s, South Africa notwithstanding, everyone claims to support democracy. The inhabitants of the global village are all democrats - or so they would say.

Yet if one thing was clear at the Idasa conference, "Democracy: A Vision for the Future", in Johannesburg from November 21 to 23, it was the need for clarity as to just what democracy means and what we mean by democracy.



Claude Ake

Speaker after eminent speaker, including ANC president Nelson Mandela who opened the conference, stressed the complexity - and uncertainty - of the process of building a democratic society. They warned that democracy offered no quick-fix solution to a nation's ills. Although so many appeared to speak the language of democracy, the exact concepts, commitments and values implied by the term remained unclear.

The scene was set by the other opening night speaker, Dr Claude Ake, an internationally renowned political scientist and head of the Nigeria-based Centre for Advanced Social Sciences in Africa, who cautioned that the apparent worldwide triumph of democracy was due partly to the fact that it had been "trivialised" to the point that it no longer threatened power elites.

"It would appear that form has replaced content and we are left with a democracy of formal equality and abstract rights... and it is not surprising that we are all



Nelson Mandela with Nthato Motlana, chairperson of Idasa's board of trustees.

now democrats," he said.

Of the so-called "democratic revolution" taking place in Africa, Ake was cautious, emphasising the need to examine the many different threads running through the movement.

"There is a deceptive simplicity about it...It has many faces, speaks with many voices, embodies different value commitments, it expresses different interests. It illustrates the classic saying that what you see depends not so much on what you are looking at, as from where you looking."

In his address, Mandela called for healing and reconciliation, and the creation of a society in which South Africa's variety of colours, creeds, cultures and genders was cause for celebration not antagonism.

The controversial thesis by Stellen-

bosch University academic Prof Johan Degenaar that the call to nation-building was a call to pursue a mythical concept, and therefore a waste of time, was disputed by ANC executive committee member Dr Pallo Jordan.

While Degenaar argued that to try to bind a diverse society around anything less than a culture of democracy was misdirected energy, Jordan claimed that the essence of the modern nation was its consolidation around shared values.

The conference presented many perspectives on the problems to be confronted and the processes to be started in building a viable democracy - not just in political society, but in the social and economic realms as well.

(See pages 4 - 9 for details of the debates at the conference)

*A Happy Christmas and a Peaceful 1992 to all our Readers*

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Idasa's goals are:

- To promote the development of a democratic culture in South Africa
- To address fear, prejudice, anger and other obstacles in the transition to a non-racial democracy in South Africa
- To engage influential groups and individuals who may be outsiders to the transition process
- To provide, wherever possible, information on critical issues and to explore ways of addressing these
- To facilitate discussion of constitutional and developmental issues relevant to Southern Africa
- To assist and encourage others to contribute to the attainment of these goals

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## Reconciliation: supreme test for leadership

The old adage, "a week in politics is a long time" is vividly illustrated by recent developments in South Africa.

Only a few months ago President De Klerk was riding high both internationally and on the national scene. It seemed almost believable that the National Party under his skilled leadership could actually secure a majority in a future election. His success on the international scene and his adroit handling of developments seemed to cast him in the mould of the one politician who could unite the greatest number of people towards a moderate centrist dispensation.

On the other hand, the African National Congress was in considerable disarray as an organisation and was portrayed generally by the media as being a spoiler. Contradictory statements on nationalisation and the stubborn adherence to an outdated sanctions policy seemed to suggest that the transition from a liberation movement to a political party was too much for an organisation being pulled in so many different directions by different sections of their constituency.

### Rattled

However, the scene has changed dramatically. It is true that Mr De Klerk is still looking good on the international scene and will continue to do so for a considerable time. But in domestic politics, where it really has to happen, he is looking decidedly rattled. What has happened?

Firstly, Inkathagate and the petulance of the Inkatha Freedom Party, plus the persistent polls which showed the IFP trailing far behind the ANC, made an alliance between the NP and the IFP a lot less attractive. Mr De Klerk has had to somewhat grudgingly concede that he simply cannot do without the ANC. Secondly, Mr Mandela made an enormous impact at the Commonwealth Conference in Harare and regained some of the ground that the ANC had lost. Thirdly, the ANC is seen as the organisation that has made it possible for South Africa to participate in the Olympic Games in Barcelona in 1992. This, coupled with the obvious major influence of Steve Tshwete as far as the cricket tour to India was concerned, softened the image of the ANC as a demanding, negative party.

An even more important factor was the ability of the Cosatu/ANC alliance to mount and successfully carry through one of the

largest stayaways in labour history in South Africa. The penny dropped with a vengeance and Mr De Klerk and his colleagues have been forced to change their strategy and look again at possible rather than idealistic options.

### Option

Clearly the one option which Mr De Klerk will have to seriously consider if he is to enjoy maximum influence, is some form of government of national unity. The name is not all that important but the substance will certainly be a shift towards joint responsibility and thus a far greater sharing of power between essentially the NP and the ANC. That there will be many hiccups before this takes place is a given. The Convention for a Democratic South Africa will see a great deal of positioning by the parties concerned but that is all to the good. The cards will be on the table at long last and negotiation in earnest can begin. But the direction will be towards participatory politics.

### Compromise

In the meantime it is going to be extremely difficult, particularly for the NP and the ANC, to hold in tension on the one hand the need for compromise, which is an integral part of negotiation politics, and on the other the necessity to move towards electoral politics. How do these two major parties keep their eye on the negotiation ball through reasonableness and consensus and at the same time begin to win support for their political positions? Electioneering very often means doing everything you can to discredit your opponent and to make the greatest possible promises to your own constituency.

The supreme test of leadership for both Mr De Klerk and Mr Mandela will be holding in tension the desperate need for the healing of the land and reconciliation and the normal practice of any political leader as he seeks to gain maximum support for his policies. One can only hope that in the ebb and flow of politics during 1992, these outstanding political figures will be seen as two great statesmen who are more concerned about a united, peaceful and prosperous South Africa than only success at the polls.

— Alex Boraine  
Executive Director

MULTI-PARTY CONFERENCE:-  
STRICTLY NO  
HOLY COWS  
ADMITTED



## LETTERS

### Democrats from different homes

The comment by Carl Niehaus of the ANC (*Democracy in Action*, October 15) that the ANC needs "to provide a political home for all true democrats" raises questions about the depth of the ANC's commitment to multi-party democracy.

I differ fundamentally with the ANC on major issues of policy, and for this reason I will not make the ANC my political home. Does that exclude me from being a "true democrat"?

I agree with the ANC's principles of non-racialism, non-sexism and democracy, but the ANC by no means has a monopoly over these principles, nor has the ANC's practical commitment to these principles been proved beyond doubt.

If the ANC is really committed to a multi-party democracy in which there is true freedom of dissent, it will need to respect the right of others to organise in parties which are distinct from, and which campaign against, the ANC, without implying that those who do so are non-democrats.

When the presumptuous words of ANC officials such as Mr Niehaus are put into action by ANC supporters, the result can

easily be intolerance and intimidation, such as that perpetrated recently by the SA Students' Congress (Sasco) at the University of Cape Town.

I contend that the Democratic Party is a home for true democrats. I challenge the ANC to prove that they are true democrats by respecting that contention.

Colin Douglas  
National Vice-Chairperson, DP Youth

### Cartoon offends

I found the cartoon in your last issue tasteless, tactless and offensive.

Surely the State President, Mr De Klerk, deserves more respect.

It is suggested you should apologise to your readers for the oversight of allowing this cartoon to be published.

One reader of your journal

Mr De Klerk was fully dressed according to the fashion of the era depicted - Editor

### Broad statement

In the editorial of *Democracy in Action*, July/Aug 1991, I interpreted Alex Boraine as equating the SACP with the dismal history of the Communist Party in other parts

## JA-NEE

### Now where were we?

Stoffel van der Merwe's presentation of a textbook analysis of democracy at a recent Idasa conference was called into question by a timely reminder from Van Zyl Slabbert who recalled the minister's words to him having presented similar views in parliament six years ago. "Those are not worth the paper they are written on," Van der Merwe told Slabbert.

- Makes you blink, doesn't it?

