

# DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

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Poets in exile . . . Willie Kgositsile and Jeremy Cronin.

## Writers start journey to new SA

### 'It is not heroic to oppose apartheid – it is normal'

In many respects it was a case of the "gatvol" meeting with the "gatkant" of literature in South Africa. For four days with the Victoria Falls roaring like an angry sea in the background, the writers talked, and talked — and listened. The air was thick with Afrikaans, eagerly spoken too by the Xhosa, Tswana and Zulu veterans of the struggle.

It was the Afrikaans writers mainly who were concerned about the repetitive "gatvol with the system" refrain in "white" Afrikaans writing. The other delegates —

many of them members of the ANC — represented the neglected, ignored and silenced — but vibrant and liberatory — "gatkant" of literature in South Africa.

Many of them had travelled far, and long. From Leyden in the Netherlands came the diminutive and delightful literary academic Vernon February who left his home town of Somerset West nearly a quarter of a century ago. From London, Wally Serote, the sober poet who above all wants his fellow writers "to dream" in the struggle. Poet extraordinaire Breyten Breytenbach, his "tongue itching" to speak Afrikaans, travelled from Berlin. A string of "listed" and therefore (damn!) unquotable delegates came from Lusaka, among them poet Jeremy Cronin, ANC cultural head Barbara Masekela and poets Willie and Baleka Kgositsile. The rest came from south of the Limpopo. They were black and white writers and academics, the majority of them Afrikaans-speaking.

Their opposition to apartheid had brought them together. But was that sufficient to keep them together? Would the Afrikaans writers, especially, be able in large numbers to throw in their lot with the broad democratic movement

**In July, IDASA hosted a SA writers' conference at the Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. RONEL SCHEFER reports.**



From London . . . Wally Serote in conversation with Cape Town writer Ingrid de Kok and Stellenbosch academic Annie Gagiano.

in their search for the much desired "united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic" South Africa? And if some of them should decide to take a different route to achieve a new order? Would that be acceptable to their new-found friends in the struggle against apartheid?

Not all the questions were answered conclusively. And more could probably have been asked. But first meetings with ANC members in exile are emotional occasions for South Africans, regardless of race. And the reluctant "oracle in Lusaka" also has an annoying (democratic) tendency to suggest that questioners thrash out certain issues with the democratic movement inside the country!

But some firm points were made and conceded in relation to the state of Afrikaans writing, the role of the writer in national liberation and the necessity of establishing an inclusive, truly representative South African literature.

As a starting point, some Afrikaans writers said the four-day meeting had helped them to

shed some of their "feelings of impotence" about the future of their country. The rising star among Afrikaans novelists, 33-year-old Etienne van Heerden, will never again accept the Hertzog Prys, the prime award made by the Afrikaans literary establishment. "It (the Hertzog Prys) had to be demystified for me, and that has now happened," he said on our last night at Vic Falls. Many of the Afrikaans writers are already members of the progressive Congress of South African Writers, and some of those who currently belong to the more conservative Afrikaanse Skrywersgilde said they might resign if the organisation failed to commit itself to the goal of a non-racial democracy in the near future.

These initial responses from delegates seemed to fulfil the expectations which the funders, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in West Germany, had of the event. In a message sent to the conference, the foundation said the gathering was "black and white and bound to

