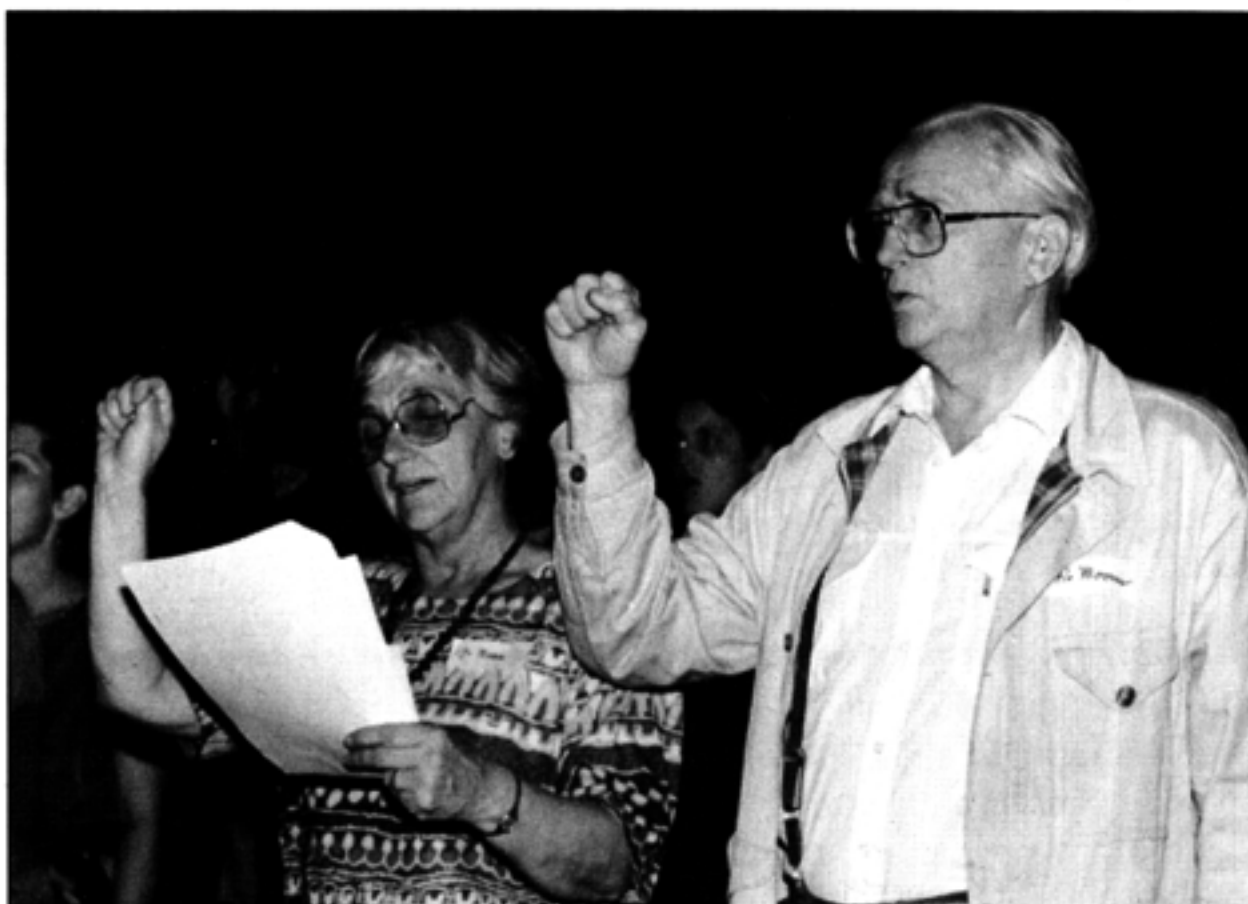


# Trekking into the ANC

**Besides the Afrikaners who have worked in ANC underground structures, many have joined the ANC since its unbanning. A MAYIBUYE correspondent spoke to some of the "New Voortrekkers"...**

**W**hile township streets were filled with spontaneous rejoicing and dancing at the unbanning of the ANC most people in the white community, especially Afrikaners, seemed stunned and uncertain about how to handle the new situation.

In a few Afrikaner homes however there was joy, especially after the release of Mandela. Some of these Afrikaners had for many years already taken an open stand against apartheid. A few even went as far as joining the banned African National Congress and often suffered the wrath of the Afrikaner communi-



**At the launch of the Pretoria Central branch of the ANC**

ties and the state.

The majority of Afrikaners who shared in the joy of the townships were actually people who had not actively participated in the ANC-led struggle against apartheid.