### High-flying favours

A group of musicians off to a conference and concert in Nigeria were promised a ride by SAA if Nelson Mandela would personally endorse the SAA request for landing rights in Lagos. The ANC received permission from the Nigerian head of state, but not via the suggested Mandela letter. The result? SAA said sorry, no plane.

- Not enough political mileage for our national carrier?

### Watchout

And then there was the Neighbourhood Watch representative who was sleeping soundly when he had to take questions at a seminar on self-defence.

- Crime prevention must have it's dull moments.

# Educating for democracy a tough challenge

The theme of dreams and visions for a future democracy begun by Nelson Mandela on the opening night of the conference confronted harsh reality the following day when the director of the Centre for Human Values at Princeton University, Prof Amy Gutmann, spoke of the need for education for democracy.

"A principle requirement for democracy is education, education in opposition to oppression, discrimination and authoritarianism... We need to be armed with a vision, but one that moves beyond opposition to a positive vision."

Non-repression, she said, requires that schools teach toleration and a broad respect for other views. However, they should not toe a political line.

"Many South African schools may deny a fair hearing for leftist thought today, but these schools could deny a fair hearing to other views in the future... Schools must be insulated from the prevailing political pressures from the left, right or centre," she said.

Legacies of racism could not be overcome by teaching from a book. Students needed the direct experience of recognising the value and potential of their peers and therefore an economically and racially integrated classroom environment should be encouraged.

Acknowledging the huge task that lay

ahead Gutmann said: "A scenario of change that includes democratic education may be difficult to implement, but one that excludes democratic education will be far more difficult to endure".

Just how large the task is was emphasised by Stellenbosch University academic Dr Amanda Gouws whose analysis of black and white South African student attitudes showed very low levels of tolerance and limited understanding of what tolerance meant.

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**'Tolerance needs to be recognised as a democratic value'**

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She said 270 white and 270 black students she had interviewed, all subscribed to a belief in civil liberties, yet when asked whether the groups whom they listed as "least liked" should be accorded the rights of freedom of speech and association there was a flat refusal.

"The majority said their 'least-liked' groups should be banned... This kind of intense intolerance is higher than intolerance found in Israel," she said.

Gouws said one predictor of tolerance was education - people with higher educa-



Amy Gutmann with, from left, Alex Paul Graham, p

tion were more tolerant, but as the students' reactions had shown, the concept of civil liberties could not simply be taught, people needed to understand what it meant.

One of the problems with the concept of tolerance was that it was seen as a liberal value. This had led to a perception that liberal tolerance was repressive because it called for tolerance of evil ideas. However, she argued that tolerance needed to be recognised as a democratic value.

Despite calls for "liberatory intolerance" from certain political organisations, Gouws insisted that to demand silence from certain groups was to be intolerant and anti-democratic.

"If a society is tolerant, and if it puts up with ideas it rejects, it is highly unlikely that those ideas will become the dominant ideas," she argued. "Tolerance is unconditionally necessary for veracity to be externalised... We must teach children through liberation what tolerance means."

Speaking of the necessity for informal adult education and Idasa's proposed training centre for democracy, Idasa executive director Dr Alex Boraine said the litmus test

## Mandela: time to make a clear, de

A need for national reconciliation and a commitment to a future which embodied the best for all South Africans - this was the message delivered by Nelson Mandela in his keynote address to the "Democracy" conference.

Yet he too, cautioned about the uncertainty of the transition process, saying the country stood at the crossroads with a "real and frightening possibility" that it could slide into a bottomless abyss on the one hand, while on the other, there was the potential of a bright and happy future for all.

"Whether we shall succeed or not depends on what we do now, tomorrow and

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**'Have the courage to forgive, to trust, to love and to dream...'**

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the trying years ahead... It is time to make a clear and decisive break with the apartheid crime against humanity. The alternative is anarchy, chaos and more violence. In this regard, time is not at our mercy."

Mandela said the only hope for lifting South Africa out of its current crisis was for a foundation of real freedom and democracy to be built for all South Africans - regardless

of race, colour, creed or gender. Any notion of white supremacy had to be totally eliminated.

It was in everyone's interests, he said, to "have the courage to forgive, to trust, to love and to dream... Nothing less than such a covenant can propel us all from the current unhappy state of affairs to the happy, robust and triumphant South Africa which all of us and all succeeding generations so richly deserve."

Speaking of his years in prison, Mandela said his convictions would always be worth more than the anguish they had caused him, but he added his fate was one which he would not wish upon even the worst of his



Seshi Chonco, Amanda Gouws and Director of Idasa.

for democracy was the experience and expectations of jobless youths.

"The 17 or 18-year-old youngster in a township with no job, no home, no security, needs to be convinced that the struggle for democracy makes sense in terms of their escape from the ghetto. We cannot wait for a democratic government before we transform the education system. We must begin now."

Programme director for the Institute of Multi-Party Democracy Dr Seshi Chonco echoed similar sentiments.

He spoke of the difficulty of making democracy a concrete experience in the townships and squatter camps around the country when what people most needed and wanted were basic amenities such as toilet facilities.

He said a process of deliberation should be promoted to question and debate and arrive at a common understanding of what constituted democracy. The institutions of schools and political parties were essential to this process. □

## ive break

enemies. It was "a cruelty to which no decent society would want to expose its citizens...a tragic indecency from which any sane society will seek to shield its children."

Concluding on a challenging note, Mandela said South Africa should be a society which fostered a healthy respect and appreciation for all races.

"A united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society is the best hope for the delivery of such a society into the hands of our children. It is a vision we advance. It is a vision we invite you to examine...and enrich. If needs be, it is a vision we challenge you to surpass." □

# Vote must mean empowerment too

Offering some thoughts on the future of democracy, Nigerian academic Claude Ake suggested that the most appropriate democracy was not one which dealt only with constitutional rights, but one which united political and economic rights – a social democracy.

"There is no freedom in abject poverty and no freedom in ignorance. If we talk of the future of democracy in Africa we must think of producing enough surplus [wealth] to support it."

Ake said there was a danger of people using civil society tautologically to define democracy. Civil society was an *effect* of democracy not a precondition for it.

He suggested that civilian defence against state power in Africa came through the development of associational life. Communal life and ethnic or cultural groups were not a problem in themselves. It was the political exploitation of cultural identities that caused problems.

"We must take community, collective and cultural rights seriously. If we don't we will repeat the mistakes of history," he said.

"People identify with these groups because it is useful to do so. The state must not denounce ethnicity, but must displace its utility by offering alternatives for people's security."

Secretary-general of the National Union of Mineworkers Marcel Golding said the extension of the franchise in South Africa should be accompanied by economic and industrial democracy.

"The franchise is an indispensable weapon, but patterns of wealth distribution must be changed... Democracy must empower people if we are to generate confidence in the system of government," he argued.

Echoing certain points advanced by Ake at the opening of the conference, Golding said it was not enough to have formal

rights guaranteed in a democratic system, substantive rights had to be ensured as well.

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**'There is no freedom in abject poverty and no freedom in ignorance'**

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The legacy of unemployment, low education standards, inadequate health care, the homeland system and general suspicion would make it difficult to build and reconstruct society. The mere removal of repressive legislation would not undo decades of underdevelopment.



Stoffel van der Merwe and Marcel Golding

National Party secretary-general Mr Stoffel van der Merwe while endorsing the need to create a democratic culture and set democratic practices, warned of the tyranny of the majority.

"One man one vote is an essential element of democracy, but not the only element," he said and later suggested that "if 51 percent of the vote gives 100 percent of power, this is not good enough. We would advocate the idea of 'prescribed coalition'."

Van der Merwe said that despite the difficulties and the "special circumstances in South Africa", if one took account of the essence of democracy such as freedom of the individual and society, then a growing degree of democracy could be achieved. □

# The hit and myth approach



SLABBERT: pursue democracy as means towards unlocking potential

In the closing address to the conference, Van Zyl Slabbert stressed that democracy was an "instrumental value": it could be used by a society to realise or destroy its own potential.

With this in mind, and because of the worldwide desire for democratic systems of government, Slabbert warned that it was necessary to be clear and cautious about some of the myths concerning *how* to become a democracy and *what* a democracy could deliver. Some extracts from his address follow:

## SOME MYTHS ON HOW TO BECOME A DEMOCRACY

- **There is only one reliable political strategy that can guarantee a democratic outcome:** There are many and competing claims about the democratic outcome of elite pacts, mass mobilisation, modernising oligarchies and revolutionary seizures of power.