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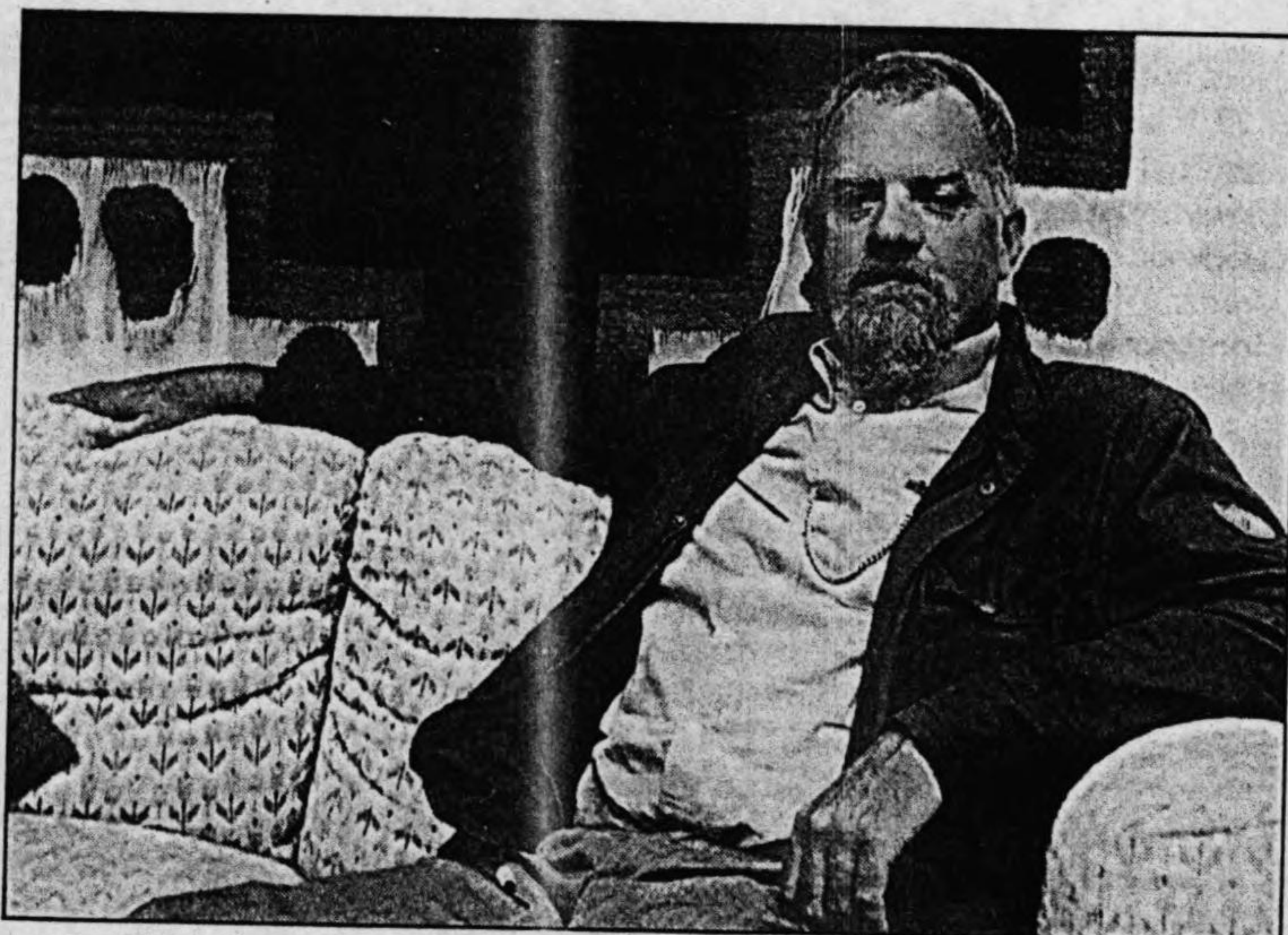
# Two years after Dakar, the dialogue continues

Van Zyl Slabbert's phone call inviting me to Dakar was the beginning of my most exciting time ever on African soil. This was so despite the years I spent working in "black" Africa and my 25 or so research trips to South Africa since I first saw the Cape of Good Hope in 1964. For in all those years I had asked myself, to put it in Alan Paton's words, "that most difficult of South Africa's questions... what are black hopes and what are white hopes, and can they be hoped together?"

At that time of course I did not know that my becoming a "Dakarite" would lead to a situation where, within a year, I would meet a couple of times, in Moscow and elsewhere, Soviet scholars of Southern African developments. But then "Dakar" was the very best introduction one could have to meet outstanding specialists like Vasili G. Solodovnikov, his country's former ambassador to Zambia during the crisis over Southern Rhodesia, Boris R. Asoyan, probably the top expert on Southern Africa of today's Soviet diplomacy, and of course Vladimir I. Tikhomirov.

