

### PROTESTERS VS REVOLUTIONARIES

Mass protest, which often marks the beginning of revolution and continues as its accompaniment, calls attention to the inequities in society. The sloganeering, picketing, singing and dancing that accompany marches, gatherings and sit-ins articulate the wrongs that need to be righted.

Protests are appeals to those in power to provide better living conditions for those dependent on institutions of the State and Private Sector. Protest is essentially the tool of the disempowered and demonstrations are generally accompanied by vigilante actions: damage to property, trashing, looting, even battery and rape. This kind of violence and destruction is most often vented against other powerless people: street vendors, usually women, small shopkeepers and ordinary people and indicates the assumption of illicit power and the lack of a contextual understanding of problems.

Revolutionaries on the other hand work from an ideological base that allows them not only to analyse the organisation and power structures of oppression, but also gives them a vision for a democratic society. Once they have this vision, they set about creating strategies for destroying the old, but more importantly for building a new society. They identify a leadership and begin a process of self-education that prepares them to create a new government and establish the means to administer the country. They know that bringing down the old regime is only the first step in the process that they have undertaken. They do not relinquish control of the transformation process; they take charge of it and steer the country towards a new dispensation.

Protesters have a limited understanding of the transformation process; all they understand are personal needs. They may be involved in toppling the old regime but they do not become involved in planning and creating the strategies for building the new society and administering it. They leave the initiative and decision-making to others. They are followers not leaders. They are not doers; they are receivers.

Revolutionaries, however, are not beggars. They know that it is their job to transform the society and they come prepared for it. The ANC did not sit back and ask De Klerk to create a new government; they steered the whole process themselves.

Looking at what is happening in the so-called Arab 'Awakening,' I see it as a protest movement, not a revolutionary movement. In Egypt, the people are still begging other people to create their 'democracy' for them. Their protest has no leaders with an understanding of how to build a new society. They have called on the army and members of the old undemocratic regime to create their new democratic government. How can they? How can people inured in authoritarian ways create a democratic dispensation?

Egyptian protesters continue to shout the word 'democracy' but they have not defined what it means in terms of organisation and administrative structures. All they can do is to go on demanding a better deal. That makes them protestors not revolutionaries. Their vision is limited to punishment of the old regime. There is no indication that they have the capacity to take over the administration of a country. Simply because it is a popular protest movement does not mean that it is on the right track.

And overthrowing a government does not constitute a revolution. It is only a coup.