- **Political tolerance has to be institutionalised before democracy can survive:** This is to confuse cause with effect. Very often people negotiate because they have no choice and deeply distrust each other because of competing interests. Trust may be a consequence of their bargaining but it is not a precondition.

- **Civil liberties have to be respected before there can be democracy:** This is part of the same confusion... Respect for civil rights is part of the democratic bargain – not a precondition for it.

- **Democracy cannot come about in a state of violence and instability:** Not true. Very often democracies are born out of such a state. Violence and instability are very often the response to a prolonged period of repressive domination and stability.

## A DEMOCRATIC OUTCOME

I mention these myths about how to become a democracy to underline a simple point: *We in South Africa must stop looking for excuses for not getting on with the job of negotiating a democratic outcome.* We must stop posturing, morally outbidding and playing one upmanship on preferred strategies, violence, tolerance and civil rights.

Our past has scarred and polarised us so much that it is futile to expect us to love and trust one another *before* we enter into bargaining... For the moment, our saving grace appears to be that enough key political

actors seem to realise that we have no choice but to bargain for democracy if we hope to avert a catastrophe.

## SOME MYTHS ABOUT WHAT DEMOCRACY CAN DELIVER

- **Democracy will bring about growth and economic efficiency:** This is perhaps the most dangerous myth for South Africa. If political groupings are economically illiterate before the onset of democracy there is nothing in democracy per se that guarantees such literacy. That is why the economic debate must be engaged before, during and after democratisation of our society.

- **Democracy will bring about efficient administration:** Very often democratisation can, initially at least, lead to increasing inefficiency because of a wider range of interest groups having access to decision-making. Autocracies/military regimes display great repressive efficiency which very often induces nostalgia in some sections of the population for the "good old days".

- **Democracy will bring about enduring stability:** Groups, parties and movements with recently acquired autonomy will test certain rules, protest against the actions of certain institutions and even insist on renegotiating their side of the bargain.

I make these points about some of the myths concerning what democracy can deliver to drive home the simple truth: *a democratic constitution cannot guarantee commitment, efficiency, loyalty, stability or growth, but it can reflect it.*

Democracy has the capacity to unleash the potential of our country, to involve the broadest possible spectrum of our people's creative talent and abilities, to release the most available sources of information and overall, and over time, improve our ability to adjust and respond to changes in our

domestic and external environment.

## PRINCIPLES THAT MAKE DEMOCRACY FEASIBLE

What is democracy? This question has lost a great deal of its controversy in recent times. The pitched ideological battles signalled by such qualifications as "people's democracy", or "total", "guided", "one party" or whatever, have to a large extent run out of steam.

If one accepts that a modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens acting indirectly through the competition and

co-operation of their elected representatives, then there is a growing convergence of opinion that such a system of governance reflects a broad acceptance by that society of three fundamental principles which make democracy feasible.

Firstly, the party that wins an election does not use its victory to deny its opponents to win some other time, and where those who lose accept the right of those who win to take binding decisions over everybody else (*contingent consent*).

Secondly, all democracies have to institutionalise political uncertainty – uncertainty about electoral outcomes and policy shifts. It is not a limitless uncertainty in which society is at the mercy of the capricious will of a majority or individual or party.

The *uncertainty is bounded* by constitutional guarantees of privacy, property, individual liberties and most important, competition between interest groups and co-operation within civil society.

Thirdly, the institution of *political procedures* which includes that control over government policy decisions is vested in elected officials, universal franchise, freedom of expression and association, and the right of citizens to seek out alternative sources of information which are protected by law.

## VISION

If I have to formulate a vision for South Africa on democracy it has two components. Firstly, those who bargain for a democratic constitution do so with a view that not they, but their fiercest opponents will be the first political beneficiaries. This will induce caution and moderation and deepen reflection on how to constrain the abuse of power.

Secondly, that we in South Africa pursue democracy not as an end in itself, hoping that it will deliver the impossible, but as a means towards unlocking incredible potential. □

# Civil society: more than being nice to each other

The meaning of civil society and its implications for a potential democracy were debated by University of Cape Town political scientist Prof André du Toit, Mr Wynand Malan (former Democratic Party leader), Methodist Church Bishop Peter Storey, Mr Mark Swilling of Planact and Soviet historian Prof Appollon Davidson.

Setting the scene, Du Toit defined civil society as the social formations which were relatively independent from and outside of the state. It was, however, also an approach to democratisation which focused on the role of associations and churches, that is, all aspects of civilian life outside direct politics.

It was not enough, suggested Du Toit, to democratise the "political kingdom", all other aspects of social life had to be included too.

Neither should democratisation be confused with the free marketer approach where privatisation was the cure-all. This led to a situation where authoritarianism became privatised and civil society was left to the mercy of giant privately controlled corporations and the whim of the market.

Du Toit cautioned that following the resurgence of civil society in the anti-apartheid struggle there was the danger that these groups were so rooted in the liberation movement that they converged with political society and took the form of a "state-in-waiting".

The key to a strong civil society, he suggested, was diversity, tolerance and pluralism.

Developing on the earlier definition, Mark Swilling suggested that civil society was the realm where citizens voluntarily associated with each other in fields not directly constituted by the state. He stressed, however, that civil society was "by no means" intrinsically democratic. "It could be dominated by extremely anti-democratic forces such as nationalism, capitalism, contrived collectivism or even global informationism".

He said civil society should not necessarily be seen as an adversary of the state where civil society stood for freedom and the state for coercion. It was possible though, that civil society might at some stage



SWILLING: civil society should not be equated with democracy.



DU TOIT: democratising the "political kingdom" not enough.

need to be protected from the state.

"A strong state is necessary for a civil society and strong civil society is necessary for a strong state... There is a difference between a strong state and a dictatorial state."

There was no neat formula for ensuring a democratic society, rather, Swilling suggested, the greatest threat to democracy was certainty.

"Civil society is a messy, miserable place to live. It is not a panacea. Civil society is how people cope with how they live. Civil society is simply a code word, not necessarily even a concept. It must not be seen as an entity in itself nor should it be equated with democracy."

In what was probably the most entertaining address of the day Peter Storey appealed

to civilians to be ever vigilant of politicians and those in positions of power.

Quoting Winston Churchill, he said democracy was the worst form of government - except for all the others. It might not be perfect, but it was, the least harmful way of doing things.

"Democracy is a state of mind, the internalisation of a set of values... It is not dressed-up, it isn't romantic, it is realistic. It is aware of human fallibility and nobility. Democrats prefer their emperors without clothes because that way they can see what they're doing with their hands!"

In a stinging attack on politicians (to which Van Zyl Slabbert later reacted reminding the audience that politicians were babies once and that societies got the politicians they deserved!), Storey said the track record of almost all politicians was uniformly poor.

"Democracy will not be sustained in the corridors of power; that is most likely where it will be suffocated. Nor should one trust the party political milieu...it is the ultimate of manipulation."

He said the process of politics was more important to society's well-being than the product. The means needed to be discussed as much as the ends because there could be no undemocratic road to a democratic society.

Sketching the parallels between South African society and that of the Soviet Union, Appollon Davidson said he had very little experience of democracy although his knowledge of totalitarianism was brilliant!

The levels of intolerance in South African society laid a better foundation for Stalinism than democracy. Similarly the multi-ethnic nature of the society and its isolation from the rest of the world were factors mitigating against the development of a strong, democratic civil society.

Just as Russian farmers differed from American farmers in their attitudes and approaches, so the mentality of South Africans should be understood and considered when identifying obstacles in the way of and steps towards a democratic society, he said.

# New-speak for the 1990s

**What exactly do politicians mean when they launch into the jargon of the transition process? Are they all speaking the same language? VAN ZYL SLABBERT offers an interpretation.**

**C**hange generates its own vocabulary; South Africa is no exception. We use different words to express more or less the same idea and more often than not the same word for different ideas.

On the political battleground, opponents stake out claims and stalk each other publicly with hidden agendas that everybody knows about and disguise obvious ideological preferences with verbal posturing, calculated to promote themselves as the most attractive partners in the process of negotiated transition.