In the privacy of their homes and among a few like-minded friends they agonised about the terrible repression during the last years of PW Botha's rule.

## **ORDINARY PEOPLE**

These are very ordinary people from all walks of life. Some are academics, others housewives or students. A few are working class people who, instead of staying in the conservative white trade unions, joined the progressive trade unions of Cosatu.

It is unlikely that most of them would have had the courage to join the ANC while it was still banned, but quite soon after February 1990 the slow trickle of Afrikaners into the ANC started.

A few ANC branches like Pretoria Central and Stellenbosch now have a majority of Afrikaner members. For many of them it is the first time in years, and in the case of some students, the first time in their adult lives, that they have found a political home.

Recent polls measured white support for the ANC at under one percent! The ANC has begun a concerted campaign to reach out to the Afrikaner community and is trying to address their fears. In recent weeks Nelson Mandela made a special effort to assure Afrikaners that their language

## No publicity, please!

**M**ost of the "new Voortrekkers" in the ANC that we talked to feel at home, but they are still reluctant to go public about their membership. They joined after long difficult struggles with themselves and their families. They have paid a heavy price in lost friends and families.

Though the ANC is unbanned, their lives resemble the experiences of Afrikaners such as Bram Fischer, Carl Niehaus, Hein Grosskopf, Jansie Lourens and Damian de Lange who worked in the underground structures of the ANC/MK.

The possibility of being ostracised or even physically assaulted is very real. Two young Afrikaner miners in a conservative Free State town were prepared to talk to us about why they joined the National Union of Mine-workers and are now close to joining the ANC. But they didn't want any photos to be taken or their names published. A young Afrikaans student at Rand Afrikaans University asked only to be mentioned by her first name. Her mother lives in a conservative East Rand town and she does not want to create problems for her. Her mother is a member of the Gereformeerde Church – the same church that De Klerk belongs to. ♦

and culture will be safe in a democratic South Africa. In interviewing the "new Voortrekkers" we asked them whether the ANC had succeeded in conveying this message. We also wanted to know why most whites – especially Afrikaners – are not interested in joining the ANC.

The problems of being an Afrikaner in the ANC become very real when Willem Saayman, who openly acknowledges his membership, relates how a number of shots were fired at his house.

"It is as an Afrikaner that I've got the convictions that I stand for today", he emphasises. Willem Saayman lives in Pretoria and is a professor of theology at the University of South Africa. He joined the ANC shortly after it was unbanned.

He cites discussions with young Zambians he had met as a missionary in their country and atrocities committed by the SADF in northern Namibia as key influences in changing his political convictions. On his return to South Africa from northern

Namibia he immediately involved himself in the United Democratic Front. One of the most important influences on Willem's life was the brutal repression during the States of Emergency. The funerals of 1985 and 1986 touched him deeply.

