

# DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE FOR SOUTH AFRICA

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1990

## Afrikaans writers struggle with transformation



Vernon February



Willie Kgositsile and Jan Rabie.



Antjie Krog and Njabulo Ndebele.

# Signs of change . . . but WHERE is the action?

By Ronel Scheffer

**AT THE** recent writers' indaba hosted by Idasa and the Afrikaanse Skrywersgilde, a speaker predicted that, in a few years' time, we will be able to scour the length and breadth of this country and not find anyone who ever believed in or supported apartheid.

Glimpses of what Tim Couzens of Wits alluded to on the first evening of the conference could be seen among the writers and literary academics themselves at Langebaan. No one had ever supported apartheid and a dull inertia dominated proceedings. It was as if in the new South Africa, ushered in by FW's masterful strokes, "the issues" and "the struggle" were over. What confrontation, what debate, what action - if any - were needed in a society which has all the signs of change?

The question, however, was how much real transformation had taken place? Certainly the dividing lines between "inside" and "outside" in South African literature were there for all to see at the conference. Several speakers in fact noted the pervading illusion that apartheid

was dead and buried, along with the mindset that had sustained it for decades.

Differences aside though, it was Albie Sachs, ANC constitutional expert and writer, who reminded delegates during one of the most vigorous discussions that they had all fought hard to be together. "We should honour this occa-

**With no serious enemies present, and in the absence of a clear direction on programmes of action, it required "vasbyt" from the 120 delegates to go the full distance of three days**

sion with our diversity. What's important is that we do speak together, without rancour," he said.

With no serious enemies present, and in the absence of a clear direction on programmes of action, it required "vasbyt" from the 120 delegates to go the full distance of three days - even in the simulated Grecian air of Club Mykonos.

Coinciding as it did with the 15th anniversary of the Skrywersgilde, the majority of delegates at the conference were white Afrikaans writers, critics and publishers - a politically disparate group, more divided than the delegation who met with the ANC and exiled writers at the Victoria Falls in July last year. Other dele-

gates were black writers and academics, including a handful of returnees and exiles, many of them members of the Congress of South African Writers.

The programme covered a range of topics related to writing in a new South Africa and fostering a broad inclusive South African literary culture. Although much of the discussion was of an exploratory nature and speakers often talked past each other, a measure of common understanding had been forged by the end of the conference. To many of the delegates it was their first meeting with people from the

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# 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

# A new vision from Dakar

A FEW weeks ago, Van Zyl Slabbert, Breyten Breytenbach and I visited Dakar in Senegal for four days. This was not our first visit. In 1987 we had brought a large group of mainly white Afrikaners to meet with key members of the national executive of the African National Congress.

As the Air Afrique plane landed once again at Dakar airport, the memories came crowding back. It was a very tense journey then. We had wondered what sort of reception we would receive, how the members of the ANC and their white counterparts would react to each other. Would the meeting explode after a few hours and end in disaster? Certainly there was a wariness and even an unease to begin with. There was suspicion, the discussion was tentative. But after a while the exchanges became far more honest, focusing on the whole question of violence, a future economy for a new South Africa, human rights and protection of individual rights in a new constitution.

It might well be argued that Idasa was conceived in South Africa but was in a very real sense born in Dakar, Senegal.

So much had happened in South Africa since the 1987 visit, and now we were back in Dakar which had given us the opportunity to facilitate a meeting which, in many ways, was the beginning of the shift towards negotiation politics.

We were the guests of the Department of Foreign Affairs and throughout our brief stay were treated with great courtesy, generosity and warmth. The visit with President Abdou Diouf stands out. It was a meeting which lasted one and a half hours and we talked first of the event which he had helped to make possible in 1987. We outlined the developments which had taken place in Idasa. We spent time in giving our understanding of what had and was taking place in South Africa. He was deeply interested, asked many questions and was as interested in the role played by Mr De Klerk as he was in the role being played by Mr Mandela.

When we told him that we had come to explore the possibility of setting up a new Institute for Democracy in Africa he was immediately interested and pledged his total support.

After that meeting the way was cleared for us to meet cabinet ministers, lawyers, politicians and academics. With each group we met, we told them of our hopes for an institute which could be based in Senegal, but would serve the whole of Africa. We stressed time and time again that for an institute such as we envisaged to be successful, it had to be totally independent of the government of Senegal, of political parties and would have to enjoy wide support – not only from the Senegalese but from all the people of Africa.

We explained that the institute would have a small and lean professional staff, that

it would have to have an infrastructure which would enable it to host workshops, conferences and seminars focusing on the meaning of democracy, not only in constitutional terms but as it affected every area of life. We described the possibility of distinguished visiting professors spending time at the institute, of people coming from many parts of Africa and even beyond, that those who came would not only be academics but also professionals, bureaucrats, politicians, young and old. We even dared to mention that we had hopes that the Institute for Democracy in Africa could play a small part in breaking down the wall which separated South Africa from the rest of Africa to the mutual advantage of both.

But why Senegal? Firstly because Senegal in its recent history has demonstrated a commitment to a form of democracy in strong contrast to most other parts of Africa. Secondly our own experience in 1987 gave us the idea that Senegal may well be the ideal place for such an institute. Thirdly and perhaps more importantly, just off the mainland of Dakar lies the island of Goreé.

IN 1987 we visited the slave house on Goreé Island where approximately 40 million victims were held before being carried away from their homeland during the 11th to the 19th centuries. Six million died from hardships and cruel treatment.

What better place to found an Institute for Democracy which would emphasise the unique worth of the individual and the absolute importance of fundamental human rights.

We will continue to explore the possibilities of founding such an institute. Already President Diouf and Madame Mitterand of France have agreed to serve as patrons and we will be inviting other leading figures to do the same. We will also have to set up a board of approximately 30 to 36 trustees and as we discuss this project with people who could serve usefully on such a board, it will become clear as to whether or not such an institute is both desirable and possible. Should we make good progress, we will then have to consider the basic infrastructure, financial support and appointment of staff.

During November, several of us have been invited to attend a conference on democracy which is to be held in Dakar and delegates will be coming from many parts of Africa. This will give us a further opportunity to test out the idea.

History will determine whether or not the meeting in Dakar in 1987 had any influence whatsoever in the new dispensation in South Africa today. Only time will tell as to whether or not it will be possible also to begin an Institute for Democracy in Africa.

– Alex Boraine  
Executive Director



## Westcott wrong on women's concerns

I CANNOT agree more with Shauna Westcott that the launching rally of the ANC Women's League was "not a great day for women". Many of us had travelled far to be part of this occasion but were sorely disappointed.

However, I cannot accept her comment that "women's concerns have barely made the agenda of the ANC and other organisations in the MDM".

I have been involved in the women's organisation in the Western Cape since its inception in 1981 and have witnessed a steady growth in consciousness of women's issues within our organisations and the community.

There has also been a steady growth in the numbers of women actively involved in both women's organisations and the trade union movement. This is now most definitely reflected within the ANC as it begins to take formal shape.

In preparation for our regional conference here in the Western Cape, branches were encouraged to ensure that women were present in every delegation at conference. Anyone who was present at the weekend's proceedings would have been delighted that virtually half of the delegates present were women. I must say I was quite surprised. But they were there in large numbers. And their participation was active.

Within the trade union movement, I can

## LETTERS

women in this industry in 1984, we had endless problems. They could not move. They were completely at the mercy of their husbands, who could decide whether they attended meetings or not.

TODAY many of these women are leading shop-stewards within their union. They have asserted their independence. They go out together. They move more freely.

Of course, much more has to be done. But to state so tritely that "sincerity must be proved in practice" and to suggest that there is no evidence of commitment to non-sexism in the ANC and the MDM only indicates a complete lack of knowledge of painstaking work that has been done over many years.

If evidence is what Shauna wants, there are scores of very ordinary women in the Western Cape who could tell how their lives have been transformed.

Zubeida Jaffer  
Fairways

## Confusing peace

IT IS a pity that Laurie Nathan's "How to make peace work" is confused, because this prevents him from cutting through the lies and distortions of conventional military wisdom.

For instance, he suggests that one should pursue "peace" rather than "security", but then he redefines peace to include a wide range

of my experience in the clothing industry. When we first started organising

## JA-NEE

### Ultimate accolade?

A PARTICIPANT at the recent Afrikaanse Skrywersgilde conference rose to dispute a small point with poet Antjie Krog. Attempting to preface minor criticism with fullsome congratulations on her forthrightness, he offered as tribute the opinion that she was the only writer "with balls".

- A case of semantic confusion?

### Totale verlies

'N ANDER deelnemer het die volgende dramatiese opmerking gemaak: "Ek is my taal. Sonder Afrikaans sal ek niks wees nie."

- Moenie worry nie. Die totale aanslag was erger vir baie.

### Infectious humour

THE headmaster of a church school in Cape Town was a little weary after an evening spent reassuring white parents concerned about "contamination" in open schools. Asked over tea, "What are you doing about Aids?", he replied: "Our school's far too poor. We need lots . . . overhead projectors, videos . . ."

- Another side to the politics of transformation.

### CP goes a little green

THE CP programme now allows for dealing with ecological issues, the *Cape Times* reports. Leader Andries Treurnicht considers the matter "not so important that it will be basic to our policy" but says "aspects will receive due attention".

- Pasop! 'n Bietjie groen vandag, 'n bietjie pienk oormôre.

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# Wages vs profits

## WHO WINS?

Discussion about future economic policy has reached an uneasy impasse over the question of wage claims. Demands by workers for a living wage are being countered with the argu-

ment that wages have been rising faster than productivity and that profitability is being squeezed as a result. NICOLI NATTRASS says there is substance to the claims of both sides.

**ALTHOUGH** capital and labour are locked into a class struggle over the method of production and the distribution process, it is through co-operation in the production system that the solution to the dilemma needs to be sought. As the recent Mercedes-Benz strike has illustrated, labour, capital and the community lose when no production takes place.

Capitalism is not a zero-sum game, but rather a bargaining arena where the rich and powerful hold most of the cards. Resources get channelled in the direction where there is the greatest (monetary) demand. In societies where income, wealth and distribution are highly unequal, this implies a structure of production geared towards the needs of the rich.

In this context, it is not surprising that there is such a strong anti-capitalist consciousness in the black South African labour movement. Capitalist rules of the game suffer from a legitimisation crisis. Arguments along the lines that workers benefit under capitalism and get a better deal than they would under old-style socialism, are regarded with great suspicion.

However, old style socialist rules of the game have also collapsed recently under a massive legitimisation crisis. Conflicts of interest between planners and managers, and between the state and society, resulted in widespread misinformation and the abuse and manipulation of planning targets.

The challenge for South Africa is to create a new path between the unbridled free market (which responds to the demands of the rich rather than the redistributive needs of the poor) and the corrupt and inefficient system of central planning. A new system must be created which minimises exploitation, maximises the surplus for investment, and encourages growth and redistribution.

For reasons of efficiency and incentives, the market mechanism needs a place. It also needs to be kept in its place. The new "rules of the game" must be hammered out in a forum consisting of democratically elected representatives of the state, organised labour and business so as to engender confidence among all parties. Trust and co-operation are necessary ingredients of a new economic dispensation.