It cannot be questioned that the USSR continues its close and very important co-operation with both the ANC and the SACP. It would be naive to believe that, as quite a number of political contacts have been developed between Pretoria and Moscow, the Soviets will now give up probably the only instrument they have to influence developments in South Africa. What has changed is, that the USSR has freed itself from its previous ideas of a post-apartheid South Africa that is the product of a military-revolutionary change. The Soviets have realised that there is no "law" that says that the armed struggle of the ANC must lead to the liberation movement's ruling the new South Africa in the name of the democratic masses as one of sub-Saharan Africa's many one-party states. Living in a country with a very heterogeneous population, being aware of the ethnic conflicts in Transcaucasia, the Baltic republics and, latently, in Central Asia and maybe even the Ukraine, they will understand the complexity of South Africa's situation better than many Western, particularly North American, South Africa watchers.

Dealing with Southern African issues seems to be a particular challenge to a German, be he from the eastern or the western part of this arbitrarily divided nation. For we know best a policy that first plunged the world into massive destruction and then led to the amputation and the division of what had remained of Germany. One of the most lasting impressions in Dakar was that of the possibility, and even the probability, of an all-out civil war between MK and the AWB. Against this background I remembered the pitiable failure of the Western Namibia initiative of 1977 that according to its fathers, American UN Ambassador Andrew Young



RASHID LOMBARD

By KLAUS BARON  
VON DER ROPP

and West Germany's Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher, should have led to a corresponding South African initiative. The initiators of this probably stillborn policy were its gravediggers, as they had not studied the Afrikaner's mentality. They indeed thought they would have little more than a child's play with Afrikanerdom and succeed in bringing first Swapo, in Windhoek, and then the ANC, in Pretoria/Kaapstad, to power. In Dakar, for very good reasons, there seemed to be nobody who still put much hope in the not always good services of Western mediation.

Listening to IDASA in Dakar one remembered a question the then West German chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, used in May 1977 to reply to a remark by US Vice President Walter Mondale to the effect that the West must do everything in its power to force Pretoria to abolish apartheid. The question was "and replace it with what?". Even if very many self-styled Western experts on Southern Africa think it to be obsolete, Schmidt's question is the key to solving the South African conflict.

IDASA delegates had exactly this in mind, when they asked Thabo Mbeki and their other compatriots from the ANC again and again, what was acceptable to them: only a unitary state? Or could they also see the new South Africa as a federal, a consociational or a cantonal system? What did they think of a regional approach like the Kwazulu Natal Indaba? Could they even think of the founding of something as ideologically unacceptable as a "toevlugsoord" in the sense of a boerestaat — an Afrikaner-Israel? With Egon Bahr, the leading German thinker on foreign policy issues, the vast majority of

IDASA delegates were looking for South Africa for a "hitherto unknown model of co-existence with equal rights and special protection for minorities".

The ANC apparently had a problem with such fears, expressed also by Slabbert's remark, that revolutionaries must convince whites, and particularly Afrikaners, that there is life beyond apartheid. What else could the ANC have done but to reiterate its belief in the Freedom Charter and its vision of a non-racial democratic order in an undivided South Africa? If white liberals expressed these fears repeatedly, and sometimes in very harsh terms (!), how could the ANC convince the 90 per cent or more white South Africans who are politically to the right of the "Dakarites"?

To overcome these fears Oliver Tambo in a speech in April 1986 in Bonn had professed to the ideals of the French and the North American revolutions, as he had done earlier in November 1985 in an interview

with the *Cape Times*. In Dakar the ANC confirmed its commitment to political pluralism. IDASA delegates who asked whether this would include the (obvious) rights of opposition got an ambiguous answer: there will be pluralism within the frame of "liberatory intolerance". And other statements were a sign of a somewhat strange interpretation of those liberal ideals: the ANC seeing itself as an umbrella leader and its defining "racist" and "tribalist" groupings out of the nation. Does this mean, that besides the NP, KP, HNP, AWP and very many other Afrikaner organisations — also the PFP, Inkatha, Azapo etc. — will be defined out of the new nation and as a consequence be banned? Will the free South Africa go the way of today's Zimbabwe? In Dakar it was again to be felt, how very deeply divided a society South Africa is. And it is definitely not only a division between progressive and racist forces. Probably there are two democratic political cultures that often seem hardly to be compatible.

