

# DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

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## Breaking the deadlock

**'SA's only hope a social contract between opposing groups'**

### IF ENVIRONMENT

affects quality of life, then one might ascribe the quality of discussion during a four-day conference on the economy in Bellagio, Northern Italy to the beauty of the surroundings.

Clearly, what was equally important in focusing the minds of the 19 delegates, was the urgent need for far-reaching and meaningful measures to address poverty in South Africa.

The conference theme – The New Rules of the Game – came into immediate focus on day one of the proceedings when University of the Western Cape economist Pieter Le Roux raised some questions for consideration.

What could changes to the rules imply? Can the rules of the game in fact be changed? Can change be brought about by an accord, or must it be through the imposition of a new power structure through revolution? All kinds of accords can be made between different parties, but how to find agreement of a broad nature?

Citing one of the great social theorists of the day, Cambridge sociologist Anthony Giddens, Le Roux said if the hard-line free marketeers or old style historical materialists were right in their claims that the rules of the game could not be changed and that there were immutable economic or historical laws, then there was no hope.

The difference between the human and material world was that humans were able to reflect and modify their behaviour.

According to Giddens, people were not objects helplessly bound by certain rules. Rather, "people create their own future, not

There was some hard talking – and serious listening – when top SA economics specialists gathered in Italy in April for a conference hosted by Idasa and sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. SUE VALENTINE reports.



Sindisa Mfenyana of the ANC with Chris Stals, governor of the Reserve Bank.

under conditions of their own choice, nor under the outcome they intend".

**ARGUING** strongly for a social contract between opposing groups as the only hopeful possibility for South Africa, Le Roux said unless South Africans reflected on their positions, the alternatives were a post-Allende Chile scenario, a Pol Pot type radical dictatorship or a Lebanon.

Against the backdrop of these broad parameters, there was a general willingness among all conference delegates to add their expertise through 10 to 15-minute presentations building

a vast colourful and detailed canvas of South Africa's political and economic needs and how best to meet them.

What set this conference apart from so many others in the same vein, was the quality of participation. Delegates, such as Chris Stals (governor of the Reserve Bank), Max Sisulu (head of ANC economic planning), Sindiso Mfenyana (national executive committee of the ANC), Japie Jacobs (advisor to the minister of finance), were not only voicing their objectives and criticisms, they were also listening to each other during the week's proceedings.

**IT WAS** Chris Stals who made headlines when offering a description of the South African economy.

The growth rate was around 1 percent, while the population was increasing at a rate of 2,5 percent. If this continued for another five years, no government would be able to govern the country, he said.

Stals said that the lack of economic growth could not be solved by monetary policy, although the period of transition did give the Reserve Bank the chance to create a stable environment for economic growth. Time was of the essence, however.

No high growth rate could be achieved until three conditions had been addressed: the political uncertainty in the country which inhibited business and international confidence; social unrest; and international action against South Africa in the form of sanctions.

In his presentation to the conference, the advisor to the Minister of Finance, Japie Jacobs,

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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

# Reconciliation: a tough and tricky journey

**RECENTLY** Deputy Minister Leon Wesels became the first member of the cabinet to apologise publicly for the "mistake" of the apartheid system. The minister is to be commended for his courage, but his action falls far short of what is needed before South African society embarks on the long and difficult journey of national reconciliation.

Fundamental to the start of this process will be an exercise of self-examination on the part of whites in this country. Unless this happens, there's little hope that black people will be willing to begin the journey of reconciliation.

There have been calls from senior members of the government for South Africans to "forgive and forget" – to forget the past and start afresh with the "new South Africa". It is tantamount to asking millions of South Africans and the world to view the past 43 years as a minor aberration in the course of this country's history.

## Misconception

At best, this attitude reflects a misconception about the origins of apartheid and little knowledge of the toll it took and continues to take from the majority of people in this country. At worst, it reflects the callous arrogance of a distant ruler.

Apartheid was not an "accident" that happened on a remote country road. If reconciliation is going to take place, the government, and all South Africans who supported it, will have to move to the point where they are able to recognise and acknowledge this simple fact. They will have to demonstrate their sincerity through action, which must begin with a commitment to listening and understanding about the lives and living conditions of the black community. At best, whites can claim that they did not fully comprehend or did not have the full facts of what was being done in their name.

## Sincere

Those in government are not so fortunate. No doubt they have changed course for a range of different reasons, some of them being a sincere change of heart, others of a less noble nature. For reconciliation to be possible, however, black South Africans must, at the very least, know how the government now views the effects of its past policies.

