

TRIP TO MOUTSE (KWANDEBELE)

BY GAMIEDA JAFFAR

ON Saturday, 23 April, 1988, a group of students from the University of the Witwatersrand (Faculty of Political Studies), accompanied Ms Gamieda Jaffar and Mr Louis Bredenkamp to Moutse in KwaNdebele. These students wanted to experience, first hand, the practical reality of life in KwaNdebele. The benefits of the trip are expressed in excerpts from letters of appreciation written to the Southern Transvaal office:—

Richard Dickman writes: "At the outset, I should express my gratitude to IDASA for having organised the visit . . . What best sums up my impressions of the trip, and I think this is the view of most of those who went, is to say that I learnt a great deal. I can say without reservation that the opportunity afforded us for interaction on a social basis was very valuable indeed . . . I was moved by the hospitality we were shown, and by the ability of people who have suffered so much to exhibit such warmth towards us . . . In retrospect, I recognise that as much as it was a learning experience for us, it was also a learning experience for the people of Moutse, who saw that there are white people who can associate with their compatriots in an atmosphere where race is not an issue. This, alone, will not solve the problems of this country, but perhaps it will go some of the way towards preparing us for a new society."

Tom Mosoko felt that "The smallness of the village makes the whole idea of making Moutse a homeland absurd. People there don't want to be incorporated in KwaNdebele or Lebowa . . . The idea of incorporation is simply not economically viable. It is absurd to say the least."

Mark Devenney explained: "Students of political science, all too often become enmeshed in highly theoretical and abstract concepts, far removed from the practical reality of life and intersocial relations. As politics students at Wits



Wits students surrounded by the children of the Moutse village.

then, the opportunity to spend some time with the Moutse community, an opportunity made possible for us by IDASA, and to discover the practical reality of apartheid first hand, was welcomed! The benefits of the trip proved to be far more a 'political learning experience' however, and perhaps the best aspect of the weekend was the interaction between peoples of all race groups — interaction which South Africa's segregated social structures refuse to allow.

"From our moment of arrival in Moutse we were treated as old friends. No holds were barred, a situation which one found a little uncomfortable at times, with the Moutse community laying on a feast for us. As that first evening progressed all facades were slowly stripped away and we mixed with each other as people of South Africa. As evening became morning, the drum beat of Africa lulled the group into sleep, whilst the mothers of the nation danced the dark away. In the space of a few hours, discrimination which had been entrenched in successive generations, became immaterial. The dawning of Sunday morning, with us sleeping peacefully in the homes of the people of Moutse, seemed to present hope for a future democratic dispensation in our land."

Mpho Nang emphasised that "The trip was a real-life experience because I thought that I didn't have anything to learn, because I thought I knew it all, but the trip proved me wrong. Now I know that I can learn new things from an old story. It was amazing for me to see the zeal and the commitment of people in dealing with issues concerning the problems of our country — especially the youth who are prepared to do anything it takes to see the liberation of oppressed people in this country."

Arthur Mosikare commented: "Cheers to IDASA for what it did. We live in a country where the press is under severe attack as a result making us unable to read and know about the realities of our country. Fortunately IDASA found an alternative. We received a very warm welcome from our hosts — the treatment they gave us would make any reasonable man conclude that the people of Moutse are not violent. They did not fight because they like violence but because they resisted being deprived of their South African citizenship — which is their right! . . . It's a pleasure for me to inform IDASA that I subscribe to their ideology and that we shall support it until it has accomplished its wish."

Mathe Sam who lives in the area

Northern Transvaal (cont.)

wrote: "We were now faced (in Moutse) with a stark silhouette of abject poverty; a distinct pattern of homelessness shrouded in despair. This is to a large extent a consequence of a deliberate effort by the government to make 'homelands' economically unviable. But apart from such experiences, I think the trip was really worth it in the sense that it improved race relations.

"White students actually felt really at home and to a lesser degree comfortable, despite the strangeness of the situation. The social interaction between students and local people there was quite remarkable. I guess I felt more at home than others due to the mere fact that I also live under these conditions.