Institutions must be created where honest, informed negotiation towards legally binding agreements can take place as part of a new, democratic corporatism. Although the fundamental conflicts of interest will always remain, the essentially co-operative nature of economic production must serve as the basis of negotiation.

The important economic questions to be negotiated include: the distribution of the surplus between wages, profits and taxation; the sectoral destination and nature of investment projects; the goals of state economic policy and the spending of government revenue.

An important implication of all this is that organised labour will be placed in an unprecedented position of power and influence. In return for a recognition from labour of the need for an environment which guarantees capitalists a certain rate of return, business must recognise labour as a partner in production rather than as simply a cost of it. Likewise the state must come to terms with substantial input from organised labour on questions relating to welfare and broader economic

policies.

In return for increased power and responsibility, labour needs to adopt a more compromising position – especially on the wage demand front. It is a cruel economic fact that redistribution from profits to wages is rapidly reaching its limits. The surplus available for investment is being dangerously squeezed, and in the context of higher profit rates in many other countries, further disinvestment, lower economic growth and rising poverty may well result.

This argument could be countered by one stressing that it is an equally cruel political/organisational fact that labour will not accept a compromise on the wage demand. In this view, a stronger labour movement would simply use its heightened economic muscle to substantially and extensively bid up wages.

**THERE** are several reasons why this is unlikely to occur and why, in fact, a stronger trade union movement is more likely to accept a short-term policy of wage restraint, or one co-ordinated with an investment project, than a less powerful movement.

If trade unions are given an important say in the investment decisions of firms and in the spending of tax revenue, then they would, for the first time, be in a position to evaluate certain trade-offs inherent in the wage demand. The most important among these is the choice between higher wages now, and investment for job creation or higher earnings later. Another trade-off is that between lower taxation (that is, higher wages) now, and improved social services later.

Furthermore, if organised labour is informed – and trusts this information – about the strong possibility of stagflation eroding wage gains and the productive potential of the economy, then unions are more likely to co-ordinate their demands with increases in productivity and a targeted investment strategy.

Given that workers are also rational people who live in communities where problems of unemployment, poor schooling and inadequate social services are rife, it is not unreasonable to expect them to moderate their wage demands in return for less inflation, sustained growth, better schooling, improved social security and less socially destructive levels of unemployment.

For this to happen, however, workers must be sure that their foregone income is being channelled into productive social and economic investment. This in turn requires that they are placed in a position of power and responsibility with good access to reliable information. They must be, and must be seen to be, important partners in economic production and distribution.



Youths, many



AFRAPIX



did not had a job since leaving school, take to the streets in Cape Town.

**'The challenge for South Africa is to create a new path between the unbri-dled free market and the corrupt and inefficient system of central planning.'**

ical stability is of supreme concern to capitalists.

If South Africa can construct rules of the game which provide capitalists with a sense of stability and certainty as to the mechanisms whereby key economic decisions are made in consultation with them, then it is less likely they will desert the country for uncertain alternatives.

Secondly, the manner in which workers are brought into decision-making processes must be negotiated honestly, constructively and sensitively. Management may well be hostile to, or concerned about, placing managerially and financially unskilled workers in positions of responsibility. Workers must be sensitive and capitalists must be willing to put resources into training worker representatives in areas such as accountancy, tax law, investment decision-making, and so on.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there are substantial economic advantages to capitalists in a social-democratic or welfare state. Improved education and social services feed back to the production process in the form of increased supply of skilled workers and rising productivity. Capitalists may well find that where workers and the state are strong (and wages and taxes relatively high), the potential for accumulation is greater than it is at present.

**BARGAINING** and planning must take place in the context of a tri-partite relationship between labour, capital and the state. It is important that the state is involved for numerous reasons, including the fact that if organised labour is to have the option of delaying or even sacrificing higher wages now for improved education and social services later, then the state needs to be party to the bargaining process.

Also, assuming the state will be democratically elected and accountable to the majority of South Africans, it is important that the interests of "the people" as distinct from "the workers" be represented at the discussions. The state needs to be able to intervene on the part of the directly unrepresented constituencies when there is tension between the interests of the employed and unemployed, or between the urban workers and the rural food producers.

The state also has a role in mediating between groups of workers who have different sectional interests or where interests of individual workers are in conflict with the interests of the labour movement in general. In the same vein, the state needs to minimise conflict between sectors of capital and between various economic regions. It is a complex role, for the state must be both participant, facilitator and arbiter in bargaining as well as a substantial actor in the economy.

It is all too easy to find a short-term solution to the conflict between competing claims on the state's resources by simply printing more money. Expanding the money supply or embarking on fiscally unwise spending patterns is an ever present temptation to governments under pressure to provide more resources.

Misuse of monetary and fiscal policy is widespread in all governments where institutions such as the treasury and the central banks are under direct political control. For this reason, it seems sensible to provide for an independent and powerful central reserve bank. Central Bank officials should be open to continual scrutiny and evaluation by a wide panel of experts, but should at the same time be in a position to dictate certain economic terms to government.

For all the idealism in this article, the important point is that people expect some redistribution and improved social services in the short-term. Any policy which fails to take this into account will be a resounding failure.

Nicoli Nattrass is a researcher at the Research Unit for Development Sociology at the University of Stellenbosch.



ABOVE: Wanted: institutions for honest, informed negotiations and democratic corporatism.

The obvious question is "why should business accept such a powerful role for labour?"

The first part of the answer has already been alluded to - organised labour is less likely to act in economically or socially damaging ways if it is in a position of power and responsibility. However, business will have to submit to full labour participation in investment decisions and it might well balk at this.

There are, however, several reasons why capitalists would opt for the compromise. Firstly, although rates of return are higher in many other countries, the costs of relocation are steep. Furthermore, South Africa's good infrastructure and cheap sources of power are a bonus not readily available elsewhere.

More importantly, it must be remembered that the prime determinant of investment is expectation of future profitability, rather than present rates of profit (although these too play a role). In this respect, socio-polit-

# In quest of na

**What does the commonly expressed longing for a "new" South Africa imply? ANDRÉ ZAIMAN argues that our society needs to be welded by a different consciousness, a new way of looking at ourselves as one society in a united country.**

**THE KEY** question for a liberated South Africa remains how to build and sustain a democracy in a society ravaged by years of authoritarianism, inequality, exploitation and division. This implies that we have to look for practical ways to consolidate and deepen the developing consensus across the social spectrum that South Africa should be a united, non-racial, democratic country.

Politically this means that the process of negotiations should proceed speedily to its logical conclusion of a new, legitimate constitution that has the support of at least the majority of South Africans.

There seems to be growing agreement in South Africa that for democracy to survive and flourish, real socio-economic benefits should flow from the process of negotiations. In other words, we cannot allow socio-economic injustices to be frozen over once political democracy has been reached, as has been the case in many other transitions from authoritarianism to some form of democracy.

Many interesting debates have recently highlighted this fragile but important link between democracy and the economy. It has become abundantly clear from these debates that our country is in dire need of a mutually agreed upon national development strategy. It should be a strategy drawn up by all the major political and economic players as a matter of great urgency, and in that sense could be placed outside the party-political terrain.

Such a "depoliticised" approach could mobilise and focus the energies of our whole society. An agreed strategy would help us eradicate injustices and inequalities in the quickest and most effective way, while helping to secure the kind of national and international financial and human resources that would make a massive intervention possible. We cannot afford any longer to treat poverty, homelessness and deprivation as ideological footballs.

However, democracy will not be secured by

actions in the political and economic fields alone. Our society needs to be welded by a different consciousness, a new way of looking at ourselves as one society in a united country. In many ways there is an "old" South Africa that has existed as a geographical unit since 1910, but remains divided in a socio-psychological sense. Nothing expresses the desire of South Africans to resolve this paradox more clearly than the commonly expressed longing for a "new" South Africa.

The challenge is that we are seeing the collapse of both the hegemonic (apartheid) and counter-hegemonic (socialism) frameworks. The result is a paradigmatic vacuum. It is in this context that Albie Sachs talks of the need to "free the cultural imagination of the whole society", and Njabulo Ndebele argues that we should "free the entire social imagination of the oppressed".

The simultaneous crisis of both the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic conceptions of South Africa has opened up the way to "imagine" South Africa in a way that transcends racial, ethnic and class divisions; a way that increasingly focuses our attention on the common aspects of being South African, rather than on the divisions of the past. One could argue that this is, in any event, the logical

result of a cross-class, non-racial, national democratic struggle.

Some interesting common themes arise, for example, in South African (as opposed to South

Africa's) history. Identifying these themes is also identifying the transformational aspects of our history, which can be either the wedge that keeps us permanently apart or the cement that binds us together.

The most common aspect in the history of all South Africans is the widespread sense of geographical and cultural dislocation.

White South Africans came to Africa, where they were confronted by a foreign continent with foreign cultures, as part of the colonial and imperial sagas. Black South Africans suffered under this type of colonialism for many

## Letters

From Page 3

of loosely related positive ideas, including security itself. This wrecks the peace/security opposition with which Nathan began, and begs the question of whether peace is possible without the kind of security analysis which Nathan condemns.

He admits that his interpretation of peace allows the armed forces to use might to contain violence. This contradicts his emphasis on negotiations, since this is what the SADF claims to have done for 20 years. It is classic legitimisation for militarism.

Nathan talks of "peace movements" in South Africa - but where are these movements? ECC and COSG were anti-apartheid organisations. Nevertheless he tells us that peace movements must be supported because of their success in the West. He is mistaken.

Western peace movements have completely failed to stop the West's export of militarism to the poorer nations, including wanton aggression by rich against poor. Even the vaunted reduction in nuclear arms proves to be part of sordid deals between Western and Soviet elites for the mutual benefit of both. Whether or not the Western experience has relevance for South Africa, it is far from encouraging.

Definitely peace movements need clear, well-researched policies. More importantly, they must open these policies up for public scrutiny and debate. In South Africa today, anti-military movements (aspiring peace movements or not) lack both policies and public profiles. Nathan's article does nothing to fill either of these gaps.

*M F Blatchford  
Observatory*

## Prayer for SA

**SINCE** Idasa is changing its strategies for the new South Africa, I would like to say that it should affirm democratic education and political tolerance among individuals and organisations.

Political intolerance is rife in our townships these days. It seems people are politically intoxicated.

Mr John Kane-Berman of the SA Institute of Race Relations put our political situation in a nutshell when addressing Inyanza at Nelspruit: "totalitarian language, totalitarian behaviour, totalitarian demands and political monopolism."

I hope you don't forget to put township councillors and homeland leaders in your programmes, because they too need to come with us to the new South Africa.

My prayer for South Africa today is: "O Lord, soften the stone hearts of those who preach and practise intolerance and bigotry, as the sun's setting glow softens the stone walls of your country South Africa." □

*Bangumzi Mayana  
Soweto*

# onal imagination

years, not only in the cultural sense but also geographically, as the wars of conquest took place.

However, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, in combination with this process, resulted in black South Africans becoming increasingly Westernised. The integration of technology into our societal fabric has made this, in a certain sense, an irreversible process – unless we have some pastoral and romantic idea of going back to a mythical “rural” Africa.

The dislocating effects of moving from rural to urban environments, particularly for Afrikaners and black South Africans; the forced geographical dislocation of many Afrikaner farmers during the Anglo-Boer War; the forced removal of thousands of black South Africans with the imposition of the Land Act in 1913; the severe dislocating effect on black South Africans of the implementation of apartheid; the “homelands” and migrant labour; the mass of South Africans who were and are in exile: these are all examples of a common theme in the history of a society that together (although mostly in opposition) went through periods of tremendous “unsettlement” and dislocation.

These massive periods of dislocation for both black and white South Africans took place within the boundaries of the same geographical area that came to be known as South Africa. The advent of “South Africa” in 1910 established this beyond any doubt. In fact, the ANC

## **‘A new way has opened up to “imagine” South Africa in a way that transcends racial, ethnic and class divisions’**

was founded in 1912 because of the political exclusion of black South Africans from this reality.

Economically, however, South Africa has always been a highly integrated society, albeit in an extremely unequal way. And despite the concerted attempts of apartheid and its ideologues to undo this, it has remained so.

**IT IS** an interesting exercise to read the books that formed the basis for the formalisation of the apartheid discourse, for example, Geoff Cronje’s “Regverdige Rasseskeiding”, written in 1943. If one looks carefully at this book, it describes a reality of increasing racial integration. But a quasi-religious framework is superimposed and the argument is that such integration is wrong, bad or sinful and that God wants us to be apart.

I do not wish to deny the very real aspects of racism, exclusivity and separation that permeate our society. But surely this is not the full story? Are there no silences in this regard that need to be uncovered, explained and inter-



History could throw light on what binds South Africans together.

preted?

South Africans of all races share a history of war and violence, in particular because we have waged war against each other – be it physically, structurally or psychologically. The violence of colonialism and apartheid have tied white South Africans irrevocably to black South Africans, for one cannot exploit people on such a scale and then turn around and pretend nothing happened

between you.

In wars such as the Anglo-Boer War or World War II, South Africans of all races participated, fought and suffered. The most recent example of this is, of course, the civil war waged between the forces of apartheid and the liberation movements.

I want to emphasise, though, that this way of looking at our past should not be seen as an attempt to completely reconstruct history. Neither is it an attempt to smooth over or deny the injustices of the past and the present, nor an effort to impose a new form of hegemony, a narrow kind of nationalism.

It is rather an attempt to focus on the big silences caused by the discourses of segregation and apartheid. It is an attempt to make being South African more concrete; to provide us with a legitimate and mutually acceptable consciousness within which we can securely and vigorously differ and agree as South Africans. □

André Zaaiman is Regional Director of Idasa in Pretoria.

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# Time to tackle the patriarchy

**W**omen have a role to play in shaping a new constitution. But to achieve this, argues HERMIEN KOTZÉ, they will have to go beyond vague policy statements and resolutions that are never implemented.

THE LAST weekend of September saw about 150 women, representing churches and Christian organisations from all over South Africa, converge on Durban to discuss the role that women, and specifically Christian women, can and should be playing in shaping a new constitution.

Implicit in the theme of the South African Council of Churches conference, one assumed, was the notion that women should get actively and immediately involved in this process to ensure that the new constitution will be truly enlightened, going beyond a mere liberal, non-racial formula to safeguard equal citizenship for women and men.

Since constitution-making is traditionally the terrain of male "experts", inactivity on the part of women might lead to a constitution perpetuating the present patriarchal nature of society.

This was the main focus of the conference but it also attempted to deal – in three days – with such a bewildering variety of issues and themes that one was left with a general sense of confusion and unfinished business.

Even though it is quite generally accepted these days that all issues are women's issues (by virtue of us comprising more than half of the human race), it is definitely over-ambitious to try to deal with so much in so little time.

Apart from two papers which focused specifically on the conference theme – "Women and the Constitution" by Natal human rights lawyer Linda Zama, and "Gender in Constitution-making" by ANC constitutional committee member Bridget Mabandla – the conference also attempted to deal with all of the following issues: land, the economy, housing, health, social welfare, family, education, law, culture, religion (women and the church),

and political participation!

The unfortunate result of this voluminous undertaking was that many of the discussions and debates tended to be somewhat stereotyped and sometimes harped on the obvious.

Zama's paper stressed the need for the oppressed majority in this country, who have been excluded for centuries from participation in decision-making processes, to understand exactly what a constitution is. She emphasised that the fundamental principles that should inform a constitution are those articulated by people, which should then be written in legal language by constitutional lawyers.

She went on to ask whether South African women, who are not represented in many of the forums where proposals for a new constitution are discussed, have started thinking about the role that they can (or have to) play in the

process of constitution-making.

She expressed the hope that a conference of this nature was an indication that such a process had begun. However, she also stressed that the time for slogans and protest was over and that women should develop an ability to think and act critically and to articulate their demands with clarity.

If women want fundamental change, she said, they must get involved in law-making and policy-making forums and assert themselves. Women needed to organise themselves into a broad front which will "say in one voice" that it is a fallacy to speak of equality before the law when most laws discriminate against women.

This need was echoed by several other speakers, none of whom gave any indication as to how this difficult task should be achieved.

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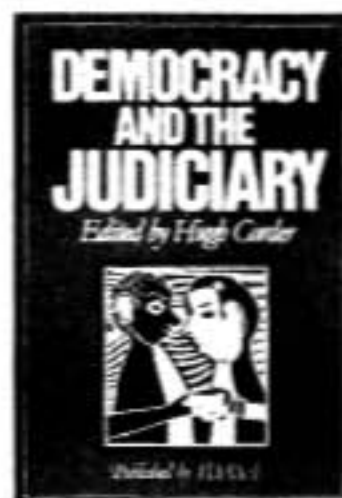
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Zama also emphasised the need to address urgently the large-scale illiteracy in SA. The best legal system and constitution in the world would be useless if not understood by the people.

She urged women to inform themselves on constitutionmaking and other national matters. "We should not brighten up when gender issues only are raised - we should be alert to respond to a variety of problems," she warned.

**SEVERAL** other speakers also urged women to empower themselves intellectually, especially in technology, finance, economics and other areas traditionally regarded as male territory.

"Male domination and patriarchy affect women . . . women do not have confidence, and we need to confront that in ourselves," said Brigalia Bam of the SACC.

There was a welcome sense of "taking matters in hand" from both Mabandla and Bam, who urged women to stop complaining and protesting and to start fighting for and demanding their rightful place in society: "You will never be a recipient of your own liberation, you have to demand it, fight for it, take it," was the message.

Some of the speakers felt that women in South Africa were to a certain extent to be blamed for their absence from important decision-making forums, since they have, in varying degrees, accepted the patriarchal status quo for far too long. They therefore have to acquire leadership skills as a matter of urgency.

Concern about violence, in all its various manifestations, was expressed by a number of speakers, and it was felt that women should speak out on this. It could also be a source of solidarity, since many women across racial, class and cultural barriers share concern about the seemingly endemic violence in our society and are also themselves often victims of (mostly male) domestic violence.

The conference did not, however, come up with concrete proposals in this regard.

The land question emerged as one of the central issues at the conference after a very thorough and interesting paper presented by recently returned exile Bongzi Njobe, who serves on the ANC's land commission.

She traced the history of the dispossession of African people in South Africa, turning also to the present crisis in agriculture and the complexities encompassed in a land reform programme.

She expressed the general sentiment of delegates when emphasising that failure to address the land issue would mean failure to address the aspirations of the majority, whose struggle for liberation is based also on the resolution of the land question.

She acknowledged the emotionalism contained in many people's views on the land question, but stressed the need to be realistic and to adopt an integrated approach sensitive to the complexities. She said it was vital that there be serious discussion and consideration around questions like: what is it we want to do

with the land?; who is to get the land?; what will they use it for?; on what basis is this land to be acquired?

She also spoke on the important relationship rural African women have with the land. The majority of rural African households are headed by women as a result of migrant labour and the racist legislation that has underpinned it for so long.

Thus these women "live off the land" (and remittances and old age pensions) and are seldom taken into account.

However, the balance and realism of Njobe's paper was not reflected in the commission on land that followed it. Participants were very emotional, at times simplistic and gener-



Brigalia Bam of the SACC, flanked by Sister Bernard Ngcube (left) and Dr Zuma, addresses the conference.

ally uncompromising.

It is very interesting to note that women are not mentioned in any of the conference's central resolutions on constitution-making bodies. General socio-economic and political demands dominate.

On the other hand, almost every single resolution addressed to the churches makes demands about women - for example, that women's desks be formed in all churches "for developing resources and opportunities for the empowerment and advancement of women"; that churches commit themselves to the eradication of sexism and the emancipation of women; that the churches openly debate issues like abortion and homosexuality.

Delegates also pressed hard for the rejection of all traditional, cultural and religious teachings and practices which perpetrate the dehumanisation of women. Examples are polygamy ("One man, one wife," said one delegate!), the practice of lobola (which has become totally commercialised) and reactionary marriage vows.

**I FOUND** the conference useful but quite confusing, in the sense that it attempted to deal with almost every single aspect of the future South Africa. To make matters worse, issues had to be approached from both a Christian and a women's perspective and also had to refer to constitution-making. This had negative results for focus in particular.

The conference was also often characterised by contradictions. The most serious (for me as a white, bourgeois feminist) was constant reference on the one hand to the need for a broad front of women across the divides of race, culture ideology and class to fight for women's emancipation and, on the other hand, the emphasis on "unity with our men" in the national liberation struggle.

Some very serious questions derive from this contradiction. For example, can women challenge the sexism and patriarchal attitudes of their male comrades without creating disunity? Can women ever get into positions of leadership without seriously challenging their male comrades, and do so en masse? And can the

**'Can women ever get into positions of leadership without seriously challenging their male comrades?'**

battle for women's rights be waged simultaneously with (or within) "the struggle for national liberation"?

If the conference under discussion is anything to go by, it seems that we will have to do some very serious and clear thinking about how the two can be combined, if at all!

It seems that the issue of women's rights in South Africa is in a real "Catch 22" situation. On the one hand, the formation of a broad front of women, now, is absolutely crucial to ensuring meaningful participation in the shaping of the new society and the new constitution (although, until now, only lip service has been paid to this difficult ideal). On the other hand, many women are very involved, often in very unequal capacities alongside men, in what is assumed to be the wider process of social transformation.

Will there be the time for us, or space, or feminist fervour enough to fight for women's rights? And can we, in time that is short, overcome the many factors that divide women in this country?

The answers to these and many other questions have to be sought, and soon. South African women have to get their act together and get beyond the stage of unfocused conferences with vague policy statements that nobody does anything about when they go home. We need working conferences and, most of all, we need clarity. Forward women! □

Hermien Kotze is Regional Director of Idasa

## Where is the action?

From Page 1

"opposite" political culture, which in itself almost always produces positive results.

The most conciliatory noises came from the left of the spectrum – at least one black poet expressed interest in joining the Gilde.

