

EDITORIAL

Credibility in tatters

PRESIDENT DE KLERK has one last chance to restore his waning credibility in the eyes of longtime anti-Nationalists. That credibility was based on the courageous leadership he showed in his February 1990 speech, the speed with which he removed apartheid from the Statute Book, and his brave challenge to white conservatives in the referendum.

Today his reputation lies in tatters with most of those people. It has been destroyed by his party's arrogant ham-handedness in the CODESA negotiations, by the revelations of rampant corruption in the South African and homelands administrations, and, most damaging of all, by the crude attempts to hide the crimes which have been committed by the security forces and to protect

those who have been responsible for them.

President De Klerk's last chance of restoring his credibility lies in the hands of Lieutenant-General Pierre Steyn, the man he has appointed to investigate the activities of the Directorate of Covert Collection, that particularly degenerate component of the security forces.

If General Steyn turns out to be a man of integrity, who carries out his task fearlessly, and shares what he finds with Mr Justice Goldstone, as Mr De Klerk tells us that he has been instructed to do, then much may be saved. But if this is just another cover-up operation the De Klerk reputation will be damaged virtually beyond repair. ●

Disastrous failure by leaders

IN THE months after the collapse of CODESA the country was tossed from one crisis to another by political leaders, if one could call them that, who showed a fine aptitude for scoring party political debating points at one another's expense, and precious few of the qualities needed to get us out of the mess we are now in.

Nobody knows how many people died politically-related deaths in that time. However many it was, it was not enough to move those who hold high office in the Government, the ANC or KwaZulu to do anything effective about it. It took a long, hard look into the abyss which opened up at Bisho to bring at least some of them to their senses.

Mr De Klerk hastily called for an urgent meeting with Mr Mandela. Mr Mandela, in turn, gave a long, thoughtful and conciliatory interview to the Johannesburg *Star*, which showed that he shared many of the concerns about the dangerous state of drift in which we find ourselves. Now, at last, they have met.

Perhaps having plumbed the depths at Bisho, these two will have had brought sharply home to them just how recklessly they have been playing with our future.

Mr De Klerk, we hope, has realised that if that future is to depend on the support of the likes of Oupa Gqozo it will not be a democratic future at all.

By all means let the Nationalist Party go all out to win the first non-racial election, but for heaven's sake let it do it in such a way that, if it loses, it can still play a constructive and honourable part in making democracy work under some other government.

FROM MR MANDELA, for his part, we expect strong action to bring his radical supporters into line. It is no longer only the Nationalists who see the ante-diluvian ideas and antics of his allies in the Communist Party as something we do not need at all, either now or in our new society. He seems to have been badly shaken by the latest revelations about the state of the economy. We hope that his response will be to start telling his supporters that what the future offers them is not hand-outs but hard work, and an economic system, with a strong social welfare emphasis, where the most substantial rewards will go to those who do work hard and those who invest imaginatively.

CHIEF MINISTER Buthelezi's reaction to the De Klerk/Mandela agreements has been profoundly disturbing. We wish that he would stop calling his troops constantly to battles which nobody can win and, instead, would start arguing cogently, constructively and unthreateningly for a regional dispensation which would give the people of his region and others a large measure of control over their everyday lives.

From the Democratic Party we expect an injection of good sense and moderation into what, these last few months, has become an increasingly immoderate and dangerously polarising slanging match.

In short, what we now expect from people who claim to be our leaders, is some sign that they can lead. ●