"All the weird stories and nightmarish accounts about vigilantes attacking people at night and police shooting teargas, were quite common to me. But I believe that since white students are not subjected to such callous experiences, most of them must have been shocked

"I think that through such visits people of other races will be able to articulate our problems comprehensively and perhaps become sensitive about our plight as the oppressed masses People back home (in Moutse) were quite inspired and to some degree comforted by these strange visitors."

TRANSVAAL - EDUCATIONAL TRIP TO SOWETO

ON 2 March, 1988 Mr George Peffer took a group of women from the Women for Peace organisation to Soweto. The objective was to provide the women concerned with direct, first-hand information on living conditions in Soweto. It is clear that the trip was most educative as expressed in the following excerpts from letters written to the office by members of the group: —

Mrs Tapper of Parkmore —
"Thank you very much for taking us around Soweto . . . Before I went I



Women on the tour in Mshenguville, Mofolo.

was apprehensive and wondered how safe it was, but once I was in Soweto I found the tour so enlightening. I think it would be tremendous if more whites could see how blacks live . . . It really was a most worthwhile experience."

Mrs Wood of Bryanston wrote —
"A word of thanks for taking a group into Soweto on 2 March. I was very pleased that some members who live in Soweto were able to join us . . . I certainly think that many of us were made more aware of how some of our fellow South Africans live."

News from the regions — EAST CAPE

LECTURE SERIES ON CONTENDING IDEOLOGIES

HOW much do you know about the ideologies around which a future South Africa may be shaped? This is the question put to Port Elizabethans as they are invited to the latest series of lectures conducted by the Eastern Cape Office.

Called "Contending Ideologies on Trial", IDASA arranges for one speaker to speak in support of an ideology and for another to oppose it. This is very instructive to the audience because their attention is drawn not only to the positive aspects of an ideology, but also to any negative aspects. This is why the Series is entitled "on trial".

It has also proved very provocative to have speakers opposing each other and the audience participating in the debate far more readily as a result. We have attempted to keep these discussions away from an academic level so that they have more appeal for the "man in the street". Speakers also keep their talks as relevant as possible to the current South African situation.

At the time of writing, lectures and debates have been held on Marxism, Socialism, Communism and Liberalism. Still to come are Nationalism, Capitalism and Fascism. They are held weekly and in view of the success of the concept the entire series will probably be re-run in the second half of the year.

IDASA CONSULTS WITH DEMOCRATIC ORGANISATIONS

BY BRAAM VILJOEN

IN the Transvaal during the last weekend of March 1988 a special weekend workshop took place. IDASA, Five Freedoms Forum, JODAC, Nusas, Jews for Social Justice, ECC, Women for Peace, Black Sash etc. sent delegates to analyse, assess and discuss the current political situation and to review programmes, strategies and co-ordination of efforts by the various organisations working towards fundamental change.

Dr Van Zyl Slabbert spoke on his perceptions of developments in white politics and a paper was read from a people's organisation.

An in-depth discussion took place on the proposed legislation on foreign funding of extra-parliamentary political organisations. The effect this could have on participating bodies and various

means of opposing the proposed bill were also discussed.

In the workshops the issues of human rights, the municipal elections later this year, group areas and education received particular attention. A very valuable session was held on the co-ordination of programmes for the months to come.

The regional office in Pretoria had a "feast" for once. They could rejoice with the people from Moutse on the ruling of the Appeal Court in Bloemfontein which ruled the action of the State President to incorporate the 3 Moutse areas into KwaNdebele as illegal. IDASA, in this part of the world has been particularly active in conscientising the public on the fallacies of homeland-development as applied in the specific case of KwaNdebele. So at least this was good news — while it lasts

Eastern Cape (cont.)

EDUCATIONIST FORUM ON PEOPLES EDUCATION

This is a forum where Port Elizabeth teachers of all persuasions meet and discuss issues which are important to them. The ultimate goal of the exercise is for the educationists to resolve differences instilled by different Teachers Unions and by different teaching environments and to concentrate on commonality of purpose. For all of them this should be to give relevant education, to the best of their abilities, in a non-racial educational system.

On 10 March 1988, Prof Shirley Walters of the University of the Western Cape, addressed such a group of educationists. Her presentation on "Peoples Education" was quite outstanding and certainly demystified the concept for a lot of teachers in the audience. Once one understands the glaring simplicity of the demands for a relevant educational system it is not difficult to see why Peoples Education holds

such an appeal for the great majority of South African school-going children.