But the Cosaw delegates also demanded more self-examination and action from guild members, who were later castigated by poet Antjie Krog for their excessive inward focus and their inability to escape from their apartheid "hokkies". While the "outsiders" arrived at the conference eager to engage and armed with poetry and stories to share, the Afrikaner writers clung to a fallacious notion of independence, she said. They could not break out of their mental laager to link up with a broader South Africa.

Asked oral poet Sandile Dikeni, of Cosaw: "I am an Afrikaans writer. What is the Gilde doing to enable and enhance the writing of Afrikaans?"

**THE** keynote speaker was exiled literary academic Vernon February of the Africa Institute in Leiden, Holland. He was back in South Africa for the first time in 27 years, bubbling over in a mixture of Dutch and Afrikaans with a dash of Xhosa.

Speaking on moves towards a broad South African culture, February highlighted three areas that required urgent attention: the need to abandon slogans and define freedom, the need to embrace the diversity of cultures in the country and strengthen the languages that have been neglected, and the need to develop critical thinking at all levels in society. These issues, he said, could not stand over until the national question had been settled.

He said although the concept of a national identity was viewed with suspicion and it often created confusion, writers should endeavour to redefine it in a positive way.

Responding from the floor, Hein Willemse of the University of the Western Cape, cautioned against a narrow interpretation of the concept "national". He said there was much evidence of intolerance and authoritarianism in current politicking. "We must make tolerance a demand and make sure that the national concept will not incarcerate us."

But when poet Marlene van Niekerk wanted to know from Willemse what the ideology of the new national culture would be and who would be setting the standards, he replied that he did not want to enter that debate at present.

The simmering controversy about the relationship between individual writers and political/cultural structures flared into the open again when Sestiger Jan Rabie spoke of "black bureaucrats" on "cultural thrones" who wanted to dictate to writers. He charged that Barbara Masekela, head of culture in the ANC, wanted to prescribe to authors. "You want to organise books, I want to dream books."

Rushdie Sears, founder member of Cosaw, indicated that Rabie's charge reflected an

unfortunate paranoia that still bedevilled relations.

Wilhelm Liebenberg, a former member of the Cultural Desk of the UDF, claimed that the popular perception of prescriptiveness was inaccurate and based on a lack of understanding.

Dikeni argued that "one could organise and dream at the same time". The general secretary of Cosaw, Junaid Ahmed, added that organisation would never be a substitute for literary activity, but it was important to create conditions supportive of writers' efforts.

Willie Kgositsile – poet, professor of English in Zambia and deputy head of culture in the ANC – seemed to concede that prescriptiveness may have existed in the past. He said there was no need for paranoia though, but negative past practices must be destroyed.

**TAKING** this debate a step further in a later session, Kelwyn Sole of the University of Cape Town, said it was an illusion to think that it would be possible at some point in the future to separate the arts and politics. A new approach to the usefulness of both was needed for a more meaningful relationship to come about.

Marlene van Niekerk hinted that, in a democratic South Africa, writers should perhaps have a third choice, moving away from the complete freedom advocated by liberals, on the one hand, and the organised commitment preached by the struggle on the other hand.

Sachs said Afrikaans writers should foster and develop their own language and help lead those who are frightened of the future.

Much concern was expressed about the content of South African writing: the narrow and elite focus of Afrikaans writing; the violent overtones of the literary products of black writers; the elevation of certain writers to the status of "chief narrators" of the South African story; the increasingly alienated reading public.

Poet Don Mattera said the flow of the "guava juice" (fuel in petrol bombs) that was eulogised in the toyi-toyi poetry would have to



Karen Press

'While the academics indulged in abstract topics, writers' concerns – that could potentially have a profound impact on the country – were treated as less important.'



From left: Welma Odendaal, Tim Couzens, Pet

stop at some stage. "When we feed our children on poems that feed only on retribution and death, they will perpetrate it."

Dikeni, writer of "Guava Juice", countered by quoting from another poem. "When the sorrow disappears, then we will start singing."

There appeared to be consensus that the future of Afrikaans was secure but that it would not necessarily continue to enjoy its current privileged status. One speaker noted that Afrikaans had never really developed beyond the "sterilised" version approved by the ATKV (Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging) and the FAK (Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings).

Krog said Afrikaans had "failed this country", it would need to reflect a broader reality to survive.

A number of fundamental problems emerged spontaneously in the final session of the conference. First the organisers were taken to task by exiled writer and academic Njabulo

# Ghostly dance of bloodless categories

**South African literary criticism needs an injection of humour and fun – the natural enemies of nationalism and authoritarianism – says Tim Couzens, of the Institute for African Studies at Wits University. This is an edited version of his address at the writers' conference at Langebaan.**



and Ernst Lindenberg.

Ndebele (University of Lesotho) for inviting him into a situation where he could not follow much of the discussion, which was conducted mainly in Afrikaans.

"The aim is to communicate – that is the fundamental objective," he said. "We should not adopt a smugness that will have the effect of closing down communication."

Then Karen Press of Buchu Books expressed dismay that a writers' conference was being dominated by critics. While the academics indulged in abstract topics, writers' concerns – that could potentially have a profound impact on the country – were treated as less important, she said, appealing also to writers to start supporting each other.

**FINALLY** Cape Town poet Gladys Thomas spoke of how she felt snubbed by other writers when she arrived for the conference. She had thought that the "new South Africa" implied changed attitudes but was dis-



Writer Jeanne Goosen.

appointed when no one greeted her on arrival.

Ndebele said the experience of Thomas illustrated that South Africans would have to start at a grassroots level by acknowledging each other as human beings.

He said the central question was how to reverse the 40 years of isolation and lack of contact produced by the "madness" of apartheid.

Addressing the issue of the "representativeness" of South African literature, Ndebele said there did not appear to be a mainstream literature at present. He was also not sure that it would develop overnight – it would depend on literacy, awareness and availability.

He cautioned that writers should not submit to a "tyranny of representativeness" as the real need was for "a much deeper appreciation of the wealth of art before us".

Creative growth would flow from a preparedness to absorb this diversity of experience, said Ndebele. □

**LOOKING** back over the last 20 years I am saddened by what we have missed, the opportunities lost in research in South African literature. I shall dwell on the past in the hope that it will teach us something about the present and future. I shall deal with a few aspects of what I regret.

## Last Post for the Lost Past

Fairly recently, I took a straw poll of students doing fairly advanced work in South African literature so that one can assume that they are amongst the better informed on such matters in our society. I asked them if they knew who Pixley Seme was, and whether they knew anything about him. Not one of them had ever heard of him.

Perhaps it is because the Dark Continent is so dark that we tend to lose things – little things – like our own history. Many people do complain that so much of our literary and other history has been kept from us. Why have we not been told? There are three sets of people to blame.

- The ruling class with its whole apparatus of repression, censorship and intimidation, especially in the field of broadcasting.

- The literary establishment who have, for a variety of reasons, failed to come to grips with and disseminate this knowledge.

- The very people who complain that they are deprived of the knowledge. Through a combination of anti-intellectualism, complacency, stupidity and, quite often, straight laziness, they have not sought out the sources which are available to them. The charge of laziness applies equally to black and white South Africans.

To all intents and purposes Pixley Seme was the founder of the ANC. He was born, of fairly humble origins, it seems, in Zululand in 1881. He made his way to North America and, through a combination of missionary help and his own efforts, he was educated at a school in Northern Massachusetts and at Columbia University and Oxford University. He returned to South Africa in 1910 to practise law, and the following year began the moves which culminated in the formation of the ANC in Bloemfontein in January 1912.

## Cultural and Intellectual History

**THERE** is another glaring gap in the present state of our literary criticism. This is the almost complete lack of knowledge of the cultural and intellectual history of Africa. Let me take one example – that of Pan-Africanism.

At the independence celebrations of Ghana in 1957 – an event crucial in itself for the culmination of the ideas of Pan-Africanism, as well as their spread – was the Jamaican historian C L James who had published in 1938 that great book *The Black Jacobins*. At the celebration James met "some Pan-African young men from South Africa". They told him that his book "had been of great service to them". When James asked how, they said that a copy of it was in the library of the "black university" (Fort Hare) in South Africa. They said they didn't know anything about it until a white professor there told them: "I suggest that you read 'The Black Jacobins' in the library; you may find it useful."

'The Black Jacobins' is about the great slave revolution in the Caribbean island of San

To Page 12

Modern literary theory and criticism has contributed much to the discipline. In our present position its most important function is a healthy scepticism, especially in the areas of discourse and power.

But I do not find it fully satisfying. I have searched through it for human beings in amongst the wealth of jargon. It seems to have its blind spots. There are great dollops of the world and experience it chooses to ignore.

I suppose I am unredeemably old-fashioned but I do believe that there is a real world out there, however hard it is to apprehend. Namaqualand and Bushmanland always remind me how real it is.

We can declare the death of the author, but in so doing we write out of existence the ungraspable phantom of life. We can content ourselves with what one social scientist has called "the ghostly dance of bloodless categories", but in so doing we cut ourselves off from being, from the organic life of our country.

**WHAT** I am suggesting is quite simple, really. It is to encourage people to be more adventurous in their literary criticism. Or, as Trader Horn says: "If you want facts you must travel for 'em".

Not all answers lie in the realm of discourse alone. To understand a writer like WC Scully who was in Bushmanland and Namaqualand in the 1890s you have to accumulate all the evidence you can. To understand the writing you must try to understand the history, the area, the people – by talking to them etc.

Words on the page are no substitute for feet in the sand. Or as Keats wrote to his friend John Reynolds: "We read fine things but never feel them to the full until we have gone the same steps as the author."

There are dangers in the way literary criticism is likely to go. The in-phrases are Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism. We are in the process of being assailed by the propagandists of Afrocentrism. As African nationalism increases so this can only increase. We are, in the near future, in danger of studying only South African literature and in so doing, we will become as Saddam Hussein or P W Botha, people who seldom venture beyond their immediate horizons.

On the other hand, Western literary criticism is nearing saturation point. Some critics look only to America and Europe, others look only to Africa.

The kind of literary criticism I favour tries to use evidence of every available kind. It is open to the adventurous and the curious. I could be cynical and say I am glad that so many critics are currently obsessed with pure theory since it gives the few of us who plough our own furrows an emptier field. But it does sadden me, too. Because those people are missing something by not hunting in the archives, scouring the newspapers, travelling the roads, shaking hands and talking eyeball to eyeball with real people. Because, believe it or not, this kind of research is, above all, fun. And there is not enough fun in our literary criticism. And I do not apologise for advocating humour and fun, because humour and fun are, by their very nature, anti-authoritarian and the natural enemies of nationalism. □

Seme did not appear and provided no defence.

If there are warning signs in our own past, there are similar warnings if we follow our Pan-Africanist studies. We should be able to see the excesses and stupidities of rampant nationalism. I fear we shall not. Already some of the first signs are creeping into the letters column of the newspapers. When the need is felt to claim that an African was the first dentist, or mathematician, or whatever, any student of African history will know the theme, recognise the signs, hear the ironic echoes. This is at the level of popular belief, but it was not, in the days just before and after

**'The gauleiters of the academy forgot the lesson of the great thinker Sherlock Holmes: "It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data".'**

independence, confined to the ordinary people.