As the NP, and by no means the Dakarites, holds power it was perfectly understandable that the ANC in Dakar was not prepared to openly discuss compromises. Furthermore, from the ANC's standpoint it is to be understood, if the liberation movement thinks it to be strange and inadequate that a minority that has humiliated a majority for centuries asks for privileges (namely safeguards) in the new South Africa. But this point of view was only convincing, if the South African conflict was not one of power politics. The West will for a long time not be prepared to totally isolate South Africa or even declare war on white South Africa. And the Afrikaners will prevent their defeat by MK (and its allies) by using, if necessary with heinousness, all economic and military means at their dis-



# 'Dis ons plek die,' sê Magopa-stam

Deur LOU-MARIE KRUGER

*"I wish that this bus had been full of white people from comfortable suburban areas. Magopa is a microcosm of South African history — its present suffering dramatically illustrates what apartheid laws have done, and continue to do to people. The tragedy of Magopa is that a thriving, vital, productive community has been destroyed — far more than buildings have been taken from its inhabitants. If only people could see, allow themselves to see."*

Dié opmerking kom van 'n Pretorianer wat deel was van 'n groep wat saam met IDASA in Pretoria op Saterdag 24 Junie die lang pad na Magopa (tussen Ventersdorp en Koster in die Wes-Transvaal) aangepak het. Vyf-en-dertig Pretorianers het die 30 lede van die Bakwena ba Magopa-stam — wat hulself nou weer op Magopa gevestig het — ontmoet, en gehoor van 'n lang uitgerekte stryd van 'n gemeenskap om hulle grond te behou.

Die Magopa-stam het die eerste van hul twee plase in 1912 gekoop nadat hulle uit die Vrystaat getrek het. Die tweede plaas is in 1932 bygekoop. Vir 70 jaar het die stam met mielies en sonneblomme geboer, waarvan die oorskot aan koöperasies verkoop is.

In 1981 het die eerste probleme begin. Die gemeenskap het nou bestaan uit 500 huisgesinne of 3 000 mense, en het goed gelewe. Hulle het in stewige kliphuise gewoon in 'n dorpie met vier kerke, twee skole, winkels, 'n gesondheidskliniek en 'n water reservoir. Die stam het ontevrede geraak met hul hoofman, mnr Jacob More, en hom met 'n nuwe hoofman vervang. Mnr More het in die geheim met die regering 'n ooreenkoms gemaak waarvolgens die hele gemeenskap na Pachsdraai, 250 km van Magopa sou verskuif. Van die stamlede het toe saam met mnr. More na Pachsdraai getrek, maar 450 gesinne het geweier om te trek.

'n Tyd van onsekerheid en moeilikheid met die regering het nou begin. Die regering het die gemeenskap se dienste afgesny, geweier om pensioene te betaal en om winkellisensies te hernu en stadig maar seker begin om die infrastruktuur van die gemeenskap te vernietig.

Op 29 November 1983 het die stam 'n staats-presidentsbevel ontvang wat hulle in kennis gestel het dat hulle die plaas moes verlaat. Hulle het geweier, maar op 14 Februarie 1984 is Magopa deur gewapende polisie omsingel, mense is in vragmotors gelaai en na Pachsdraai vervoer en huise en ander geboue is met stoot-



'n Kleuter speel voor een van die sinkhuisies wat by Magopa opgerig is.

skrapers feitlik gelyk met die aarde gemaak.

In September 1985 het die Appellhof beslis dat die verskuiwing onwettig was, maar die gemeenskap, wat nou in Bethanie gevestig was en onmiddellik begin het om planne te maak om na hulle grond terug te keer, het uitgevind dat die grond intussen onteien is. Hulle sou dus oortreders wees as hulle na Magopa terugkeer, alhoewel hulle nog nooit enige kennisgewing van, of vergoeding vir, die onteiening ontvang nie.

Die stam het toe aangedring op onderhandelinge met die regering en het tydens onderhandelinge ingestem om hulle tydelik op Onderstepoort te vestig terwyl die regering probeer om vir hulle geskikte alternatiewe grond te kry. Alhoewel hierdie tydelike vestiging veronderstel was om op die uiterste drie maande te duur, bevind die grootste deel van die stam hulself nog steeds daar.