As a result of this inspiring address there was an immediate call from some in the audience for more "contact" between teachers from

different racially segregated schools. Subsequently such meetings have been held at the homes of some of the teachers and this has been most gratifying.

By Keith Wattrus
Regional Director

News from the regions — WESTERN CAPE

UCT MBA STUDENTS GO ON IDASA TOWNSHIP TOUR

BY THAABIT ALBERTUS
(Regional Director)

ON Tuesday 22 March, IDASA-Western Cape co-ordinated a township tour for 58 MBA students from the University of Cape Town. The tour was conducted in the same manner as our "open" tours i.e. an interactive visit during which the participants have the opportunity of speaking with people from the township. It was very important for the participants, some of whom have already entered the business world, to be

exposed to the conditions under which the majority of their workforce live in the hope of them better understanding the legitimate demands of workers, and when they themselves join their respective managements and face the worker on the other side fighting for survival.

We believe that the system thrives on misinforming and imparting fear and suspicion amongst South Africans. When arranging tours of this nature we always expect different impressions from the participants. One of the feedbacks received from participants this time is that the political, social and economic realities faced by our people in the township are nothing unique but a Third World problem. The participant went further by mentioning places like Nairobi as an example. This is to me forgivable because people are always bombarded by a justification of legitimacy of starvation, lack of houses, monopolisation and exploitation. These are always justified by saying they have nothing to do with the policies and the mode of production but with the traditions of some people.

The experiences that the people from the township shared with the students were really eye-opening. Most of the participants did not understand the reason for the presence of the army in the township because the borders are up in the Northern Transvaal? One of their highlights were the survival strategies that people were employing, especially in the informal sector.

The appalling conditions of living in health hazard areas cannot be disassociated from the policies that are producing third world and first world economic inequalities. They are a direct result of the system. Moving through KTC, Old Crossroads, Lusaka and Khayelitsha whilst being a person from a privileged community does make a difference. The impact that the tour had can be summed up by

HISTORIC CONFERENCE ON THE FREEDOM CHARTER AND THE FUTURE 15th AND 16th JULY, 1988

IDASA is presenting a national conference on the Freedom Charter and the Future in Cape Town over 15-16 July this year. The conference will accommodate 350 persons and will be held in the Robert Leslie Building at UCT. Registration for the conference is now open and prospective participants are advised to book well in advance. Registration forms are available from the national office (see details below).

The conference will attempt to expose white South Africans to the Freedom Charter, a document around which the non-racial democratic philosophy has been based since 1955. Prominent speakers will debate the contents of the charter with a view to gaining a clearer picture as to how the document will affect a post-apartheid South Africa in social, political and economic terms.

The topics to be dealt with are:—

1. **The Congress of the People Campaign and the overall view of the Freedom Charter**
2. **The Freedom Charter and the Future towards a non-racial democracy**
3. **The Freedom Charter and the economy**

4. **The Freedom Charter and Equality before the law**
5. **The Freedom Charter and Equality in education**
6. **The Freedom Charter and religion**
7. **Freedom, Peace, Friendship and Sovereignty: What needs to be done towards a non-racial democratic future?**

The topics will be dealt with by structured panel discussions consisting of 4-5 members each. Amongst the prominent list of speakers are:—

Mr Wynand Malan, Dr Farouk Meer, Dr Nthato Motlana, Prof Hermann Giliomee, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, Mr Bheki Sibiyi, Prof Lourens du Plessis, Prof Dennis Davis, Fr Neil McGurck, Prof Colin Bundy, Dr Beyers Naude, Mr Faried Essack, Prof Johan Kinghorn, Mr Wesley Mabuza, Dr Frederick van Zyl Slabbert.

Registration for the conference is R50,00 (including all meals, teas and a social function). A limited number of scholarships are available. Participants can register by obtaining a registration form from any of the regional offices, or from the national office at: Hill House, 1 Penzance Rd, Mowbray 7700. Tel: 47-3127.

quoting the Class President of the MBA programme: "For all of us it was a sobering experience to come face to face with the economic and physical realities being faced by fellow South Africans no more than 10 km from where we live and study.

