

## DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

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It is easy to get bogged down in the immediacy of the moment. Especially if the moment is filled with violence, irrationality, posturing and one-upmanship. At such times, emotions vacillate between despair and anger and they in turn feed off the moment and compound the problems which give rise to such feelings.

South Africa is in fundamental transition. We must not lose sight of this. It is a two dimensional transition away from Apartheid and hopefully towards a democratic outcome. Although linked, the two processes are absolutely independent. Getting rid of Apartheid does not guarantee democracy. The one is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the other. That is why the manner in which we get rid of Apartheid will have a decisive impact on whether we become a democracy.

If South Africa succumbs to violence, radical outbidding, hidden agendas and double dealing from whichever quarter to get rid of the pain of Apartheid, or to cover up its ugly face, or to pretend that we can simply ignore its legacy and do a slight little political gearshift as we begin to climb the hill of our future, we will undermine the prospects for a democratic outcome.

We have no choice but to negotiate for democracy. To negotiate for democracy means we have to not only negotiate substantial issues such as a new democratic constitution, fiscal parity on the national budget or transforming the civil service.

At this stage, more importantly, it means bargaining about the very conditions that can make negotiations possible : the one obvious condition is a pact on violence, i.e. an agreement that it has to be stopped before we proceed with any negotiations. Another condition is a national contract on the economy, i.e. an agreement that everything possible must be done to get growth and redistribution going in economic life. Yet another condition is a common commitment to share responsibility for managing transition, i.e. to agree on interim arrangements to move from A to B.

If such conditions can be met, then new structures can emerge which will not only demonstrate to all South Africans how we manage transition away from Apartheid, but also how we can jointly begin to understand the challenges inherent in a democratic government. These structures do not have to wait for "one-day-magic" from the top-down. Yes, it is important that progress be made on the national level and that the major

antagonists come to an understanding, but a whole range of interlocking pacts, contracts and commitments can come into being from the "bottom-up" as it were. This is what, for example, the Metropolitan Chamber in the Witwatersrand is about as well as the "One-City-One-Municipality" initiatives in other areas such as Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London.

The future can not be held hostage to a few prominent politicians. Transition affects the whole of our national life. All of us, in some way or the other, can play a role in seeing that transition away from Apartheid moves toward a Democratic outcome. If we do not, we will sit like a toad before a python, trapped and immobilized by the immediacy of our situation. The philosopher Karl Popper touched on a simple truth. For evil or tyranny to prevail it is sufficient that good people do nothing in the face of it. Locked into our transition is the capacity for tyranny and the capacity for Democracy.