In 1988 het die Minister van Onderwys en Ontwikkelingshulp, dr. Gerrit Viljoen, ingestem dat 'n paar van die stamlede kon terugkeer na Magopa om die begrafplaas skoon te maak. In Mei 1989 het 'n regeringsbrief hierdie vergun-

ning teruggetrek en die sowat 70 stamlede op die plaas is aangesê om weer eens te trek. Hulle het geweier en in Mei het die minister 'n aansoek voor die Hooggeregshof in Pretoria gebring dat hulle verwyder moet word. Die aansoek is toegestaan en sedertdien wag die mense van Magopa in sinkhuisies tussen ruïnes om weer verskuif te word.

Maar hierdie keer, sê hulle, bly hulle net waar hulle is. "Hulle sal ons moet opsluit of doodmaak, maar hier trek ons nie weer nie," sê een van die bejaarde boere. "Dit is ons plek. Daar was my huis, langsaan was my pa se huis en daar oorkant is die fundamente van my oupa se huis. Hier is ek gebore."

Die groepie besoekers van Pretoria het verstom en verdwaas tussen die murasies rondgedwaal. "I never realised the prosperity of the Magopa community, their self-sufficiency, and extent of their houses, schools and churches. I never realised the absolute and total destruction left by the government. I never realised how much pain, fear and anger the people must feel, but today my eyes were opened," skryf iemand op die bus op pad terug huis toe.

Lang gesprekke en baie luister en kyk het iemand anders laat omerk: "The bulldozed remains of houses, schools and churches stand as mute memorials to the white man's greed and selfishness. I felt sick. And yet, amid the shacks and desolation, stood the astonishing dignity of the Magopa elders."

Gedwonge verskuiwing bly van die mees ontstellende manifestasies van apartheid. Alhoewel die regering sê dat gedwonge verskuiwing nie meer plaasvind nie, is dit duidelik dat mense soos die Magopa-stam se lewens steeds beheer word deur 'n verskuiwing wat vroeër plaasgevind het. Dit is ook kommerwekkend dat die regering steeds mense verskuif, maar onder ander dekmantels. Sonder dat stootskrapers en gewapende polisiemanne gebruik word, word dieselfde resultate verkry. Gemeenskappe soos dié van Braklaagte en Leeufontein word, byvoorbeeld, by 'n tuisland ingelyf of die regering gebruik burokratiese terrorisme (byvoorbeeld die sluit van skole, die staking van vervoerdienste, die skuif van punte waar pensioene uitbetaal word) om mense te dwing om "vrywillig" te skuif.

Intussen gaan die stryd van die Magopa-stam voort en bly dit ook voortleef in die gemeedere van die Pretorianers wat saam met IDASA besoek in die gemeenskap afgelê het.

□ Lou-Marie Kruger is IDASA's regional co-ordinator in Pretoria.

posal. But as one particularly outstanding delegate, Breyten Breytenbach, remarked in Dakar, talking to the Afrikaners in power, the ANC too will realise that to negotiate is to think on fall back positions.

My message to my own constituency in Bonn is that we must do our utmost to promote this nascent dialogue. Financially and even more so politically! We must learn to abstain from prescribing to Africans and Afrikaners what the answers to their problems are. We must particularly abstain from abusing South African (and Namibian) problems for domestic purposes! And we must include in the growing number of our severe condemnations of apartheid, to quote Otto

Count Lamsdorff, a liberal, that "it so happens that white security is the key to black liberation".

When in March 1989 the UK and the USSR surprised the diplomatic world with the news on the possibility of a common South African initiative, it was learnt that both London and Moscow will use their influence over Pretoria and the ANC (and the SACP) respectively, to moderate their views on a new South Africa. In times of an apparently decreasing interest of the US in South African affairs, London and Moscow may continue the fruitful US-UK-USSR co-operation of 1987/89 to solve the Namibian conflict. If this is to be done successfully, it will have to

be done along the lines discussed, both in the open and behind the scenes, in Dakar and at follow-up meetings in Frankfurt, Harare and, most important, in Bermuda.

It remains to be seen, whether the Bonn government will support a UK/USSR attempt to organise a negotiation-process similar to the Camp David conference on the Middle East in the late 1970s. If it does not, it will be excluded from this policy of mediation, as it was increasingly excluded from the international Namibian initiatives since October 1978.

□ Klaus Baron von der Ropp is based in Cologne and has specialised in developments in sub-Saharan Africa for many years.