I have just finished a book on the rise of the nationalist movements in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. There are mocking elements of *deja vu* in that period of the early 1960s. It is to be hoped that we shall not repeat history as farce.

We should be reading the texts of the rest of Africa, but critically, as well as for inspiration. It might help to avoid the worst excesses of rampant nationalism.

The function of the biographer and the literary critic is to search, research, and keep researching. Their duty is to admire and applaud the struggles (with a little *s*) of people (with a little *p*). They should take fright when these are idealised into people with a big *P* and struggle with a big *S*. It is our job to stick with the little *esses*.

### The Case of Sherlock Holmes

**ONE OF** the things that saddens me most is the opportunity we have missed to record fairly systematically the literature of a revolution. It was fairly obvious, at least from the early 1970s, that a revolution was under way.

Who set out to record the literature of that revolution, as it happened, on the hoof? With a few notable exceptions, such as Kelwyn Sole, nobody. Where are the pamphlets, where are the interviews, where are transcripts of the wall slogans, where are records of the meetings etc? Nowhere. True, we can piece together bits and pieces through newspapers, court records, novels, Staffrider etc. But we have lost forever much of the contemporaneity of the action. We have lost the chance to study fully the literature of the country's revolution.

There are many reasons why we missed it but I would like to put part of the blame on Louis Althusser. The blight of Althusserianism, with its science of the text and its rigid authoritarianism, was imported into the country in the late 1970s, and students were sucked into its religious reading groups to the exclusion of all else.

The gauleiters of the academy forgot the lesson of the great thinker Sherlock Holmes: "It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data."

Domingo in the 1790s and how the leader Toussaint L'Ouverture led his followers in a movement which culminated in full independence and the creation of the new state of Haiti.

At the time that James was writing in the 1930s he was, he tells us, working in close association with one of the most influential figures in Pan-Africanism, George Padmore. And James said of "The Black Jacobins": "As will be seen all over and particularly in the last three pages, the book was written not with the Caribbean but with Africa in mind."

**IT WAS** in 1900, at the instigation of a West Indian barrister, Henry Sylvester Williams, that a Pan-African conference was held in London. It was here, according to W E B Du Bois, that the phrase "Pan Africa" was put in the dictionaries for the first time. Du Bois had a hand in launching a series of Pan-African Congresses in the decades that followed. The most important was the fifth, held in Manchester in 1945.

In pinning their faith to political action as the necessary measure for combating imperialism and accomplishing the social, economic and political emancipation of Africa, the congress participants forged the instruments for "positive action", which were mentioned as strikes and boycotts in order to press their claims on the colonial powers.

These ideas surely had an effect on Anton Lembede and the ANC Youth League, on those who drafted the ANC's 1949 "Programme of Action" which, in turn, led to the Defiance Campaign of 1952.

Not only has this got general relevance to South Africa literature, it has specific reference. Of the six people on the committee which included George Padmore, Kwane Nkrumah and Jome Kenyatta, was Peter Abrahams.

What saddens me, however, is that a key work like 'The Black Jacobins' which was being read in the Eastern Cape at least in the 1950s, is now virtually forgotten. And the currents and cross-currents of our past and its thought are submerged in a mass of ignorance and sloganeering.

### Little s and big S

The recovery of history has as its purpose not just the creation of heroes.

If you read some recently discovered early letters of Pixley Seme, you will get a glimpse of the courageous struggle of a young man to further his own education. It is an admirable struggle culminating in great achievement, eventually in the founding of the oldest surviving political organisation in this country. And for this there should be great honour.

But we should also remember that Seme, through his autocratic and lethargic leadership, almost destroyed the ANC when he became its fifth president in 1930. Of even greater import we must remember that he was removed from the lawyers' register by the Incorporated Law Society of the Transvaal in 1932.

He had been hired by the black residents on the white-owned farm of Waverley in the Pretoria district to defend them while they were under threat of removal in terms of the 1923 Urban Areas Act. Seme lost the case, failed to lodge an appeal with the Supreme Court in time, and was accused by his previous clients of misusing the money paid to him. When the Supreme Court heard his case

# There shall be houses, security and comfort . . .

A community initiative for affordable housing in Alexandra could serve as a pilot development model for other low income areas in the Transvaal.

**PATRICK BANDA reports**

**CIVIC** organisations throughout the country are waiting anxiously for the Transvaal Provincial Administration to respond to an Alexandra Civic Organisation development proposal that could be a reconstruction milestone for South Africa.

Should the TPA respond positively, the way will be cleared for an African urban community to participate actively in developing their home base for the first time in the history of this country.

The ACO proposal for the development of the far East Bank of Alexandra — entitled "Affordable housing for all in Alexandra" — is an attempt to transform historic slogans like "there shall be houses, security and comfort" into a plan of action.

It was submitted by the ACO in conjunction with Planact (a service organisation dealing with issues related to design, housing and urban development) to the deputy director-general of the TPA at the end of July.

The proposal is based on the notion of community participation in, and control over, the development process. The emphasis is on the process of development rather than a precise and idealised picture of the final product.

In other words, the proposal flows from a rejection of the idea that a product can be designed and then produced by means of a purely technical process, as if this process had no bearing on the product. This technicist approach, coupled with "consultation" with the Alexandra community, is what most developers have in mind in their approach to the East Bank's development, according to the ACO.

The ACO proposal, on the other hand, stops short of specific designs and plans for the land on the far East Bank. Instead it suggests mechanisms, structures, processes and concepts that comprise an approach to "bottom-up" community-controlled development.

It was conceived through a process of workshops and discussion with representatives of various groups within the Alexandra community, particularly representatives of backyard shack-dwellers, residents from the free-standing shack areas and hostel committees.

**MANY** of the ideas contained in the document have been discussed with other community-based organisations in the PWV area. The hope is that it could serve as a pilot development model for low-income areas in other parts of the Transvaal.

The proposal is divided into four sections: development goals, development principles, structures and mechanisms for organising community participation and control, and a section

headed "Space and Community" which sets out the ACO approach to urban planning and design.

In the first section on development goals, the document argues that commitment to democracy means that development programmes should be democratically conceived and implemented. This entails the creation of decision-making mechanisms to fully involve the intended beneficiaries in their conception and



Alexandra: From historic slogans to plan of action.

implementation.

The second goal is expressed as "development for reconstruction", which recognises the needs of residents in Alexandra as being physical, social, economic and political. A development programme should seek to address these needs in an integrated way.

Declaring a commitment to non-racism, the document observes that development programmes conducted within the confines of the Group Areas Act, the Land Acts and racially-based municipalities will be limited in their effectiveness.

Posing empowerment and human development as a further goal, the document argues that development is not merely about building houses and basic infrastructure. It involves the design of a living environment, the creation of strong community structures and space for human beings to develop their individual capacities.

Finally, the proposal suggests that development should further both individual freedom and the collective good. People should have the opportunity of maximum individual choice, but within a context of providing for all, not just a few.

First among the development principles suggested by the proposal is community participation and control.

The ACO argues that development projects within Alexandra to date have been based largely on a "top-down" process, and have suffered accordingly. There is a direct correlation between active community participation within any development project and the chances of success for that project.

The ACO acknowledges that the existing managerial, financial and technical capacity of residents in Alexandra is very low. It therefore recommends that the development programme for the far East Bank should be accompanied by a large-scale, systematic education and training programme to upgrade skills within Alexandra and facilitate grassroots participation.

**THE** proposal also recognises the need for involving a wide range of professional consultants from outside the township in the process of planning and development, to ensure professional standards.

The second development principle suggested by the proposal is non-profit development.

It notes that the land and housing markets in and around Alexandra are highly imbalanced and subject to many pressures. Current estimates show that there are approximately 7 500 formal houses in Alexandra and about 15 000 informal shelters. In other words, there is an extreme demand for land and low-income housing, yet little or no supply.

## There shall be housing

From Page 14

The ACO suggests that the far East Bank should be regarded as a scarce and precious resource for the people of Alexandra. Accordingly, the land on the far East Bank should not be developed according to conventional private sector criteria.

The ACO stresses that it is not suggesting that private sector developers have no role in a low-income development programme, nor that development projects should not be based on efficiency, cost-recovery, sound management and professional expertise. However, special conditions should pertain to ensure fair and equal distribution of scarce resources, to ensure affordable housing for all in Alexandra, and to avoid speculation.

The suggested "special" conditions are:

- The land on the far East Bank should be placed in a non-profit Community Land Trust, rather than being allocated directly to private developers. The main function of the Trust would be to prevent land speculation, including the resale of stands for profit and the holding of land allocations by private developers for profit.

- Serviced stands and houses on the far East Bank should be allocated to Alexandra residents only.

- No residents should be allowed to buy or own more than one house or serviced stand on the far East Bank.

**THE** ACO proposal also argues for affordability as a development principle, on the basis that housing is a human right and that most residents are poor.

It suggests that low-income housing and serviced land should be developed at cost. It rejects as contradictory and unacceptable that low-income and unemployed residents should have to cover high interest repayments and profits of private developers in order to have houses.

The proposal also calls for the subsidisation of low-income development, in the form of grants or subsidised loans. Such subsidies should not be viewed as hand-outs but as compensation to urban residents who have contributed their labour and spending power to the city, yet who, up to now, have housed themselves at very little cost to the city.

The ACO proposal calls for a development programme that integrates the provision of community facilities like creches, clinics, schools, recreational areas, halls and so on, with the construction of residential accommodation.

It therefore suggests that the planning process should include guidelines for determining priorities.

The TPA was due to respond to the ACO proposal a few days before publication. Here's hoping that we've seen a breakthrough! □

Patrick Banda is regional co-ordinator of Idasa in Johannesburg.

# New-look NP stress party politics

By Paul Graham

**POLITICAL** parties - not groups based on ethnic identity - will be the crucial "groups" in the exercise of constitutional political power, according to the Deputy Minister of Provincial Affairs, Tertius Delport.

Addressing an Idasa "Future Forum" in Durban, Delport said in laying down two basic tenets for the reform process he was speaking as a member of the National Party rather than expressing the "sentiments of the government in its role as administrator of the Republic".

Commitment to the principles of non-discrimination and freedom of association were the base from which commitment to multi-party democracy should flow, he said.

"A constitution may have safeguards for the protection of individual rights, it can protect freedom of religion, language and culture, and it can protect principles such as culturally oriented education. What it cannot do is guarantee a particular language, culture, or racial group leadership or decisive political power."

"Therefore, the political choices of the future will be between the principles of the various parties, between the different values they represent and defend and between the different policies they pursue."

This emphasis on the party as the necessary expression of people's political interests ran throughout his speech.

"When I refer to power-sharing," he asserted, "I refer to the concept of power-sharing between political parties."

His audience, many of whom had expected only a discussion of development proposals, warmed quickly to what was clearly for them an entirely new approach to constitutional development. He was challenged repeatedly to clarify this position.