The big point is not to appear ignorant or unconfident even if the vast majority of people have no idea what you are talking about, or exactly what is happening.

It would be comforting, even nice, if for example, the government in power and its opponents to the left and right, displayed some humility; confessed some ignorance and took the country into their confidence about the complexity of the process of change they have unleashed on us.

Instead, the PAC assures us that "the toiling masses demand a constituent assembly now!"; whilst the ANC claims that the same masses are prepared to move in stages from an "all party conference", to an "interim government" and then a constituent assembly election.

The government says it should be blindingly obvious to everyone that you cannot have constituent assembly elections or an interim government before there have been a number of multi-party conferences, and by then, neither of the other two may be necessary.

Right-wing organisations and parties proclaim that all this is a lot of cock and bull and that South Africa consists of a plurality of struggling nationalities battling for self-determination and that partition is the only solution.

Nobody seems inclined to gently pry open the lips of the pony and actually count the teeth.

The first thing to keep in mind is that nobody, not even the super confident prominent spokesmen, knows how the process of transition is going to work out. This is an obvious but very important point.

The second point to remember is that despite the confusion, there is a national consensus on two fundamental issues: domination in whatever form is unacceptable. Negotiation is the manner in which an alternative should be found.

All significant parties declare themselves

in favour of this from left and right. There are fringe flanking elements who favour militancy and radicalism, but they are in the minority.

**T**he third point is that despite this national consensus, there is a fundamental division on what to negotiate about. A minority of whites, who may be strategically located in the economy and the civil service, wish to negotiate a form of partition. The majority, (including the majority of whites) wish to negotiate some form of a non-racial democracy.

Within the minority who wish to negotiate partition one can distinguish between greedy partitionists and sacrificial partitionists.

Greedy partitionists wish to negotiate a substantial piece of South Africa which they believe is historically theirs, e.g. the AWB and the Boer republics. Or they want to reimpose old-style Verwoerdian separate development, e.g. Ferdie Hartzenberg and his supporters in the Conservative Party.

Sacrificial partitionists wish to negotiate either a small part of South Africa for the Afrikaner, e.g. Prof Carel Boshoff and the Oranje Werkersbond. Others, like Koos van der Merwe and his supporters in the CP, want a variation of communal self-determination on a neighbourhood/regional basis.

Sacrificial partitionists show an increasing willingness to sit around the same table with those who wish to negotiate a non-racial democracy and put their case for sacrificial partition.

Those who wish to negotiate a non-racial democracy agree on at least three fundamental problems that have to be addressed in the process of transition, but there is no general consensus on the mechanisms in terms of which to do so. These problems are:

- **Transitional legitimacy:** (how can we be sure that we understand each other in the process of negotiation and be reasonably

confident our constituencies will follow us?) The mechanisms that the government in power and the ANC, DP, Inkatha and trade unions favour is an all- or multi-party conference.

- **Responsibility for managing the transition:** (how do the regime and its negotiating partners share responsibility for administration and government whilst negotiating a final outcome?) This is where the concept of an interim government figures strongly and is generally supported by the government, the ANC, DP, Inkatha and the unions.

- **Popular legitimacy for the final outcome:** (how do we find out

what popular backing there is for what has been negotiated?) This is where the idea of a constituent assembly or a national referendum figures. The ANC, PAC and unions strongly favour this, whereas the government and Inkatha tend to favour a referendum. In fact, once the process has unfolded this far, either one will serve the purpose.

**Q**uite probably what one will see happening is a number of multi-party conferences leading to multi-party commissions of inquiry into various government functions, e.g. health, housing, security, education etc. From these will emerge policy recommendations and personalities that will form the infra-structure of an interim-type government.

The tricameral parliament with its executive president will increasingly defer decisions until it receives recommendations from the interim government.

There may even be an interim referendum to mandate an interim government to continue with its work until it has successfully negotiated a final outcome which hopefully will be a non-racial democracy. These final proposals can then be put to a final popular test.

The fifth and final point to remember is that given our history, ideological differences, racial/cultural/ethnic diversity, as well as our declining/stagnant socio-economic situation, we have a high propensity for transitional violence which will pose severe challenges to stability and the negotiated transition.

In short, South Africa's quest for democracy is not as easy as some pretend, nor as futile as others predict. We have the potential for it, but certainly also a demonstrable capacity to squander it. Let us encourage those who have the ability to prevent this not to sit on their hands.

Dr Van Zyl Slabbert is Idasa's director of policy and planning.



# Non-racialism: gathering the fragile threads

**What do we mean or understand by non-racialism?  
How will the general principle be translated into  
specific policies and practices? DON FOSTER  
suggests that the debate is still in its infancy.**



Recently even the National Party has opened its membership ranks, though it is most doubtful whether the NP endorses anything like a principle of fully-fledged non-racialism. Such manoeuvres do, however, beg more precise answers to the question of how non-racialism is to be boundaried.

A perception of non-racialism as fragile is also due to its relatively recent development both as a principle and as a practice. Certainly the development of the principle goes back to the 1930s and '40's with the Communist Party of South Africa and various trade unions responsible for early notions. The Congress movement developed the principle further during the 1950s and it took centre-stage in the 1955 Freedom Charter, albeit with questions remaining about precise interpretation of the "national groups and races" also prevalent in that august document.

However, in practice non-racialism was only installed as

recently as 1969 in terms of membership of the ANC and 1985 regarding its national executive committee, while the present year has seen some fuss about continuing separatism of the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses.

The 1980s also saw a certain amount of turbulence within the ranks of the National Forum regarding the meaning in practice of anti-racism. It was only a few months ago that Sansco and Nusas merged in the establishment of the practice rather than the principle of non-racialism.

Let us not overstate the case. Indeed enormous credit is due, particularly to the Congress movement, and in recent years to the UDF and trade unions, for the fairly firm foothold that non-racialism has managed to gain in the imagination of many people. Also let us not misunderstand. Non-racialism (of course in full combination with the other three key principles mentioned above) is the most central and precious principle and practice in the struggle against racism both here and abroad. That is precisely why questions have to be asked: because it is so important. It is for the future that we need to pose questions about non-racialism. First, what exactly do the various political parties and trade unions mean by non-racialism or where do they stand in relation to non-

Racism has been the dominant social organising principle in South Africa for some 340 years. What do we have to replace this dominant ideology? In this transition period it may be worthwhile to reflect quite critically on this question.

A decade or so ago, Neville Alexander alerted us to the surprising fact that, given its centrality, so little attention has been paid to the issues of "race" and racism in South Africa. Now, with violence and transition upon us, the position has not substantially changed: racism has not been given its due attention.

What is racism? Following Robert Miles ("Racism" published by Routledge, London, 1989) we may say that racism is an ideology: a social and psychological process of signification of the "other" as different and inferior. Nobody doubts the implication of capitalism in this process, particularly in South Africa, but most commentators now tend to see the relationship between capitalism

and racism as a contingent and shifting, rather than as a necessary and static, one. There is little need to debate the case of racism here. South Africa has been, is at present and will be for some time yet, a racist society.

What do we have to challenge racism? Over the years the liberation movements in South Africa have developed four main principles to combat and challenge the racist order: non-racialism, democracy, class-transformation and – rather belatedly – non-sexism. All four are, or should be held to be, necessary and intertwined for positive social change to occur. However, let us focus only on the first: non-racialism.

What do we mean or understand by non-racialism? It is a question not often posed. Despite its scarcity, the question deserves closer critical scrutiny.

In a recent popular and worthwhile book, "The Unbreakable Thread: non-racialism in South Africa" (Ravan Press, 1990), Julie Fredrickse has made the case that non-racialism should be viewed as an "unbreakable thread". In her view, non-racialism is the core thread or common principle running through the Congress-aligned liberation movements. This may be, yet I wish to differ from Fredrickse. In a recent inaugural address, "On racism: virulent mythologies

and fragile threads", I suggested that non-racialism may better be treated in terms of a metaphor of "fragile threads", for the following reasons:

- Principles, forces or struggles against racism are of necessity quite fragile, as any rudimentary grasp of contemporary events in Britain, the USA or even Eastern Europe will testify.