Reconciliation will demand that the injustice of the apartheid system be exposed by all who have the power to do so. The people of this country must know that social engineering on a scale unprecedented in the modern world excluded the majority of a country's population from enjoying the social, economic and political benefits of a modern state. The present rapid repeal of apartheid legislation will do little to alleviate the bitterness of those who suffered under it, nor will it lessen the burden on those who are guilty of its original implementation. Our country needs the cathartic experience of looking at its past honestly and squarely before we can face the future with confidence.

## Reparations

The foundations of that future can be built on reparations: of human relations, of resources and facilities, in the spiritual realm, in the field of education and in the township ghettos of South Africa's cities. Government intransigence on perfectly reasonable demands for reparation, for example by the victims of forced removals, must be challenged. The poorest and most marginalised must see some reward for their participation in the transitional process.

## Symbols

National symbols which unite and promote the common commitment towards, not a country or a people, but the ideal and practice of non-racialism and democracy must be found. This land cannot afford the arrogant nationalism of the past. The culture of violence and political intolerance which permeate our society have their roots in South Africa's vicious past and present. Just as the dead of two world wars are commemorated annually by a section of South Africa's population so too must we mourn our own more recent dead and intensify the struggle for peace and harmony.

We are faced with an enormous challenge in South Africa as we set out to attempt to build – in an uncertain future – a nation from the sorrows of the past.

– David Screen  
National Director





## LETTERS

### Editors don't speak for management

**MR RAYMOND LOUW** errs in viewing me as a potential representative of TML.

It is true that I did not attend Idasa's conference on the media; had I done so, TML would not have been represented any more than it was in fact represented by the attendance of Mr Pottinger. As Mr Louw well knows, South African editors do not represent their managers. I wonder why he persists in trying to represent them as doing so?

For the record, I avoid media conferences because they bore me and because I think freedom of the press is best upheld by using it, not by talking about it.

Ken Owen  
Editor, Sunday Times

### Rebuild, help others next Christmas

**IN JUNE** last year, Idasa took a group of students from the University of Pretoria on a social history tour of Winterveldt. I was in this group and was quite taken by the conditions which confronted us.

Before Christmas of 1990, my family decided to take the money that each of us would have spent on one another and give it to a worthy cause. Winterveldt immediately sprang to mind, and I set about preparing an input on the area and the conditions found there. I also covered the political history of the conditions that

gave rise to Winterveldt and highlighted the hard line that the Bophuthatswana government has taken against the squatters.

The input left my family in little doubt that the donation would be put to good use. I included a detailed description of what the Sisters of Mercy do and gave them an idea of how their self-help tutoring projects equip people with basic skills and enable them to become self-sufficient. I managed to raise R1 000 from my family and we have dispatched it to the Sisters of Mercy.

I urge others next Christmas, that instead of spending money on those who have, to donate it to helping those who have none. I feel that exchanging gifts at Christmas detracts from the spirit of the season and turns it into a commercialised, capitalist ploy, instead of a season of goodwill. There is a lot of rebuilding to be done in the community of Winterveldt, and this is a responsibility that rests on each of us.

Lance Cooper  
Pretoria

### Job discrimination

**WE BLACKS** in Cape Town have a big problem. Against all expectations, job discrimination is well and alive in the city.

Virtually all supermarket staff are coloured, in post offices all top posts are held by coloureds and whites. The blacks are left out in the cold. Year after year they hold the same posts. I would like your organisation to expose these evils.

Jerome Gumenge  
Nyanga

## JA-NEE

### For missionaries

For those who are still trying to perfect it, a blunt definition of the struggle's dreaded consultation process: decisionmaking at higher level, passed down to the lower level

– *The other way round would be much quicker, said someone.*

### Die belangrikste reg

Breyten Breytenbach vertel 'n groep mense in die Kaap van die regte waarop hy altyd sal aanspraak maak, lid van die demokratiese beweging al dan nie. Ondermeer ook om "fôkops" te maak.

– *Kom 'n stem (vroulik) uit die gehoor: "Die hêle strugge is 'n fôkop!"*

### Running Ronnie

Commenting on how it affected his life being underground and on the run, Umkhonto weSizwe and SACP leader Ronnie Kasrils remarked: "I must say I enjoyed it, I have always enjoyed it. I don't like the normal humdrum of office life.

– *Suppose there aren't many options inbetween the two.*

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"The only way to be critical, to be objective is from a position of involvement" – Breyten Breytenbach at a gathering in Cape Town in April.