"Is the party talking about the identification of ethnicity with party affiliation?" asked one

person, who pointed out that Zulu-speaking persons supported a range of political organisations.

Delport replied that this separation of party affiliation from ethnicity was exactly his point and re-iterated a commitment to a constitution which encourages multi-party democracy.

"Are minority rights protections then necessary, rather than a strong protection of individual rights?" asked another person.

"The individual right to speak a particular language cannot be exercised other than in a group," Delport replied, "but this cannot be seen in the same light as constitutional power arrangements."

Power-sharing in this concept could be achieved in two practical ways: it could be devolved to regional and local governments, and/or electoral procedures which "allow representation of all parties with substantial support" could be adopted.

This would reject the policy of "winner takes all" and make it possible to choose a system which accepts the fact "that we have many (conflicting) interests and that these interests must be represented in government".

A strong commitment to individual rights, which enables the exercise of rights which have community or group significance, and the creation of a constitution which not only allows for but encourages multi-party democracy, seemed to lie at the heart of the discussion which Delport had with his audience.

A number of questioners wondered whether the National Party and the government would be able to move in this direction in the face of right-wing and constituency dissent.

"How will you deal with the threat from the right?" was one question.

"We will outpace them," Delport declared. "Politics is about results, and we intend to get the necessary results." □

Paul Graham is Regional Director of Idasa in Natal

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**The Occasional Papers are available at R2,50 each. Publications may be obtained from Idasa head office at 1 Penzance Rd, Mowbray 7700. They are also available at all Idasa's regional offices.**

# Folly to trust the military

By Mathew Blatchford

**SOUTH AFRICA** has the largest and best-equipped army in Africa, and an awesomely armed police force which amounts to an auxiliary army. These are the same forces, with the same leaders and basic policies, that operated P W Botha's programme of repression and destabilisation. It is not clear that they can be trusted to maintain peace.

The problem is deepened by the militarisation of politics. Black political organisations generally depend on violent images for much of their propaganda. A large right-wing white

bloc depends on naive militarism for its support. The present white regime claims to be committed to peace but De Klerk's calls for order and harmony are disturbingly at odds with the unleashing of Inkatha and, allegedly, hit-squads on the Reef and in Natal.

Perhaps democracy can help to solve the militarisation of politics. At the moment little prevents political parties from using violence to pursue support – not even a common agreement that political violence is illegitimate. Nor is there an apolitical force to be used to contain such violence.

If free and fair elections are held, a party or

coalition with mass support will take power with a strong interest in peace and stability. It would be in that party's interest to marginalise violent elements, and it might be hoped that other parties would either accept stable political discourses, or adopt violence and become marginalised (as has happened in most Western states).

This offers no solution to the problem of abuse of power by the government controlling the armed forces, or by the armed forces themselves. Two factors might work towards such a solution. The armed forces must be denied the capacity to act as they did under Vorster, Botha and De Klerk, and the public must want to deny them that capacity.

The armed forces operate in secret, a secrecy protected by a huge number of interlocking statutes – including the Defence Act, Police Act, Protection of Information Act and Internal Security Act. Without this concealment the South African public might have been revolted by what the armed forces have done.

The elimination of all such statutes would make it almost impossible for the military to commit atrocities and violate the constitution without the public discovering it.

**HOWEVER,** it must be said that the white South African public did eventually become aware of what was going on, and when they did they tolerated it or even glorified it. Even the grotesque actions of the Askaris and the CCB aroused scant indignation among most whites. There is no reason to assume that a non-racial society would be much more critical of the activities of its armed forces.

Hence someone must work to arouse awareness of the threat posed by the armed forces. This should be an effective, hard-working, committed, flexible organisation without connections to any government, not unlike the American Civil Liberties Union but working in a more restricted field. (It is dangerous to leave such activities to political parties because they are always compromised by the need to appeal to voters immediately rather than to change voters' minds over time.)

In time of need such a body would identify military misbehaviour and try to publicise this and arouse opposition to it. Preferably the body should have some international status to protect it against governmental repression.

Such an organisation could not keep the military from doing wrong. Given strong public support the military can get away with any crimes, as the US military did in its 1986 arms deals with Iran, for instance. But at least the ending of military secrecy and the arousal of widespread distrust of the military might help to check the danger which the armed forces, by their nature, pose to peace and freedom. □

Mathew Blatchford is a former ECC activist, now a member of the ANC.

# Majority rule and rights in harmony

By Bea Roberts

**MAJORITY** rule and respect for fundamental rights should be in a creative harmony with each other, according to Albie Sachs, constitutional committee member of the ANC.

Addressing a business lunch group in East London in October, Sachs spoke on the topic of a Bill of Rights in a new South Africa, with specific reference to group and minority rights.

He said a country's constitution should draw the framework within which democracy operates. A Bill of Rights would be attached to the constitution and should establish the fundamental rights of citizens, as well as guarantee that majority rule would function fairly and democratically.

If such a bill enshrined freedom of speech and association, and upheld free and fair elections, it would ensure that all people would be able to debate issues, engage in politics and determine a parliamentary majority.

A Bill of Rights should not be seen as incompatible with majority rule, in fact, each should presuppose and depend on the other.

Speaking on minority rights, Sachs pointed out that international law does allow for the protection of minorities from abuse and oppression. However, he reminded his audience that there is another side to the matter — and that no individual or minority should receive disadvantaged or privileged treatment for being of a particular race, group or creed. In South Africa, privileged treatment of a minority is a problem — the white minority is rich and powerful, and giving them special protection is protecting and entrenching wealth, privilege and power.

Sachs stressed that there are two particular rights South Africans are fighting for: the right to be the same, and the right to be different — and the two are not incompatible. "Same" refers to civil, political and legal rights. These should be applied on an entirely undiscriminating basis. However, said Sachs, this does not



Albie Sachs.

mean that we lose our tastes, culture, personalities.

Equal political rights underlie each person's right to be different. There does exist one master/mistress culture to be assimilated into — people should have the right to retain their interests and associations. "No-one can tell me whom I can love, what I can eat, what language I feel comfortable in."

Minority rights should be seen in this context — if we give special political rights to one group, that is guaranteeing that cultural diversity becomes a question of contest.

Sachs called on whites to come into the new South Africa as citizens. "Don't keep apart from common society, don't hedge yourself in — if you do, you highlight special status, and you highlight privilege. Trust democracy — make democracy work." □

Bea Roberts is Regional Co-ordinator of Idasa in the Border area

# No love lost in Russia

**WOMEN** in the Soviet Union suffer more than black women suffer under apartheid.

This was the startling view expressed by Winnie Serobe, nursing sister at the Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa, at a Women's Forum entitled "From Russia with Love?" organised by the Johannesburg regional office recently.

"I thought that as a black woman in South Africa I am oppressed, but after six weeks in the Soviet Union I realised that the Soviet women are much worse off than me," she said.

She said Soviet women found it very strange to encounter a well-dressed, educated black woman from South Africa. They were even more surprised to be told that women in South Africa are organised and do not face as many basic day to day problems as Soviet women.

Among the problems that Soviet women face every day are a lack of "luxury" items, long hours spent in queues for basic food items, bad health care, no family planning, no tampons and a scarcity of modern contraceptives. Abortion is legal but poor contraceptive facilities mean that some women have to undergo numerous abortions.

Ms Serobe said Soviet women suffered most from a lack of com-



Winnie Serobe

munication - between husbands and wives, between friends, between women. Among the consequences was that they were

unable to organise themselves in civil organisations to share problems, find strength, empower themselves or plan to cope better

with life.

This made Soviet women desperately sad. What they talked freely about was misery - misery leading to a suicide rate higher than anywhere else in the world.

Nic Borain, regional director of the Idasa Western Cape office who accompanied Ms Serobe and others on the visit to the Soviet Union, said he found the Soviet people contradictory.

On the one hand they were civilised, educated, peaceful, gentle and committed to peace. On the other hand they had no service culture, no initiative and no incentive to work harder.

He agreed with Ms Serobe that they seemed unable to organise themselves politically to improve their society.

**MS SEROBE** has been nominated for both the Sowetan's Woman of the Year and the Star's Unsung Heroine awards.

She is chairperson and a founder member of the Mzimhlophe Transit Camp clinic, and a committee member of the Ikageng Aids Clinic. She has won two previous awards for her services as a nurse and her involvement in youth programmes. □

**Marianne Holscher**  
Regional Co-ordinator

## Problems at Bop private schools

Private schools in Bophuthatswana are "health hazards".

This is what Sister Immaculata of the Sisters of Mercy Catholic Mission station in Winterveldt had to say when Paul Zondo and Kerry Harris of Idasa visited her recently with an educationist from Germany.

Sister Immaculata estimates that 20 000 children in Bophuthatswana attend the four government high schools, five middle schools and 17 primary schools. A further 30 000 children attend private schools, where between 100 and 150 enter the first year in each school, but only 10 to 30 stay on until standard 5.

Before children are accepted at the government schools, their parents have to produce a birth cer-

tificate establishing that the child is Tswana-speaking, an immunisation certificate, and a receipt from the community or tribal authority proving rent has been paid. They must also buy school uniforms and books, and pay the school fees of R30 to R40 a year.

Phomolong Combined School and Ngubeni Private School, established in 1968 and 1971 respectively, are two of the many private schools set up to serve children who, because their parents cannot or do not meet these requirements, are not able to attend government schools.

Phomolong has 1 200 pupils and nine teachers. Ngubeni has 750 scholars and 10 staff members.

Our visitor, Professor Huber, who teaches courses on democ-

racy and the creation of a democratic culture to both trainee teachers and children aged 7 to 9 in Germany, was clearly dismayed at the abject poverty and squalor of the two private schools we saw.

These two schools are typical of the vast majority. They are built of corrugated iron, are missing doors and have sand floors. Icy winds howl through "windows" and other holes in the roofs and sides. Furniture consists of a few broken benches and desks. There are no toilet facilities or running water. Those with money, we were told, can buy water when it is available.

This reality contrasts very starkly with a recent informal report on the apparent success of educational policy for Bophuthatswana government schools,

which involves implementing co-operative learning programmes in primary schools.

Although group learning techniques are to be encouraged and supported, the Bophuthatswana government school system is based firmly on ethnic apartheid. A better alternative may well be the mass-based education programmes which have succeeded elsewhere in Africa.

As Sister Immaculata pointed out, a "massive literacy campaign run throughout the area and centred in homes" would do more for the people of Winterveldt than the pitiful "education" the majority of children currently receive. □

**Kerry Harris**  
Regional Co-ordinator



# Umfoloji peace accord breaks new ground

**INKATHA** and the ANC reached an historic agreement in Empangeni on September 1 this year when they, together with the security forces and the mayors of three townships, signed the Lower Umfolozi Regional Peace Accord.

Facilitated by the Natal Chamber of Industries, the Accord was reached after a deteriorating situation in the townships around Empangeni brought all the parties together in their concern for peace.

The final signatories to the Joint Statement of Peace Principles are the Inkatha Freedom Party, the ANC Northern Natal, Cosatu Northern Natal, the mayors of Esikhaweni, Ngwelezane and Enseleni, and the heads of the SAP and KwaZulu Police for the Empangeni/Richards Bay area.