- Contemporary knowledge of exactly how to challenge and transform racism is itself rather more fragile and fragmentary that we would care to admit in public places.

- The forces of racism are, unhappily, rather robust – again testified by present-day UK and USA. Racism comes back in new forms, disguises and with a range of subtleties.

- Although typically and primarily associated with the ANC and allies, it now seems that non-racialism has been embraced as a key principle by all organisations in the broad liberation movement. However, they do not all necessarily mean the same thing by the term non-racialism. There may even be competing views about what is meant by non-racialism. Some may label the principle and strategy as anti-racism. Therefore the term may be depicted better by the notion of numerous "threads" rather than the singular.

racialism as a key principle? Here is a suggested task for Idasa: gather this information as comprehensively and clearly as possible.

Then begins a second and perhaps more important set of questions; questions that will undoubtedly rage for years to come. How will the general principle of non-racialism be translated into specific policies and practices? For instance we may agree upon a practice of affirmative action in service of the principle of non-racialism. But what will be its boundaries? At what sites and in what manner will it best be effective? To what extent? And where will affirmative action lead to passivity rather than activity?

**W**hat exactly should the policy of non-racialism prescribe in respect of education, health and welfare, land and housing, legislation and the courts, as well as in the arenas of arts, culture and national symbols? In some of these areas debate has started; in others, questions regarding the practicalities of non-racialism have hardly begun to emerge. Take education for instance. In the United States, desegregation of educational institutions has been a fraught issue for many years, with few clear answers. Yet locally, in this respect we have hardly started. In economic terms what will have changed if whites in the main remain wealthy (and retain ownership) while blacks generally stay poor? Certainly "race"-consciousness will not be much altered.

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**'Non-racialism, rooted in negatives and refusals, will itself require transformation into positives'**

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Two final thoughts in an effort to stimulate debate. First, it seems that non-racialism – of necessity forged in resistance politics, thus centrally rooted in negatives and refusals – will itself require transformation into positives: aims, goals, policies and practices. How is this to be done? Secondly, a suggestion. In its most positive sense the principle/policy of non-racialism/anti-racism should (like some recent strands of feminist thinking) entertain and embody a paradox: the striving for a bond of common identity along with the recognition and tolerance of differences.

Non-racialism is certainly a most laudatory dream: it is time to consider more carefully its practice.

**Don Foster is professor of psychology at the University of Cape Town.**

*(Copies of Prof Foster's inaugural address, delivered in August 1991, may be obtained from Idasa's Media Department, 1 Penzance Road, Mowbray 7700)*

# Flurry over symbols a handy bypass?

**The intensity with which the question of a potential national flag and anthem has been contested would seem to suggest that the divisive attitudes and assumptions of the past remain bottle-necked below the surface of evolving political relations.**

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**By Erika Coetzee**

**T**he furore which has erupted around the flag and anthem proposed for South Africa's participation in the Olympic Games appears to have grabbed the public imagination. With the obvious exception of the resistance demonstrated around the imposition of VAT, few issues in the course of 1991 have enjoyed such fervent and spontaneous attention.

The themes that underlie the debate around symbols for a "new South Africa" are clearly fundamental ones: national unity, representation, inclusivity, democracy, breaking with the past. There seems to be a desire to find ways of expressing a novel common identity: from the design of new bank notes to the furtive media glimpses at the dress Miss SA will wear at the Miss World competition. Yet it is the symbols that will accompany South African athletes to the Olympics in Barcelona that have catapulted this trend into the limelight.

Newspaper letter columns have been littered with contributions from pro and anti factions. Front-page results from phone-in polls engendered vehement new rounds of debate. Suburban Saturday afternoons, traditionally reserved for uninterrupted communion with TopSport, have become tentative sites for reflection on the nature of national symbols. A wave of passionate opinion has suddenly emerged out of what is often regarded as the politically apathetic middle class.

It is understandable that public interest may veer towards this particular aspect of the political transition taking place in South Africa: national symbols are, after all, the more visible and tangible manifestations of the process of nation-building. To many, they are more accessible than constitutional negotiations, more immediate and familiar than "building a culture of democracy". It is thus not surprising that active participation in the debate around appropriate symbols – be it nostalgic allegiance to the Springbok or support for the neutral compromise of Beethoven – seems to outweigh responses to, say, the Law Commission's proposed Bill of Rights.

The intense reaction evoked by the proposed symbols then seems to reveal a popu-

lar doorway into the prevailing political process; it appears to indicate that the public is involved and concerned, impassioned by the prospect of new nationhood as South Africa is reintroduced to the international arena.

Yet there is also something disconcerting about this fervent interest in Olympic symbols, and the outrage and indignation voiced in relation to them. Like the symbols themselves, the reactions they evoke represent a larger network of associations and ideas. Expressing attachment to a flag or emblem is in itself a token way of communicating a range of related beliefs and loyalties. In the "spirit of reconciliation", lingering prejudice, anger and fear may be obscured by the seemingly open debate around a range of "new South African" issues and catch phrases. The intensity with which the question of a potential national flag and anthem has been contested would seem to suggest that the divisive attitudes and assumptions of the past remain bottle-necked below the surface of evolving political relations.

**I**t is almost as if this debate has created an alternative route for the expression of anger, resentment, indignation: a route which does not require grappling directly with people or groups, or with the historically loaded categories of race and ethnicity. By focusing on the symbols themselves, it bypasses the whole complex mass of beliefs and attitudes about others that is tied up in the process of change. People are exempted from addressing one another; instead, they can re-direct their feelings about the past and the future towards this safer, inanimate common sphere.

It is obviously necessary for South Africa to embark on a process of finding inclusive and appropriate national symbols. The danger lies in skipping the basics: the development of democratic values, political tolerance, social understanding. Without addressing the cultural exclusivity of the past and the divisions that persist in many hearts and minds, the search for truly representative common symbols is likely to occupy many more reams of newspaper.

**Erika Coetzee is a regional co-ordinator in the Western Cape office of Idasa.**

## Idasa to train for democracy

In 1992 the Johannesburg office of Idasa will become a Training Centre for Democracy. After five years of working for democracy in South Africa, Idasa wants to ensure that its work is multiplied throughout urban and rural communities in the country and it is hoped that the new centre will contribute to this.

Central to the Training Centre will be the concept of citizenship. Creating and sustaining democracy in South Africa will require the exercise of responsible citizenship at all levels of society.

From the community activist establishing a civic or single-issue campaign through to the executive struggling to establish a new culture of democracy within the workplace, essential requirements are personal and organisational skills, the values and the tools for creating democracy, and an experience of a growing network of colleagues.

The Training Centre will use non-formal and continuing education strategies to foster and strengthen a culture of democracy. Special attention will be paid to the development and evaluation of courses so that the centre can become a testing ground for new approaches to education for democracy.

Initially, three course levels will be offered. The first will be a longer course for community based "democracy animators" – emergent community leaders who can take skills back into their organisations, whether in civics, political organisations or other voluntary associations.

The second will focus on young people and students – who will become committed to democracy and learn ways of developing it.

The third will be for those who must come to terms with the emerging democracy in South Africa – in the civil service, business and other institutions where coping with the democratic culture of community-based organisations and their demands requires special insight and skill.

Idasa staff, with their experience of working for democracy, will join invited resource people and international scholars in leading the training programmes. Although based in Johannesburg, students will come to the Centre from all over the country. International students will be welcomed, especially from other parts of Africa.

*(More information about courses will be available from the Johannesburg office in January.)*

## SELF-DEFENCE

# The self-defence violence spiral

**The sharp increase in criminal and political violence is making South Africans from all walks of life feel unsafe and insecure. The parameters of self-defence was discussed at a recent Idasa seminar in Pretoria.**

By Bea Roberts

**W**hen the Idasa staff in Pretoria sat down to plan a public seminar around the issues of gun control and self-defence in October, they found themselves confronted by a range of related issues.

These issues had started appearing in the press more and more frequently, in the form of feature articles, editorials, news reports, and readers' letters. It is clear that South Africans of all walks of life feel unsafe and insecure – on the streets, in their homes, and about their futures. The sharp increase in criminal and political violence has led to groups and individuals in all spheres working out ways of protecting their property, their families and their communities. To this end arms sales have escalated and the number of community-based defence units and neighbourhood watch organisations is continually on the increase.

