

BORDER

MILITARISATION AND DEMOCRACY

“As South Africa slides inexorably into economic stagnation, endemic political instability and moral bankruptcy, South Africans must face the most fundamental question: is this government leading us to democracy through reform, or is it mobilising our human and material resources to fight a fruitless war to protect white power?”

It was with this question that Mark Swilling began his address on 'Militarisation and Democracy' at what was possibly the most informative of the Border Region's projects during October.*

On a Saturday afternoon, when most people are either involved in leisure activities or spending time with their families, a group of con-

cerned citizens met to learn of the nature and extent of the militarisation of the South African state. Their sacrifice of time was amply rewarded by a carefully reasoned, well researched paper followed by an informative discussion.

Mr Swilling pointed out that there is consensus across the political spectrum that the South African state has become increasingly militarised over the past few years, and in stating that this process has grave implications said: "It means that its [the state's] awesome power is being used not to attain a permanent peace, but to pursue violent solutions."

It was suggested that the increasingly central role played by the security forces in the running of government is, as far as the state is concerned, a response to the "Total Onslaught" being waged against South Africa. It is based on a belief held by P W Botha and his military advisors that reform with-

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Mr. Pearce Tywala who has recently been appointed to the Border region staff as a regional co-ordinator.

able to the state's objectives". The reformist measures taken as concessions to some of the demands of the communities were also listed.

Mark Swilling's conclusion, shared by most participants after the discussion, was that "the strategy of repressive reform is an option developed by the militarised South African state that will not resolve our fundamental problems. To this extent, the solutions it is offering are a recipe for further violence, rather than long-term peace."

No one left the workshop with an easy solution to the problem presented by the militarisation of the state but most had a more informed understanding of both the need for and the challenges facing a genuine democracy.

*Steve Fourie
Regional Director*

*(*Mr Swilling is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Studies*

EASTERN CAPE

EDUCATION FORUM

THIS forum was addressed by Dr. Neil McGurk of Sacred Heart College, Observatory, Johannesburg. He spoke about the Education for a New Nation: a basis for Teacher Unity. It was mentioned that the basic intention behind the provision of education of every government in South Africa since 1890 has been the continuing political, social and cultural hegemony of whites over their fellow countrymen.

The flag of the "White" nation, with its European colours and patchwork arrangements, represents the symbol par excellence of continuing "European" domination of the major white groups through a dialectical interdependence of political and economic control. By the most radical of its critics this regimen has been characterised as "racist capitalism".

The present call for peoples education is part of world-wide socialization whose beginnings, among other spontaneous expressions, can be traced to the achievement of independence of African states and the problems related to developmentalism in Latin America. The call was for a more integral development and self-empowerment of people with a preferential option for the growing number of the poor. The initial option also expressed a preferential option for youth, which in our present education crisis finds a direct resonance. There is a lack of a clear perception of the funda-

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NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

FREEDOM CHARTER SEMINAR (3 NOVEMBER 1987)

THE papers presented in this seminar covered the whole document. It was mentioned that as apartheid goes through its terminal phase, a vigorous debate has emerged concerning the type of structures that should be established in a post-apartheid S.A. To date this debate has to a large extent been dominated by liberal capitalist positions pre-occupied with the problem of how to de-racialise South Africa's political economy without dismantling the capitalist system. These positions, however, stand opposed to the demands and interests of the black majority whose popular organisations have in theory and practice articulated a rather more socialist than capitalist solution to South Africa's fundamental problems.

The Freedom Charter can, with little difficulty, provide the basis for a social democratic order vested in a welfare capitalist economic system. The basic human rights and constitutional clauses of the charter are entirely consistent with the democratic values that underpin Western social democracies. As far as the more contentious economic clauses are concerned, most welfare capitalist systems would be able to accommodate these with relative ease as long as nationalised industries are *bought from the original owners rather than appropriated*. The major organisations that represent the interests of the oppressed are in some way committed to a socialist future which

tion of capitalist exploitation and racial oppression. From the business perspective it was mentioned that only four of the eleven sections of the Freedom Charter deal with the economy. This lack of specificity and socialist emphasis causes the business community grave misgivings. However this is not a matter of principle but of organisation.

The question of how to organise your national economy and create wealth for the citizen is not essentially different from the problem of how to organise a company to create wealth for shareholders. You are concerned with allocation of resources, productivity, innovation, control, quality, ethics and motivation of everybody from owners to office workers. It is the business perspective of this aspect of the charter which should be taken seriously because this is the area of its special expertise.

Max Mamase
Regional Director

SOUTHERN TRANSVAAL

STATE Interference at Universities: On 4 November IDASA was instrumental in bringing about a meeting of students and academics from both RAU and Wits at the RAU campus to discuss the above topic. The meeting was historical, since it was the first time that Afrikaner and English speaking students and academics from the above campuses met to discuss a common problem.

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ONE of the greatest consequences flowing from the policy of Apartheid is isolation. A huge gulf exists between White and Black South Africans. IDASA was born in order to encourage, promote and establish contact and communication between Black and White South Africans who have been kept apart for so long that they have lost touch with each other's humanity.

Fundamental to the work of IDASA is the realisation that most Whites cannot hear the assurances of their fellow Whites, but need to be in direct contact with Black South Africans so as to dispel their ignorance of what is happening in their country and to be reassured that Blacks are seeking only the justice and freedom which has been denied them for so long.

Against this background the strategy of a guided township tour for Whites has proved most valuable. Mr. Mziwonke "Pro" Jack, regional co-ordinator and organiser of these tours reports on the most recent such venture.

TOWNSHIP TOUR REPORT

We have, as a follow up of our last township tour and the demand for more such tours, organised another one which was attended by 70 participants of which 90% were Whites. The 21st November tour was run along the same lines as the last one but under different conditions. For example, unlike

before, the community leadership did not participate but knew about our presence. Secondly, one of the areas involved was KTC. It is presently experiencing internal conflict which has claimed lives. The absence of the leadership was meant to expose participants to the grassroots people where there will be no distortion of realities. Sometimes, when things are said by the leaders, they are perceived as mere propaganda, but now this could not be the case!

When we left for the townships some White participants had reservations and fears about how they would be received. They were expecting a very hostile reception. This attitude is embodied in White minds by means of the propaganda machine of the apartheid regime. The role that the TV, Radio and newspapers is playing is very destructive. It is sometimes frustrating to see how foreigners and tourists are well versed about what is happening here and how ignorant, out of touch and misinformed many White South Africans are about what is happening at their door steps. It is with this in mind that we urge people to come out of their isolation, meet and understand one another and strive for a non-racial and democratic South Africa. We believe that people dare not depend on the official media position about the situation, but must use the opportunity of going to the townships and see the realities of the situation for themselves.

What astounded the participants is the warm reception, community spirit, liveliness and openness of the people as opposed to what they are made to believe. Some

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IDASA OCCASIONAL PAPERS

1. Democracy and Government: A Post-Apartheid Perspective
 Dr Charles Simkins, Associate Professor of Economics,
 University of Cape Town.
2. Democracy and Law
 Advocate Arthur Chaskalson, National Director, Legal