Signing on behalf of Inkatha was the Minister of the Interior, Mr S Sithebe, while ANC NEC member Mr J Zuma signed on behalf of the ANC.

They committed themselves and their members to a 15-point charter of principles which embodies all the interests and understandings of the parties regarding the causes and ongoing reasons for the violence.

In particular, the role of mayors as the people to resolve conflict in their towns was highlighted. Their responsibilities in establishing programmes for dealing with refugees are also being looked at.

The Accord was established by

a conference of leaders and one of their first commitments was to "sell" it to their constituents. This has proved a tough task, with young people in each party suspicious of the motivation behind the agreement and impatient with the manner in which it has been implemented thus far. However, a definite programme has been established to convince the youth that the agreement is in their interest.

The agreement remains in force and has done so now for over a month, despite having to survive the potential conflictual Shaka Day celebrations.

ALUSAF chief Mr Rob Barbour, who played a key role as facilitator during the talks and the signing of the agreement, has stressed the strong interplay between rural and urban areas which makes it essential to bring all people affected by violence into any accord.

In fact, at the time of writing, talks are being undertaken with a view to extending the Accord to the rural areas surrounding Empangeni - and by extension to the Chiefs in these areas - and south to Mandini.



The accord paves the way for the security forces to play a more constructive and impartial role.

The Accord has made it possible to isolate many of the criminal elements involved in violence, and has enabled the police to play a more constructive and impartial role.

Following the signing of this regional agreement, negotiators for both the ANC and Inkatha have identified a range of other potential regions in which similar accords can be established. The model provided by the Umfolozi Accord - in which a business facilitator assisted the parties in establishing an agreement with their support and that of the leadership of the security forces, the ANC and Inkatha - could well be followed.

Certainly, the lessons learned will be applied. Amongst these are

the need to involve as many groups and interests as possible in the agreement, the possibility for involving existing civic structures, the need for regular and efficient communication between parties to ensure no breakdowns, and the constructive role that security forces can play in reducing violence once an agreement has been reached.

Motivation for extending the Accord remains high although tensions and mistrust remain. One of the most crucial lessons which people are learning is that peace accords provide only the starting point for dealing with community conflict and violence. □

**Paul Graham**  
Regional Director

## An excerpt from the historic statement of peace principles

**IN VIEW** of the escalating unrest and violence, and in an earnest desire to promote peace in our region, we, the mayors of the towns of Esikhaweni, Ngwelezane and Enseleni, the regional leadership of Inkatha, ANC and Cosatu, and the Security Forces operating in the said towns, accept and wish to promote the following principles.

- All people must have the right, upheld by the law, to freedom of political association.
- All people must be free to choose whether or not to support stayaways, boycotts or any other legitimate political activity.
- All people shall have freedom of religious choice, and

## Peace 'lies in your hands'

church leaders shall be free to minister to all members of their congregations irrespective of political affiliation.

- Intimidation by direct or threatened violence is a criminal offence and every effort will be made by organisations to inform the Security Forces of impending criminal and violent activities so that those who carry out such acts can be brought to justice.

- The practice of denigrating leaders and organisations by the use of inflammatory and insulting rhetoric must cease.

- The Security Forces will actively pursue the impartial enforcement of law and order.

- The Mayors, or whoever they may delegate, will play a neutral role in bringing together the par-

ties who are involved in conflict in their town for the purpose of resolving such conflict.

- The Security Forces commit their organisations to the impartial protection of all citizens and their property, irrespective of political allegiance.

- Places of learning, including schools and the university, must not be disrupted by political activity and must be freely available for the use of all students. Students must dedicate themselves to the task of improving their skills to the highest possible level.

- The problems being experienced by refugees must be urgently addressed with a view to their rehabilitation in their own towns as soon as possible.

- Organisations must not misuse youth for violent purposes but rather help to create a climate in which parents can exercise full authority over children under their care.

- Dangerous weapons should not be carried in public, and the possession of illegal weapons is condemned.

- People living in this region should be guided by their local leadership and not allow rumours and forces from outside the area to incite them to violence.

- We commit ourselves to these principles trusting that their implementation in this region will open the way to a wider reconciliation and a meeting of the national leadership of the ANC and Inkatha.

- We believe that all human life is precious and should be respected and protected. □

# CSIR to advise Bop squatters

**THE** housing crisis in Soshanguve, escalated by fugitives from a draconian Bophuthatswana edict on squatters, is receiving the attention of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) who visited the area with Idasa representatives recently.

The CSIR visit followed a mas-

sive influx of squatters into Soshanguve after a directive from the Bophuthatswana authorities to stand-owners in the Winterveldt region that they should evict "illegal tenants" by the end of June.

Memories of security force shootings - in which 11 people were killed in Winterveldt in March 1986, and seven in Garan-

kuwa in March this year - panicked thousands into fleeing Winterveldt for the "haven" of Soshanguve township.

There they have since occupied every available piece of land, including dangerous areas beneath pylons and on top of storm-water drains.

The members of the CSIR's

Informal Settlement Advisory Group (Isag) who visited Soshanguve included Phil Page-Green, Peter Skosana and Dave Ventura of Transport (Road) Technology; and Baby Mogane, Cecil Chibi and Cecile Thom of Water Technology.

Mr Sekhu of the Soshanguve Residents' Association (Sorea) squatters' sub-committee told the group of the plight of 900 new families who are waiting to be resettled. He said that the fugitive squatters added to the existing housing crisis in Soshanguve, where many local residents have been on waiting lists for houses for as long as 14 years.

The delegation also visited the administration offices of the Department of Development Aid (DDA). As a Tribal Trust Land, Soshanguve falls under this department and consequently has no town councillors. However, the DDA recognises Sorea and works with them on the squatting and general housing crisis as well as other township affairs.

According to DDA official Mr Liebenberg, the population of Soshanguve is about 180 000. Twelve thousand households still require sites.

Planned services such as water and sanitation are yet to be provided and water is delivered to certain points by trucks. Water pipes are being laid and some pit latrines have been dug.

**IN AN** attempt to meet the desperate need for housing, DDA is in the process of securing more land for low-cost residential development in Soshanguve. At the moment they are moving shack-dwellers to undeveloped sites; those people already occupying land being allowed to remain until there are other sites available.

Following the visit and after assessing how they could assist the community, Isag offered to act as an advice group to the community and the DDA on how best to ensure successful implementation and cost recovery.

Isag has also requested a meeting with the Soshanguve Residents' Association and the squatters' committee to discuss practicalities.

**Paul Zondo**  
Regional Co-ordinator

**STRINI MOODLEY**, journalist and publicity secretary for Azapo (Azanian People's Organisation), recently addressed Idasa's monthly Future Forum lunch in Durban.

Speaking about Black Consciousness philosophy, he said that black liberation must be self-achieved and based on self reliance, because liberation consciousness is a prerequisite for liberation at other levels.

For this reason, he said Azapo rejected inclusive non-racialism. Whites, he said, must not look to work with black people, but should involve themselves in changing white attitudes.

He explained Azapo's rejection of the current negotiations in the light of this rejection of working with whites through the change process. The organisation also rejected the negotiation process because it did not feel the package offered by the government meets the definition of negotiations. Azapo is adamant that a constitu-

## Azapo stresses self reliance



Strini Moodley

change and on the issue of socialism.

tional assembly should be convened which must comprise representatives elected on the basis of one person, one vote.

Moodley was not able to talk about the organisation's views on the future economy as this is under discussion at present. He did, however, make it clear that they sought a socialist economy and society. He drew a distinction between a system based on the values of socialism and the Soviet/East European models which he saw as a perversion of this notion. Such models were a form of state monopoly capitalism, he said.

The talk was followed by numerous challenging questions from the floor about the philosophy of Black Consciousness, particularly the role of whites in the process of

**Gary Cullen**  
Regional Co-ordinator

## Tukkies to the rescue?

**THE** destitute Winterveldt community may receive some help from University of Pretoria students following a social history tour to the area organised by Idasa and Studente vir 'n Demokratiese Samelewing (SDS).

The aim of the tour was to expose students from UP's Rag and social welfare committees to the conditions of those living in Winterveldt - an area of 600 square kilometres which officially falls under the homeland of Bophutha-

tswana, yet for which neither the South African government nor the homeland authorities has taken responsibility.

The tour revealed desparate socio-economic deprivation - a community settled on a rubbish dump, "private" schools where it is not possible to learn, clinics empty of basic medicines and equipment.

The students met teachers, Catholic sisters from the Sisters of Mercy mission, health and community workers and Winterveldt

residents. Various people gave inputs on subjects such as the state of education and health services.

The hope is that the tour will lead to the Winterveldt community benefiting from the charitable work of the UP Rag and social welfare committees. A motion, sponsored by the Rag committee and passed recently by the SRC, calls for community service to become a compulsory component of all courses.

**Kerry Harris**  
Regional Co-ordinator

# The scourge of unemployment

By Servaas van den Berg

THE SCOURGE OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA, Klaus Nurnberger, Encounter Publications, Pietermaritzburg, R5.

**ONE** would not expect an economist's insights into unemployment from a theologian, but there is much to ponder on in this publication presented in an easily digestible format.

The author starts from the fact that the attention given to unemployment by policy makers and decision makers, "stands in no relation to its devastating results". He then sets out to give an indication of the extent of the problem, provide a structural explanation of its causes, and offer some policy suggestions for major decision makers.

The author paints a vivid but somewhat confused picture, based on a myriad of sources, of the extent of the problem. In the process he gets lost in definitional and measurement problems when quoting figures. His attempt at arriving at the causes of unemployment – and at some of the remedies – is somewhat unconvincing.

Yet his contribution lies in presenting an economic issue to a wider audience. He obviously feels he is on safer ground when applying himself to the ethical questions surrounding unemployment. He writes that: "The Biblical faith . . .

assumes that creativity belongs to the essence of the human being in general, and of the believer in particular. Human fulfilment is not possible without creative activity."

This point of departure leads him to concern about unemployment and the suffering caused by it. Though he admits that, "the irrelevance of the church in economic and industrial issues is proverbial", something that "should not be bewailed but accepted as inevitable", he does assign two specific roles to the church in addressing this problem:

Firstly, the church should, in its prophetic ministry, "express solidarity with the weaker partners in the social fabric and insist that those in need should receive first priority". The struggle for social justice is something the church cannot ignore, just as it is the task of the state to ensure that "not the powerful, but the powerless receive support and protection".

Secondly, Nurnberger points out that the church, as a grassroots structure, can assist the poor or the unemployed in concrete ways in their struggle for survival. "It is true that this may just be an ambulance service while the battle continues to maim and kill. But when you are wounded and dying you will not despise the services of the ambulance."

Nurnberger has gone to great lengths to

gather information about a topic outside his field of expertise, because he believes that more attention should be devoted to unemployment. Those of us who share his concern would welcome this booklet, though economists would be far from happy about his treatment of the topic.

However, perhaps we economists should also contribute more towards bringing this problem to the attention of a public which is far too complacent about this suffering in our midst.