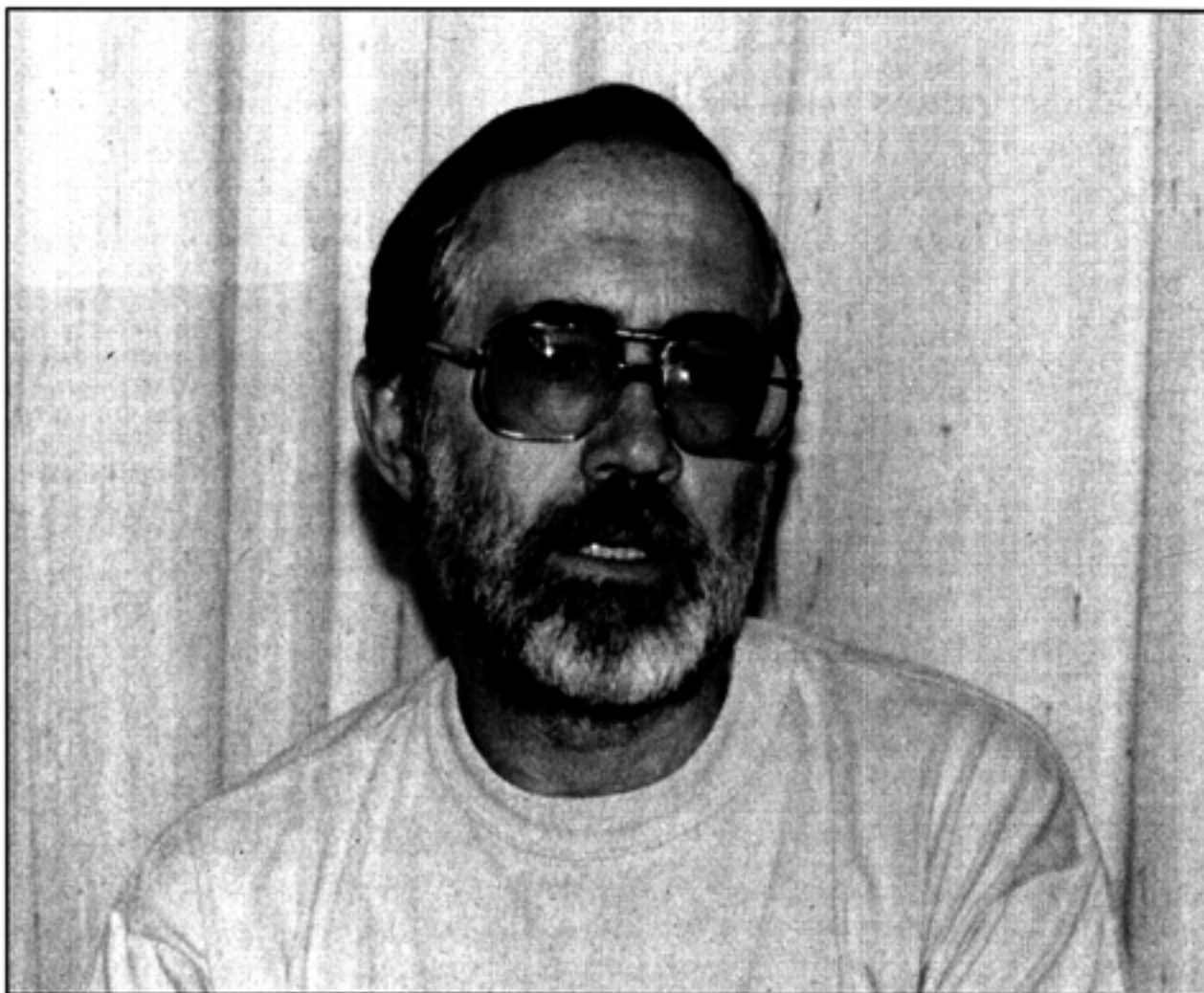
"One cannot say that as a theologian you can be politically 'objective' especially in a situation where the struggle is literally about life and death. You have to ask yourself which of the political ideologies and parties come closest to the ideals of freedom and human dignity that I believe the Christian faith demands of us.

"For me the policies and practices of the ANC come closest to how I understand all of us should live together in this country."

Willem tells how he went with much fear to the funerals of police victims not knowing how people would react under those circumstances to a white person – especially an Afrikaner. He found the welcome unbelievable, and the humanity and warmth that he received there continue to be an absolute miracle for him.

He found this in the ANC as well: "I felt totally welcome in the ANC, and also that my identity as an Afrikaner is safe there."

Willem emphasises that although he has come a long way, it does not mean that he did not experience a conversion. He is very



**Professor Willem Saayman: "It is as an Afrikaner that I've got the convictions I stand for today".**

distrustful of people like the State President who says that there is no need for conversion in the lives of the Afrikaners, and tries to deny the responsibility for apartheid. He finds it very dishonest.

"No Afrikaner can say that. As Afrikaners we must come to a conversion before we will finally get rid of apartheid and that is why I am scared that apartheid is not yet dead." He has a lot of understanding for many well-meaning

Afrikaners who genuinely want to see a democratic society, but still stay in the National Party. "Many of them think that the presence of a few black children in what previously were white schools, the unbanning of the ANC and that one can now buy *MAYIBUYE* at the local corner cafe are very dramatic changes.

"The root of this thinking is that apartheid hasn't failed; it has succeeded. Apartheid has created two absolutely separated worlds: a

black world and a white world. The result is that white people have absolutely no idea what the situation is like in the black community – many white people have never been in a township in their lives.

He feels that it is important to find a way to convey to whites the realities of what black people experience: that for the vast majority in the ghettos, nothing has changed. Despite these problems Willem insists that Afrikaners can

**R**ev Beyers Naude says he lacked knowledge about the ANC for many years.

When he did get to know the ANC, a fundamental change took place in his views. Starting off as a Christian he has searched in any political party for a future political, economic and educational system that meets the Biblical demands of justice, truth and love that he looks for.

Comparing the policy statements of all the different South African political parties he believes that the ANC is closest to meeting the Christian demands for a proper democratic system.

"Although I am not formally a member of the ANC, I am convinced that if the ANC fulfills its tasks correctly it will make an extremely important, if not determining contribution to building a non-racial and democratic political system.

It will also develop an economic vision for our whole country

## Views from Oom Bey



through which we can bring about a new approach to the problems of affluence and poverty.