"It is a cause for the greatest concern to see people living in conditions that at best can be described as make-shift: no electricity, no sanitary systems as we know them, no running water, children who do not even have the opportunity of going to school. The resilience, dignity and goodwill of the areas we visited left an indelible mark, one that clashes sharply with the images that we see and hear in our national media."

The above is an extract from a letter received from the Class President of the MBA programme. The commitment of the students to do something about what they saw, is the challenge left with each of them.

News from the regions — BORDER

THE CHURCH AND POLITICS

BY STEVE FOURIE
(Regional Director)

THERE is no questioning the fact that IDASA's primary task is that of creating a climate for democracy. The impression many have is that this task is commenced when they listen to words of welcome at the beginning of one of our projects and ended with the thanks at the end of the meeting. The projects, however, represent just the tip of the iceberg. The Church and Politics seminar — a project of the Border region held since the last issue of *Democracy in Action* was published — demonstrates this.

The goal of the project was to get Christians in East London thinking about the role of the Church in furthering a truly non-racial democracy in South Africa. The question of the Church's involvement in

politics is a contentious one in South Africa so we assumed that the project would draw a significant number of people and possibly lead to a lively debate continuing well after the initial meeting.

As it turned out, the evening meeting was a good one in that the debate was attended by a broad spectrum of church goers, including supporters of the more conservative churches. The speakers were an Anglican priest, the Rev Mike McCoy, and a Gereformeerde Kerk minister, Ds Johan Myburgh, whose participation added an interesting dimension to the discussion. To the surprise of most he was in favour of the church's participation in politics. Mr McCoy delivered an outstanding paper in which he demonstrated that political involvement is not just possible for Christians but necessary too.

A speaker from the floor, who aligned himself with a politically conservative church, was very vocal in his opposition to pulpit politics, thereby greatly enriching the debate as his view is probably that of the majority of white South African Christians.

So far so good: debates like this which raise important issues are part of the process of creating a climate for democracy. What is also good is that these debates often lead to greater things. In this instance the support of the 51 participants and their expressed interest in exploring the topic further has led to the planning of a very large project on reconciliation and justice for Christians in East London which is to be held during June. But the real point of this account is that the projects themselves are only part of the process of creating a climate for democracy.

Most of the work related to this project went into making the meeting possible. This took the form of meeting ministers and discussing with them the need for such a project and the possibility of their participation and help in advertising the meeting among their congregants. The problems attached to an apparently simple activity like this illustrate how immense a task the creation of a climate for democracy in South Africa is.

A lively debate demands at least two speakers who are in opposite camps, so our first task was to find a speaker who would argue against the notion that the church should

be involved in politics. Much time was spent with a minister in East London who was an obvious choice for this task. He ultimately refused to address the meeting, indicating that he felt the meeting itself was an unnecessary intrusion on the church's agenda. However, one hopes that the time spent with him — during which the argument for the importance of discussing the topic was put — was worthwhile. Whatever the outcome of such meetings, they are part of the task of creating a climate for democracy.

The preparations for the Church and Politics project illustrate a second aspect of IDASA's task: that of enabling people to move forward in their thinking. One minister who was asked to advertise the project responded affirmatively but went on to say something to the effect that his church — a white congregation — is actively involved in politics because they frequently meet with black people. The perception which gives rise to such comments is a fairly common one among whites in this country and is that "if we just get rid of overt racism all will be well". It is the same perception which confuses "reform" with a real solution to the country's problems. In such discussions it is our task to get people to begin to think about what a truly non-racial democracy is.

The response of another minister to the advertising request further illustrates our work. This man said that if he did not advertise only events which are organised by his own denomination he would spend so much time making announcements that there would be no time for worship. Notwithstanding the fact that he was asked to distribute handbills, that he was compelled to make such a ludicrous statement as the only defence for his refusal must surely lead him to examine, however superficially, his own morally and intellectually bankrupt view on the nature of the relationship between the Church and politics.

Creating a climate for democracy includes the need for a multitude of conversations and meetings like the ones alluded to above. Involvement in the projects is much more stimulating and satisfying but it is these little encounters which may well count for a lot when IDASA's contribution to the struggle for a non-racial democracy is evaluated.