However, the discussion around self-defence extends further, to the issue of private armies and the fact that political groupings have established, or are in the process of establishing, military units or commandos to defend their political ideals. All these facts give rise to a host of questions, some of which were used to brief the various speakers and to focus discussion.

How far does the right to self-defence extend? What controls, if any, should there be on the possession and bearing of arms? What limits could or should be imposed on groups who form formal or informal associations in order to protect their own? What role could or should the police force be playing in an attempt to create a safer, more secure society? At what point, if ever, is military defence of political ideals legitimate – and how does the existence of private armies affect the present climate of negotiations? And, perhaps one of the most important questions: what will the long-term effects of the current emphasis on arms and defence

be on this society? What kind of future environment are we creating?

The keynote address of the seminar was given by Prof Fink Haysom of the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at Wits. He placed the question of self-defence firmly in a legal context, explaining that the law does not allow self-defence as such, but that a person will have exemption from prosecution if s/he can prove that a harmful action was taken in self-defence. Elements which constitute such an action include the following: it can only be used in defence of persons (personal integrity), and property; it cannot be pre-emptive; the means used must be necessary (i.e. other avenues must be considered); and the act of defence must be reasonable, not excessive.

Haysom was particularly critical of the police force, pointing out that the general perception of the police was that they were ineffective in protecting citizens, and that this had led to black and white communities insisting on the right to defend themselves.

He said white communities were generally more concerned with the protection of their property, while one of the major concerns of black people was the ineffective policing of political violence and mass attacks. The spate of attacks on commuter trains was merely one case in point. There were also widespread claims and documentary evidence of police partiality and one-sided intervention. Haysom stressed that these perceptions created the conditions for violence and the formation of defence units.

Discussing civil defence units and other collective forms of self-defence, he pointed out the importance of good organisation and accountability. The Peace Accord, for instance, states that defence units should not fall under the control of one particular political party, and that such defence units and the police force had an obligation to liaise with one another. A reciprocal engagement would



be beneficial – civilian defence units could provide the framework for greater community participation in policing, and promote the idea that all citizens have a right and a duty to security and self-protection.

The first panel discussion was entitled "Arms Possession: The Implications". It was soon clear from audience response and participation that gun ownership and possible measures of control are extremely sensitive issues.

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**'Communities are desperate for protection and will do anything in their power to create a safer environment'**

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The panellists took widely opposing views, Jeanette Schmid from Nicro stating that guns are our substitute for communication, and perpetuate the current cycle of violence in our communities. She quoted Vivienne Stavros of Wits as suggesting that a gun is a cue for aggression, and that the visibility of a gun will heighten the negative tension of a situation. Any potential violence becomes focused on the weapon.

Schmid went on to discuss possible alternatives to gun usage, ranging from changing legislation to individual and community action (for instance, training in mediation and conflict resolution). However, recognising that the current violence and the trend of the pervasive usage of weapons must be attributed to political and socio-economic factors, she stated that the most urgent intervention needs to be on the macro level.

"Political tensions must be resolved,

employment opportunities and a better quality of life must be provided. Only when all South Africans have a vested interest in their future will they refrain from committing acts of such violence. We need to be actively creating a culture of human rights and of peace. Citizens need to have a sense that the societal institutions are able to control crime and violence."

John Welch, chairperson of the South African Gun Owners' Association, on the other hand, argued firmly that the right to keep and bear arms is a fundamental right of all citizens as a means of self-protection. He distinguished between self-defence and self-protection, the former being the application of violence against an aggressor. Self-protection, however, is a state of physical and mental preparedness, which does not necessarily mean being armed.

Welch stated that denying citizens the right to keep and bear arms was to "take away the very last resort within a democratic system".

He argued strongly that mental preparedness for gun possession was crucial, but that a competent and armed citizenry would play an effective and positive role towards the reduction of crime.

The next session, entitled "Private Armies – Protecting Political Interests", was excellently chaired by Dr Jakkie Cilliers of the Institute for Defence Politics. In his introduction to the session he briefly looked at models of transition, and suggested that the process of democratisation in South Africa was to an increasing degree occurring through pact formation, of which the Peace Accord is one example. If this process is to continue, two essential rules must prevail: the property

rights of the middle class and the position of the armed forces should not be threatened.

Picking up on the second point, Cilliers pointed out that private armies within a democracy were clearly a contradiction in terms. South Africans should ascribe to the principle that the military and police in a democracy can only have allegiance to the state, not to political parties. "Our legacy is one of various armed and police forces serving the sectarian interests of particular groupings within our society... In the end a democratic South Africa can only have one police force and one military force".

The final session of the day, "Protection of Community, Family, and Property", was addressed by a range of panellists from various self-protection units. All the speakers reit-

erated the concern of citizens over their safety and security, and there was agreement that co-operation between members of various groups and communities was essential. "Good neighbourliness" could also alleviate the problem.

Elaine Barsotti from Sandton Sentry suggested that the collective protection of communities should rest with the state and the various municipalities.

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**'The culture of violence will be with us for a while to come'**

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Mr B Bulunga of a Phola Park defence unit hit hard at the state, saying that the establishment of township defence units was entirely forced by circumstance; communities are desperate for protection which has not been forthcoming, and will do anything in their power to create a safer environment.

The seminar was summarised and closed by Paul Graham, Programme Director of Idasa, who made a few final comments: we are not yet a normal society; the culture of violence will be with us for a while to come. South Africans, black and white should have the right to security, but do not. It is the responsibility of the government of the day to provide its citizens with security and protection. In this period of transition, however, whilst working towards a democratic society, people must be prepared to assume responsibility, become accountable, and to develop creative codes of conduct. It is time that all South Africans get a good night's sleep.

**Bea Roberts is a regional co-ordinator in Idasa's Pretoria office.**

# Bring us the evidence....

In spite of repeated assurances that it will act against errant policeman, Cape Town residents are still waiting for the SAP to deliver on its promises.

By Vincent Williams

**T**here may be one or two policemen who are acting illegally, but I give you my assurance that if they are caught, they will be prosecuted..."

This is how the Minister of Law and Order, Mr Hennis Kriel, responded in a TV2 programme when he was questioned about the alleged complicity of the security forces in violent attacks on township residents. In Cape Town where the so-called taxi-war has been raging for many months now, community attempts to expose alleged partial behaviour by policemen have not met with an efficient response by the police.

In a memorandum to the Minister of Law and Order about various incidents of violence in Khayelitsha, the ANC Women's League notes:

"In a number of cases documented below, the police are implicated directly as active participants. In other cases the lack of investigation or other action by the police creates grounds for believing that the security forces are indirectly supporting the forces responsible for these attacks."

The memorandum cites the case of David Ngqeza, a civic activist who was woken up at 1.40am on August 15 when a stone and a petrol bomb were thrown through his window. Outside his house were a number of men, including two whites and three special constables with shotguns. When Ngqeza attempted to step outside, he was fired upon, but managed to get away and hide. While hiding he heard his wife crying as she was being questioned by the men. He also heard a gunshot. After the men left, Ngqeza returned to his house where he found his wife lying on the ground, her stomach covered in blood. She was taken to hospital where she later died.

In a separate memorandum, the Cape Town based Urban Monitoring and Awareness Committee (UMAC) cites an extract from a sworn affidavit in their possession:

"At about 1am (July 23) residents of M Section (in Khayelitsha) heard shots fired. The shots appeared to be coming from the guns of men who were shouting, 'come out comrades, we're from Webta'. Behind the black men were two white policemen standing on the pillars of the vibracrete wall, wearing ordinary blue/grey uniforms. During the attack a yellow and a blue van pulled

up and all the attackers ran to it. The van's number was BFG217B, A60. One of the residents saw a tall white man with his balaclava lifted up to his forehead, shooting. The attackers were responsible for burning many shacks by using petrol and some sort of a flaming projectile."

The UMAC memorandum states: "The common denominator underscoring the evidence collected over the past months indicates that white men, often identified as policemen because of the uniform they were wearing, are implicated in the violence. Often the men wear balaclavas and seem to be the leaders of the raiding commandos. They speak in Afrikaans."