**NURNBERGER** has advice not only for business, the state and the church. He advises the unemployed to use their labour resources to satisfy their own needs, and trade unions to "be careful not to increase unemployment through injudicious demands. Remember that the benefits which you may reap from your struggle . . . may not only cut the powerful and the rich to size, which is fair enough, but also seriously affect the chances of the marginalised to enter into gainful employment and a living income".

Servaas van der Berg is Professor of Economics at the University of Stellenbosch.

(Obtainable from the Department of Theological Studies, University of Natal, P.O. Box 375, Pietermaritzburg 3200)

## Vaal teenagers tell their story

By Shauna Westcott

APARTHEID IS THE TIGER, Pietie Badenhorst and Dirk Meerkotter (eds), Patmos, Bloemfontein, 1990 ) R12.

**THIS** book is one of the gleaming fragments forged in the struggle of the people of the Vaal Triangle between 1984 and 1988. It has the shine of coal, not of diamonds. It does not dazzle or decorate. It holds out – against the machinery of cruelty – the possibility of communal firesides.

A short introduction by the editors begins by noting that the term "Vaal Triangle", associated with the three "white" towns of Vereeniging, Vanderbijlpark and Sasolburg, draws a veil over the townships – Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Bophelong, Zamdela, Evaton, Eatonside, Roshnee, Rus-ter-Vaal – where 80 percent of the people live.

It goes on to sketch some of the history of the area, a calamitous microcosm of a divided society: site of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, place of peace accords, showcase of high-tech industry, monument to forced removals, birthplace of the mass revolt of 1984.

It was in response to the turmoil and suffering of 1984 that "several organisations and individuals tried to establish support groups for those who desperately wanted to communicate and move towards unity". One of the results of these discussions between students, workers and teachers from the Vaal area was a series of awareness programmes for young people.

The editors (a social worker disenchanted with state "population development" programmes contaminated by "security" concerns; and the then deputy dean of the education faculty at Potchefstroom University) were among those involved in these programmes, and were partly funded by Idasa.

They write:

"Some programmes to enhance the participants' perspective on a

united and peaceful, democratic South Africa were developed around the processes of drawing and the writing of stories, poems and plays. Programmes included the development of critical thinking, problem-solving abilities and social skills in order to empower students to fulfill

their shared need regarding a peaceful democratic country."

The students' ideas are presented in their own handwriting, complete with idiosyncratic grammar and spelling that lend a lyricism of surprise to expressions that might otherwise appear ordinary.

"We are hungry for education and we don't get a piece of it satisfactory," says Kraai.

"If we not gonna live together one day the will just be war," says Joycelyn.

"Never seen someone so cruel, so selfish

"How dare you live on earth," says Mary.

The editors provide brief linking statements between the observations and laments of the youth.

"As young people we do not always understand why some people live under such terrible conditions ... our experiences leave us with mixed feelings," is how they introduce the following, from Augustus:

"I am at the farm, at a friend's place. I am happy at a new atmosphere. A new place. But nothing is new. The environment is like that of a zoo. The house is old, think a century old. We are inside of the house and is so stuffy. At supper, we're served in broken dishes and some worn out. The rust from the ceiling falls into our food. Everybody in a family works on the white farm. Children and adults. But one member get paid. I spent a week but it was like ten years. I only had tea once."

There is more. Haunting stuff. Do your bit for re-education and buy 10 for Christmas presents.

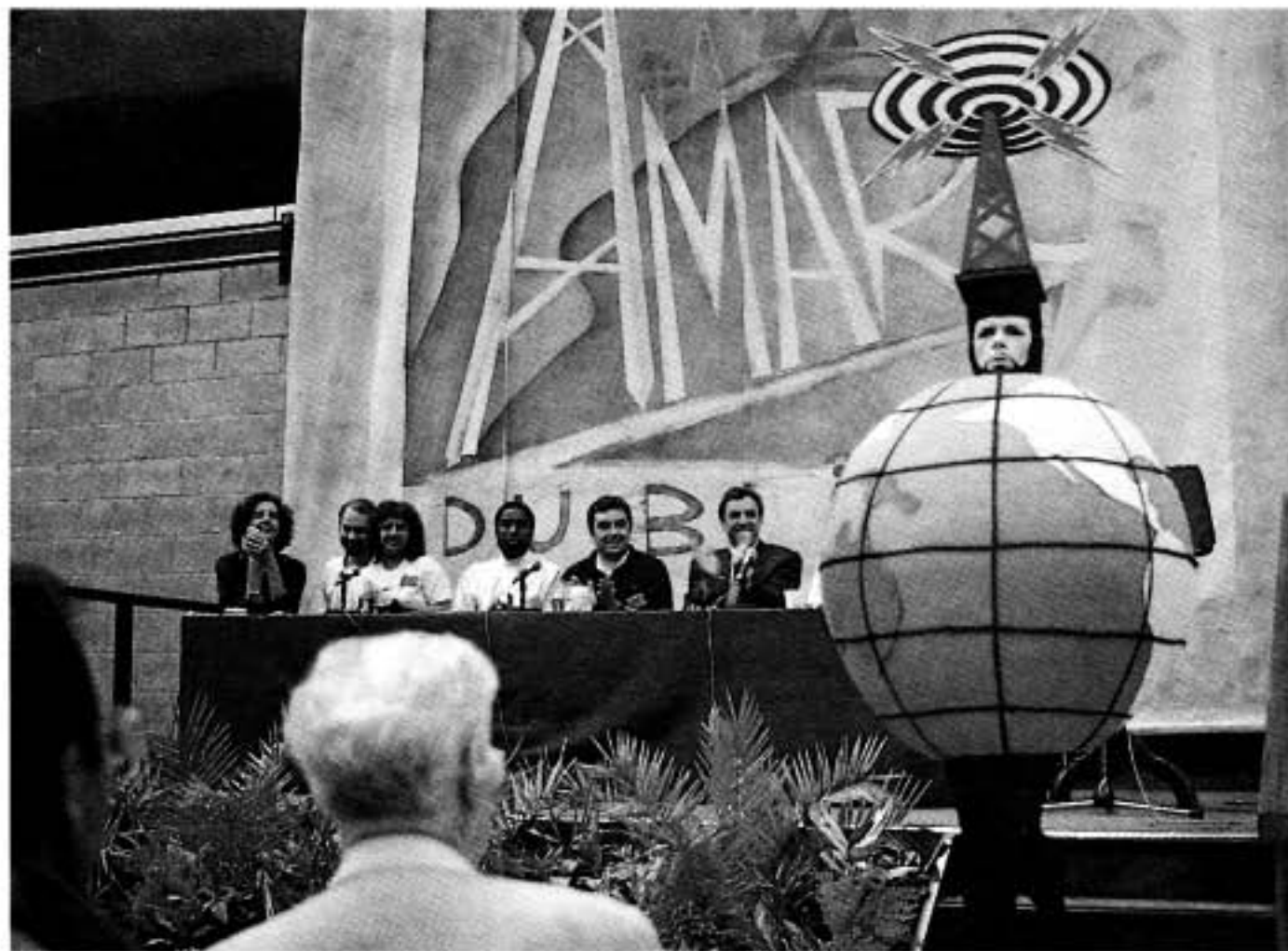
Shauna Westcott works in the media department of Idasa.

# COMMUNITY RADIO: tuned in and turned on

**Community radio has the potential to be the third voice between state controlled radio stations and private commercial stations.**

**The Fourth World Assembly of Community Radio Broadcasters, held in Dublin in August, focused on "the right to communicate".**

**By Sue Valentine**



"Radio for the people, controlled by the people". . . the opening ceremony at the Community Radio Broadcasters gathering.

years and with more than 30 up-and-running community radio stations, community radio is still considered to be experimental. Worldwide, community radio does not count for more than one percent of the stations that broadcast.

**IN HIS** address to the conference, the president of the Irish National Association of Broadcasters, Jack Byrne, explored the potential ability of community radio to prove its claims that it offered a worthwhile alternative to commercial or state radio stations.

"Traditionally, radio has developed in one of four ways: authoritarian, paternal, commercial and democratic," he said. "Community broadcasters are against authoritarian control of what can be said, against paternal control of what ought to be said and against commercial control of what can profitably be said. All are anti-democratic."

In contrast to other forms of radio which see the development of information technology as a means of consolidating political power or as a new, lucrative business venture, community

radio sees democratic access to the microphone as being of central importance to the creation of a global society where political and economic power will be dispersed throughout the population.

Rooting the lofty idealism in reality, Byrne warned that broad access to electronic information would not automatically produce a better world. To believe that would be to create yet another myth. However, like all myths it contained an element of truth and that truth needed to be discovered and built on.

Ownership of and accessibility to the media were necessary first steps in the process of achieving a more equitable flow of information, but this was not enough. A society strongly rooted in computer and telecommunications systems could incorporate participatory democracy, decentralised control and social equality, but it would not happen as a natural spin-off, he warned.

"Wisdom must also enter the process. Take

the daily news from any media source and it will be obvious that humankind has not become much wiser over the centuries of massive increases in rational knowledge. We recently acquired the electronic means of disseminating this knowledge globally and almost immediately. But this is only a speeding up of the knowledge process. When are we going to wise up?"

Concluding his address, Byrne said that through community radio, people could look to each other for help, support and answers.

"The whole planet is economically, ecologically and politically enmeshed. We can't ignore the reality of interdependence. But too often these links and dependencies are the cause of hostility and violence, when they should be the cause for reminding us that we are all here together with nowhere else to go. We can destroy it all and ourselves or we can be safe and happy together. There is still time to make that choice." □

**Sue Valentine is Media Co-ordinator with Idasa.**

**IN A** country where the state has almost total control of the airwaves, talk about the creation of community radio stations may well be dismissed as the pet subject of radio nuts or the dream of idealists.

But, if we are serious about giving people the opportunity to express themselves, to communicate their ideas, beliefs and needs, then the notion of community radio offers real possibilities and need not be a far-fetched dream.

To the members of the World Assembly of Community Radio Broadcasters who met in Dublin, community radio is very much a reality. More than that, in the words of one of the speakers, "radio is the modern natural meeting place" and the medium for democratic communication.

In pursuit of this goal, the World Assembly of Community Radio Broadcasters (Amarc, its French acronym) was set up as a Canadian initiative 10 years ago.

In his opening speech to the conference, the president of Amarc, Michel

Delorme, announced an ambitious goal: "At the end of the century there must exist everywhere on this planet a form of democratic radio based on the participation of the population. We are approaching the year 2000, which gives us 10 years to achieve this goal."

In Delorme's definition, community radio is neither the expression of political power nor the expression of business, but the expression of the population. Rather, it is a third voice between state-controlled radio and private commercial radio stations.

There is no single model for community radio, however, as part of its strength lies in its diversity. Precisely because it is "community radio" it will reflect the society it serves. In Latin America there is popular radio, educational radio and peasant radio; in French Africa there is local rural radio; in Europe it is associative radio, free radio or neighbourhood radio, while in Asia there is radio for development. In Oceania it is known as Aboriginal or community radio.

However, says Delorme, community radio still needs to prove itself. In Canada, after 10