Oom Bey, as he is popularly known among democratic activists, has suffered all kinds of hardships under the apartheid jackboot.

Banned for many years, excommunicated from the NGK ministry and physically threatened, he has been one of the leading lights in the democratic struggle.

Why is he not a member of the ANC? He explains that he is not in principle against becoming a member of the ANC.

But he has decided not to join because of his ecumenical and church work; that it will not be wise to play at the same time a formal political role.

Concerning the ANC reaching out to Afrikaners, Beyers feels that the ANC must be clear about how important it

believes the political contribution of the Afrikaner will be in a future South Africa.

The ANC will make a serious mistake if it underestimates the future political importance and contribution of the Afrikaner.

"The Afrikaner is in essence a political creature; Afrikaners live and think to a great extent around their political concepts", he explains.

The whole history of the National Party and all the other Afrikaner political parties is evidence of this reality.

"It is very important for the ANC to make a serious effort to get the support of a growing number of Afrikaners for the sake of creating a non-racial society.

"Until now the ANC hasn't yet done enough in this regard. A programme of action should be started to determine where, how and with whom intensive discussion should be held to improve the image of the ANC among Afrikaners and, where wrong perceptions do exist, to remove them."

change: "I am an Afrikaner and I have changed. One of the reasons why I have changed is because I started to find out what the experiences of black people are in South Africa."

He acknowledges that apartheid has destroyed the humanity of many white people, and there are whites you will not "turn into people again". This was the only time in the interview Willem despaired. "I don't know what can be done to change them. It is unlikely that the ANC will be able to "convert" many right-wingers. But what about the growing number of Afrikaners who no longer feel at home in the National Party, but are also hesitant to join the ANC? Why are they so reluctant, and what can the ANC do to reach out to them?"

### LIBERAL APPROACH

Willem feels that many of these people still tend to think that the liberal approach of evolutionary development can save our country, "but what we desperately need is liberation". Thus one must join a liberation movement. That is why he joined the ANC.

But he feels that there are a number of reasons why other Afrikaners who basically share his views have not yet joined the ANC. One of these is the alliance with the SACP.

"We have to remember that for 40 years the white community has been indoctrinated that communism is anti-christ. The relationship must be explained."

Another concern is that the ANC has not constituted itself into a political party. Many Afrikaners see this as a back door that the ANC is keeping open to return to the armed struggle.

A third concern is the issue of the land. As far as possible we must explain that we not planning to simply nationalise farm land that is being utilised productively. ♦

## "Alternative" Afrikaans Music

**F**or years popular Afrikaans music tended to be rather bland, consisting mainly of French and German love songs translated into Afrikaans.

During the mid-1980s, young Afrikaans musicians started to make new sounds. Rock music and songs with a critical anti-apartheid message were heard in the Afrikaans music world. Musicians such as Johannes Kerkorrel, Joos Tonteldoos and Koos challenged the establishment. They are angry young people – deeply disillusioned with their religious and educational upbringing.

Their lifestyle and their sometimes cynical songs testify to an alienation from traditional Afrikanerdom. They give expression to the experiences of a growing number of young Afrikaners. The strength of this trend became clear when the Houtstok (Woodstock) rock festival was held just outside Pretoria, on "Republiekdag" last year. Twenty thousand people, mainly young Afrikaners, came

to dance to the music.

They sang with Anton Goosen in Afrikaans "We are the kaffirs of Africa ... Break apartheid down, break all of it down ... You who distinguish between the colour of people's skins, go to your separate heaven or hell..."

The Afrikaner establishment was outraged. But they had to face the fact that the traditional Republic Day festival held at the Voortrekker Monument attracted less than half that crowd.

The so-called alternative Afrikaans music expresses the anger and confusion many young Afrikaners experience.

Long before these feelings crystallise into a coherent political position, the music provides them with a deeply needed opportunity to feel an emotional solidarity with the struggle for liberation.

At Houtstok they sang with Theunis Engelbrecht "Kwela vir Mandela" – a song he wrote after having watched Mandela's release from prison.

*Hoeveel harte is vermink  
deur die witskrif van apartheid  
watter mense is bestand  
teen die felheid van soveel wreedheid  
mag die wereld sonder bloed wees  
mag ons vir mekaar reen wees  
om die droogtes tussen mense  
in 'n somer te omskep*

*How many hearts have been mutilated  
by the white paper of apartheid  
what humanity can survive  
against the intensity of so much cruelty  
may the world be without blood  
may we be rain to each other  
the droughts between people  
to be transformed into a summer*

Theunis Engelbrecht "KWELA VIR MANDELA"