**O**n October 11 Ms Rachel Browne of UMAC handed an affidavit to General Acker, the Western Cape Commissioner of Police, concerning an incident during which a man, dressed in police uniform, was hit in the face with a hammer and sustained severe injuries. An investigation conducted by Colonel Wessels of the CID generated a report which stated that police records contain no information of any member of the security forces injured in the manner described on the night in question. The implication of this report is that either the man in uniform was not a policeman or that it was a policeman who, realising that he was acting illegally, did not report the incident. Alternatively, though one wants to accept the bona fides of the police investigation, the police are not prepared to divulge information in which their members are implicated.

Another incident noted in the UMAC memorandum concerns the release on bail of a positively identified suspect in the murder of Gladman Ngethu on September 12. When asked about this, the investigating officer in charge, Captain van Braackel, responded by saying that if people have a home address and a place of work, the police do not generally oppose bail.

Of approximately 30 affidavits handed to the police concerning incidents of violence in which police personnel are implicated, only the one cited above has been reported back on. This is despite the fact that General Acker has ordered an investigation into the allegations contained in the affidavits. According to the police, investigations are still under way.

In early October a Joint Forum, consisting of various independent service organisations as well as the ANC and the ANC Women's League, was established in Cape Town to specifically address the issue of the police in relation to the ongoing violence. At a meeting between the Forum and a police team led by General Acker on October 11, a list of proposals was submitted to the police.

The police accepted the right of complainants to receive regular reports, but did not accept the right of access to police records and joint investigations. They also agreed that all police personnel and vehicles should be clearly identifiable. Furthermore, they agreed to the establishment of an independent monitoring structure under the auspices of the City Council on condition that such a structure included the Lingilethu West Town Council and the mayor and town clerk of Khayelitsha. They, however, had reservations about granting such a structure the right to monitor police action.

A proposal regarding the withdrawal of the Riot Squad was rejected as irresponsible because, according to the police, the Riot Squad was there to protect lives and property. They would, however, consider the removal of certain officers if circumstances warranted this.

The response of the police to the Forum's proposals displays a marked ignorance or perhaps a refusal to acknowledge the urgency of the situation and the seriousness of the allegations against them. They argue that the right to joint investigations and the monitoring of police actions are granted to the Regional and Local Dispute Resolution Committees and the Police Reporting Officer which are to be established in the terms of the National Peace Accord. Until such time as these structures are established (which may be a long time indeed) the police will continue to do their own investigations into allegations against them.

The police have to acknowledge that large sectors of the community do not believe that the perpetrators of violence will ever be brought to book, particularly given the suspicions of police complicity. The lack of results emanating from police investigations so far serves only to increase this lack of faith.

Vincent Williams is a regional co-ordinator in the Western Cape office of Idasa. (This article was written in mid-November.)

# World's women stake their claim

By Jacklyn Cock

The World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, held in Miami from November 8 to 12, brought together over a thousand women from 90 different countries.

It was one of the meetings to prepare for the Earth Summit in Brazil next June when heads of state from around the world will attend and develop an Earth Charter to regulate economic development and environmental protection for the planet. The World Women's Congress aimed to ensure that the Earth Charter has "a women's dimension".

The predominant emphasis of the congress was on the linkages between the global economic and environmental crises. The major sessions featured a panel of five women judges (from India, Sweden, Australia, Kenya and Guyana) to hear testimony from diverse women ranging from Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt movement in Kenya speaking on deforestation, to Rosalie Bertell from Canada talking on the threat of nuclear power and weapons to public health and the environment.

The congress exploded a powerful myth: that the military protects and defends us.

The reality, numerous women insisted, is that the military is the greatest single threat to security. As Rosalie Bertell said, "it is the military who are destroying the earth and they are doing it in the name of "national security". The main source of environmental destruction is "the smart bombs, not aerosol deodorants".

Three other themes emerged from the wealth of papers, films and talks presented: the first is that globally women are the shock absorbers of environmental problems. It is women who deal directly with the resource base, who, for example, gather wood and carry water in rural areas. It is mainly women who struggle to grow crops on eroded land and who are responsible for food preparation. The main victims of environmental degradation are underprivileged people and the majority of these are women.

The second theme is that increasingly it is women who are providing the energy and commitment to address environmental problems. But as Peggy Antrobus from the University of Barbados stressed, while women are cleaning up the mess at the local level, they are largely excluded from the institutions which create the mess in the first place. So the third theme was the political empow-

erment of women. The congress resolved that all decision-making bodies should be made up of "no more than 60 percent and no less than 40 percent membership of either sex". The general consensus was that women can create a "healthy planet" based on human rights and a more just world economic order.

The congress was appropriately held in Miami, the scene of one of the worst environmental crimes of the century - the destruction of the "river of grass", the Everglades. Once a vast ecosystem that covered four million acres, the Everglades now occupy a mere 10 percent of their original expanse. What remains of this magical place is largely due to the conservation efforts of a group of women, and one woman in particular, Marjorie Stoneman Douglas. Now 100 years old, she was present at the congress and received a standing ovation.

There are lessons for all of us from her life and the damage done to the Everglades; the first is a warning about the destructive power of irresponsible and greedy "development". The second is about the creative power of women.

Dr Jacklyn Cock is a sociologist and based at the University of the Witwatersrand.

## The 'double shift' taking its toll?

By Ida Gartrell

With high hopes and great determination, Eshowe Child and Family Welfare launched Idasa's "Women in a New South Africa"

workshops as part of a women's rights project in August. Four workshops later (that's half-way through) we had to sit back and take stock of our goals and ideals.

Our women's rights project started in April with a workshop entitled "Tribute to Women". Enthusiastic participation, stimulating speakers, songs and poetry, and requests for more, more, more!

The "Women in a New South Africa" workshops fitted the bill exactly - workshops to run once a month, every second Saturday morning and afternoon. The great day dawned and 34 women arrived! Women from church, welfare, ANC and Inkatha organisations, unions and private individuals. They came from as far afield as Empangeni, Mandeni, Mtunzini, Amatikulu and Gingindlovu.



The end of that first workshop, "The Double Shift", saw everyone determined to commit themselves to the next five workshops, to bring along a friend, and maybe even start working towards a combined women's organisation. However, the next three workshops were attended by seven, six and four participants respectively!

The evaluation proved interesting. Feedback included difficulties with transport, choice of day, venue, time, remembering and over-commitment, fear of husbands, boyfriends, the topics discussed and the magnitude of women's problems. "Women lacked responsibility," they said, "were too lazy, were quite happy to follow, but not to lead. It was too risky."

However - once again - those who attended felt that the workshops were really

worthwhile and stimulating. They enjoyed meeting, learning, talking to other women, sharing ideas, and participating freely in discussions.

They were curious and wanted to see the end result. The commitment seemed to be there. And yet...? Have we been targetting the wrong women?

The workshops will continue until February. We decided to be more visible, have more face to face contact with other women, to hold "core" meetings separately from the workshops, and at the beginning of each meeting to check through our list of solutions and demands from the previous workshop - and ask whether any women had made any progress. Women, we felt, needed to know that they were making advances, however small, in the struggle for women's rights.

Ida Gartrell is a drama teacher and a town councillor in Eshowe.

The "Women in a New South Africa" workshop package is available from Idasa's Media Department (1 Penzance Rd, Mowbray 7700) at R16,00

# In the peace business

By Steve Collins

Until the beginning of 1991 the lower South Coast of Natal was associated with holidays in the sun and a place for a peaceful retirement home. That has changed this year as the violence that characterises the rest of the province began spreading into the area. At times as many as 70 people a month were being killed in the conflict between the ANC and Inkatha.

Peace talks and meetings – initiated by the police, the churches and even the regional leadership of both parties – had no tangible results. With the help of Natal Portland Cement, who have a quarry and factory in the area, Idasa brought together the major business interests in the area to discuss the violence.

The group which came together were motivated by concern for their workers as well as the adverse effects of the violence on business. A particular problem was the fact that many workers were being forced to “camp” during the night and were sleepy and tired at work. It was decided that rather than act of their own accord the business group would meet with both the parties and the SAP and that these discussions would be facilitated by Idasa.