# ECONOMICS CONFERENCE

## Breaking the deadlock

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raised the question of what should be immediate policy objectives in a country which needed one million houses immediately and in which 42 percent of the labour force was engaged in the informal sector or subsistence existence.

He said at present, 38,2 percent was spent on economic upliftment – housing, education and social pensions. One important factor for poverty alleviation in the rural areas was that there was no delivery system for assistance to people in these regions.

He said an economic growth rate of at least 4 percent was needed to maintain the status quo without losing more jobs. Stability and confidence needed to be restored, but this could not be done with the stroke of a pen.

The ANC's Max Sisulu agreed that confidence needed to be created, but said that it was difficult because the government lacked legitimacy. He said the policies and practises of the government had been "systematically destroying the economy through apartheid".

Questioning the government's claims that it was alleviating poverty, Sisulu said people needed to see this being done through a re-allocation of resources and so on.

### 'If we want success, now is the time to act'

The ANC and other groups were wary of participating in consultaion with the government and its agencies, because so often they were ignored in the implementation. "By participating we give credibility to certain organisations. We need to change the rules of the game," he said.

The executive director of the Black Management Forum, Lot Ndlovu, said there was widespread agreement that more black people needed to be employed at management level (2 percent of all managers in South Africa were black), but ultimately little seemed to be done to realise these intentions.

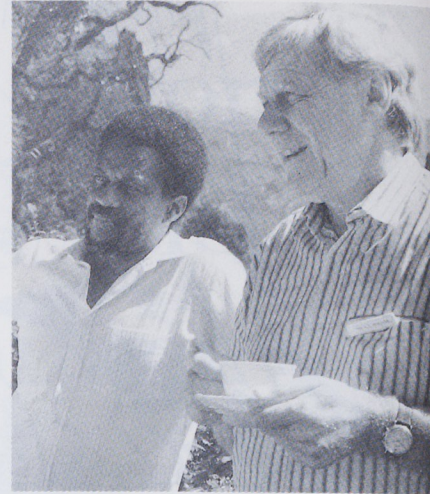
He said good management practice included a living wage, access to opportunities, social upliftment, equity participation, skills development, an active democratic value system, labour intensive policies (even with high technology), partnership schemes and regional contributions to rural areas from where migrant labour might be drawn.

"The business of business is not just business," he said, emphasising the need for commerce to play a role in the wider environment.

UCT sociologist and chairper-



Ben van Rensburg of Sacob with Lot Ndlovu of the Black Management Forum.



Max Sisulu of the ANC with Alex Boraine of Idasa.

son of the editorial of the *SA Labour Bulletin*, Johan Maree, said there was an international trend – in sound, modern economies – towards increased worker participation in the management and ownership of enterprises.

He suggested two possible forms of worker participation. A system of "employee share ownership plans" (Esops) existed in the United States whereby workers bought shares in companies where they worked. Economic performance at these firms was at least as good as at similar standard firms, and sometimes better.

At the level of labour organisation, workers were also encouraged to participate in the adjusting of time, the restructuring of the labour process for certain tasks, and so on.

Maree said an appropriate form of industrial relations that was accepted and adhered to needed to be established. Some techniques advocated bypassing the unions, but far preferable, he said, was to involve workers in the consultation process from the outset.

University of Stellenbosch economist, Sampie Terreblanche, reminded delegates of the inequalities of apartheid and the need for,

in Nelson Mandela's words on the day of his release, "fundamental restructuring".

At the bottom line was the fact that South Africa was not a democracy. In the last general election in 1989, 6,3 percent of the total electorate had voted for the National Party.

Vast numbers of South Africans had been dispossessed of their property and they lacked

### 'A shared vision is needed on a set of socio-economic proposals'

economic access and opportunities. The media capability of the ANC was less than 10 on an index of 100.

Structural reform or transformation included: political reform, bureaucratic reform, economic reform, social integration and a change in the ideology and perceptions. Of these, political and bureaucratic structures needed to be changed almost immediately, he said.

In a further analysis of the South African economy, Reg Munro, general manager of Old Mutual, said economic thinking had moved from the neo-classical view that resources determined the potential of a state to the revisionist view that believed that advantages and capabilities could be created. Resources, therefore, were not all important, strategies could make a difference.

Resources could, in fact, be a curse, he said. Because of certain wealthy resources, other industries were often neglected and needed protection. Economics therefore became inward looking.

