

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

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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EDITORIAL

Challenges ahead for ANC and govt

Oliver Tambo, in his opening address at the recent ANC conference, highlighted again the organisation's "proud record of struggle against apartheid". However, the real question facing the conference delegates was whether or not the ANC had the potential for government!

This is a question which the newly elected ANC president, Nelson Mandela, sought to answer. His speech, which was in large measure enthusiastically supported by delegates - not only at the time of delivery but in the deliberations which followed - gave a more convincing answer than South Africans had heard thus far from the ANC.

A party that is "ready for government" must be prepared to negotiate, must look well beyond the present obstacles, must be prepared to fight in a free and fair election, must have the appropriate machine (organisation) in order to fight that election and must have a base which is representative of all South Africans rather than only one part thereof.

In his speech, it would be fair to say that Mr Mandela has met all those requirements of a party that is ready for government. It is clear that the commitment is there but a very long, hard road lies ahead. The election of a person of the calibre of Cyril Ramaphosa as secretary-general of the ANC gives further cause for encouragement.

There are two major problems which the ANC is going to have to come to terms with if they are going to be successful in presenting "a consistent voice" and a "clear vision" which will meet the many fears which still exist, not only among white, coloured and Indian people, but among many blacks as well.

You don't have to be a supporter of the "red under every bed" brigade to have misgivings about the relationship between the ANC and the South African Communist Party. The recent collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe makes it difficult for many South Africans to understand why there is the continuing strong identification between the ANC and the SACP. The SACP should never have been banned and it was right that it was unbanned at the same time as the ANC and PAC and UDF, etc. But it has a very clear economic position which supports socialism.

The Communist Party in many parts of the world has had a very dismal history and

it would do the ANC a great service if these two groupings were clearly separate with distinguishable identities. In a word, there are many who are inclined to support the ANC but they want to be clear that by supporting the ANC they are not at one and the same time supporting the policies and the practices of the SACP.

Another problem which is going to face the ANC is the need for greater clarity concerning the activities and the role of Umkhonto we Sizwe.

It is readily appreciated by anyone who understands the history of South Africa that MK is part of that historic reality. Many of its members will play a role, and in many instances a significant role, in the future defence force and police force in the new South Africa. The real problem is to know what their current role is. It is particularly important because of the grim cycle of violence which has gripped South Africa in the last few years. The fact that the ANC has its military wing could well give other parties and groupings excuses to have their own "private armies".

Meanwhile the other major actor in the unfolding drama is obviously the South African government. President F W de Klerk, like Mr Mandela, has given bold and courageous leadership. But the current government also has its problems. Firstly, there is a continuing belief among many blacks that the security forces are playing a role in the current violence, either through the sins of omission or through the sins of commission. President De Klerk has not yet satisfactorily clarified the recurring questions surrounding violence and the state.

Secondly, it would appear that the government has yet to learn that when it apparently waits to be pressurised into action, the only message it gives to the ANC and other organisations is that they will never get anything significant or worthwhile unless they adopt continued pressure and mass action.

If the government is to convince the vast majority of South Africans that it means what it says, it has to take far greater initiative which will persuade the dispossessed, the poverty-stricken, the homeless and the jobless that negotiations are worthwhile and worthy of active support.

- Alex Boraine
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