Another decision was that Idasa would collect information and evidence about the violence as it was clear that there was very little trust in the police. The SAP accepted this and gave the business group the assurance that they would give their co-operation in these peace efforts.

One of the key issues was a Shaka's Day Rally scheduled to take place in September in the township of Gamalahke outside Port Shepstone, an area where the ANC had consolidated their support. The business group was able to put pressure on the police to ensure that the rally did not cause further violence. On the day I witnessed the most constructive liaison between the SAP and ANC, and

the SAP and IFP that I have seen in the last two years. The rally was a success on all counts. It was also as if a hiatus had been reached because after the rally the whole area was much calmer than before.

It was clear that the ANC and IFP accepted the business group as independent and impartial. Both parties committed themselves to peace and agreed that perpetrators of violence had to be dealt with as criminals, rather than acting with a political mandate. This – and the fact that the violence had subsided after the rally – moved us to raise the possibility of implementing the national Peace Accord which was signed after the rally. However, a week before the parties were to meet with business as facilitators in November a particularly brutal attack against IFP members at Mtengwane caused the local chief to withdraw. Both parties are however hoping that a planning meeting and implementation conference can take place early in the next year.

To keep the momentum going and to ensure that the Christmas period is a quiet one, the business group are funding an office with full-time para-legal staff. The main function of the office will be to help victims or witnesses of violence to get satisfactory police co-operation.

One aspect of creating peace is the issue of development in the region, which has a particularly high rate of unemployment. Idasa and Natal Portland Cement are assisting development in a peaceful community called Frankland and it is hoped that Frank-

land will become an example of how a peaceful community can attract development through organising and using all available avenues to secure funding.

Hopefully the peace process can also be consolidated next year to a point where the development of the whole sub-region can be explored.

Steve Collins is a regional co-ordinator in Idasa's Natal office.

## 'Counterposing collective rights with individual rights negates the struggle for national equality'

Dr Frene Ginwala, head of the research unit of the ANC, emphasised that the playing ground had to be levelled in the negotiation process. Transitional arrangements were needed for control over areas such as the security forces, the SABC, the management of financial resources and the civil service.

She said the government's view on this amounted to offering the liberation groups consultation but no decision-making powers – these groups were therefore in danger of getting responsibility without power.

Dr Ginwala also argued that the timing of the constitution-making procedure was vital, as once principles had been agreed upon it would be in the interests of the National Party to prolong the process. Participants to the negotiations need to agree on the agenda, the constitutional principles and time frame.

Following on Prof Davis' assertion that the biggest constitutional battle would be fought in the area of economics, Prof Brian Kantor of the University of Cape Town, said that efforts to boost employment and revive the economy were frustrated by political instability. He said World Bank involvement would not only boost the economy and international confidence in the country but would also provide access to much needed expertise.

“But this assistance will only be provided if the ANC okays it with the Americans who hold veto rights in the World Bank.” said Kantor.

Dr Patrick Ncube, of the S A labour and Development Research Unit, said World Bank and IMF money would give South Africa, currently classed as “insane” due to political instability, a “stamp of sanity”.

Chantél Edwards works as Media Assistant for Idasa

## Almost an Oscar!

The Idasa video “Democracy” has been awarded several medals by the National TV Association.

In the Western Cape regional section the director, Dermot Judge, picked up a gold medal in the Social Awareness category and won a bronze in the overall, Premier category.

At the national award ceremony at the end of November, the video was the only entry to receive a medal in the Social Awareness category where it took a bronze.

The video documents the activities and discussions of a racially mixed group of teenagers grappling with the questions of competition vs co-operation, trust-building and other issues which make up the process of democracy. Their experiences are interspersed with comments by leading figures like Van Zyl Slabbert, Thabo Mbeki, Julian Ogilvie Thompson and Barbara Masekela.

● “Democracy” is available from Idasa's Media Department, 1 Penzance Rd, Mowbray 7700.

# Claiming the gains of development

**Trade unions estimate that unemployment is rising by 1 350 people per day in South Africa. Other sources say the underemployed and unemployed now outnumber those with formal jobs. Representatives of the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) spoke to SUE VALENTINE about the need for "development impact" programmes.**

doing the same work.

So what are the criteria for development advocated by the DBSA? They may seem obvious, but the failure of many development programmes to make a meaningful difference to the lives of those they aim to improve suggests the issues need to be considered carefully.

Most projects aim at certain socio-economic objectives which include enabling people to take responsibility for their own lives; improving the social

and physical environment; increasing employment; reducing poverty; stimulating economic growth and reducing imbalances in access to opportunities.

In order for a programme to succeed and to continue to succeed it must: address the needs of the community; be affordable; be acceptable to the community; be appropriate; make use of local resources; contribute to the community; be operable; be maintainable.

In essence, says Milne, the "development impact" approach looks not only at the physical needs of a community, but also at the resources contained within that community which can be accessed to benefit local residents and to prevent money from flowing out of the area to purchase materials from elsewhere.

**H**uman resources within any community targeted for development could include skilled and unskilled unemployed people; various organisations and certain institutions.

Inevitably constraints exist – both internal and external. Through careful planning, however, support mechanisms and alternative suggestions may address those obstacles.

Planning and support services would assist communities to take care of training needs (both technical and managerial) along with equipment and bridging costs.

The result, argues the DBSA, is that minimum external resources are used while the maximum participation of the community, through their human, financial, physical and technological resources, is ensured. The impact of such planning and resource utilisation means that community needs are met by involving that very same community.

Wealth created through employment, or payment for services, or use of local equipment remains in that community ready to generate and regenerate other initiatives. □

communities instead of involving individuals in the *process* of identifying and solving the problems of their region.

"This results in the people *watching* a road being built through their area when they could in fact participate in the process and benefit in terms of skills learned and income gained from involvement in the project," says MacLeod.

In the light of all this, MacLeod and Milne advocate a local resource intensive approach. This they say need not be risky and unproductive, and a soundly planned approach in conjunction with communities can be both cost and time efficient as well as a source for generating jobs, income and skills.

However they warn that a labour intensive approach is not simply a means of creating jobs and the panacea to the unemployment crisis; projects must be justifiable.

All important in the process is planning. It is only through close consultation with communities that a meaningful labour intensive strategy can be adopted.

They argue that a job which is planned along conventional lines cannot suddenly be altered to become labour intensive with vast numbers of workers being thrown into the task and expected to keep up with machines

suspicious of exactly what Idasa is meant to be for?

And perhaps if the South African government joined with the ANC joined with the SACP, something would actually get done, beyond the rhetoric and in the spirit of true socialism, about the human degradation due to inequality in so-called post-apartheid South Africa.

*C Knowles  
Cape Town*

*Idasa firmly opposes sloganeering and supports critical thought. Dr Boraine's editorial pointed out the implications that Eastern bloc communism had for the SACP and argued that the ANC should campaign seperately. – Editor*

## LETTERS

From Page 3

of the world, and linking this to the economic philosophy of socialism.

Is this not a very broad statement, which hides finer distinctions that should be brought to public knowledge, triggering critical thinking, and breaking expedient stereotypes which ideology likes to conserve?

In an issue which itself contains articles on the need for a media that fosters critical thinking, I was disappointed and led to be

**W**hile well-intentioned development programmes proliferate, all too often they develop only the physical environment but do little to empower communities because they do not serve basic needs such as creating employment and generating income for local residents.

This is the view of two senior technical specialists at the DBSA, Donald MacLeod and Chris Milne, who stress the importance – and the significant benefits – of assessing both the needs and resources of local communities before embarking on any development projects.

They point to various developers who claim to be uplifting the living conditions of people, when in actual fact people in the area are passive observers who do not gain jobs from the process.

DBSA figures for 1987 show 40 percent of construction was undertaken by only seven major companies. Eighty percent of the work was done by members of the Building Federation of South Africa (Bifsa) who it is claimed represent just 20 percent of the number of employers.

Part of the problem, according to Milne, lies in the approach of conventional development models where planning and execution (and ultimately the material benefit) is initiated and negotiated outside of the community where the project is based.

This usually results in only the physical requirements of the community being met whereas if another approach were adopted, many more needs could be addressed.

The conventional approach generally imports external resources to meet the educational, health or accommodation needs of