What was needed was that the country should change from being an inward-looking, con-



Delegates at Bellagio: Back Row: Rudolf Gouws (Rand Merchant Bank), Johan Maree (UCT), Lot Ndlovu (Black Management Forum), Reg Munro (Old Mutual), Frans Barker (National Manpower Commission), Sindiso Mfenyana (ANC), Ben van Rensburg (Sacob), Max Sisulu (ANC), Sue Valentine (Idasa). Front Row: Sampie Terreblanche (US), Japie Jacobs (finance advisor), Chris Stals (governor of Reserve Bank), Alex Boraine (Idasa), Sally Bowles (Rockefeller Foundation), Greta Steyn (Business Day), Archie Nkonyeni (Nafoc), Bongzi Kunene (UZ), and Pieter le Roux (UWC).

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# A route out of deadlock

**THE BELLAGIO** conference sounded warnings on a range of fronts. Among the important conclusions of the delegates were:

- There is an urgent need for bold and imaginative action to take South Africa beyond the present political and economic deadlock.

- The consequences of no significant growth and the further impoverishment of millions of people in the urban and rural areas will make the country ungovernable within five years.

- A social charter or compact is needed in South African society. The political and economic crisis in the country left little time for prolonged struggle, common ground had to be found immediately. A compact should not be fascist or Stalinist in style — nor should it be an airy-fairy liberal idea of consensus, nor should it attempt to co-opt people. The broad goals of agreement would include the suspension of the armed struggle for power; a commitment to a negotiated democratic system; the need for political agreement to deal with the economic crisis; a commitment to uprooting poverty and job creation programmes to combat unemployment.

- It is totally unacceptable that a police force should not be able to prevent the killing of thousands of its citizens. The perception remains of a police force out of sympathy with the reform programme of the State President.

- A regular flow of reliable information to the public is vital for negotiations. The board of control of the SABC should be changed immediately so as to reflect representatives of the wider South Africa.

- There is a need for specific anti-poverty programmes, but also for all parties and groups to start renewed efforts against mindless violence. Whether or not poverty programmes are effective in resolving the crisis will in large measure depend on whether they affect the life of an 18-year-old living in a township. Will they give him or her greater security, a sense of political participation and emancipation, a job, a sense of hope? This is the litmus test!

- A two-pronged approach to the country's economic problems was recommended: a "kickstart" in the form of housing and electrification programmes, and a major drive to increase the ability of the economy to export competitively.

- Little reliance can be placed upon the availability of foreign capital. The drive to increase and diversify South Africa's export capacity should be tackled immediately and vigorously.

- To address the economic crisis, a change was also needed in the culture, philosophy and attitude of the government.

# Inequalities will plunge SA into chaos

*'In a society with too great a degree of inequality, human society is impossible' — Raymond Aron, French philosopher*

**IRRESPECTIVE OF** political or constitutional settlements, the huge inequalities in South African society might make the country ungovernable by 1995.

This was part of the sobering message delivered to delegates at Bellagio by Francis Wilson, co-author of "Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge" and economics professor at the University of Cape Town.

In an attempt to draw a picture of poverty in South Africa, Wilson said numerous components needed to be considered.

One was the gender issues: women were among the poorest group. Most of the poor were black — a racial dimension and the geography of poverty in South Africa showed that most of the poor lived in the rural areas.

Vast anomalies also existed. A picture of poverty in South Africa showed a rural black woman carrying a bundle of firewood (weighing on average 30 kg) on her head, while above her stretched vast lengths of Eskom power lines.

A further irony was that while a white household might spend R25 a month on electricity, a black household in a similar area, but without access to electricity, could spend R65 a month on paraffin, candles or other means of light and heat.

"The message is that poverty is expensive," said Wilson.

Besides the human cost, the macro implications of short-sighted energy policies included the degradation of homeland areas — not due only to over-grazing, but as a result of the search for fuel by people living in those regions.

The infant mortality rate for white South Africans was 12 per 1 000 births. For blacks it was between 94 and 124. Here again there were substantial differences between black urban and rural areas. In an urban area such as Soweto, the infant mortality rate was 35 per 1 000, however in Tzaneen it was 70 and in the Transkei it was one of the worst in Africa — 130 per 1 000.

"The question is, how to mobilise resources to deal with these issues," Wilson reminded delegates.

Touching on the widespread violence in the country, Wilson said most whites did not know that the violence had started as family violence; it had broadened into the community in the form of rapes and violent attacks, had then developed into gang violence and most recently into political violence.

"We need to see this as a social pathology: individuals and communities living in impos-

sible physical and political conditions...violence has a deeper root, it is linked to poverty, powerlessness and frustration," said Wilson.

He cautioned against the prevailing attitude among many white South Africans who said let bygones be bygones. While it was important to move away from past practices and attitudes, one could not do so by attempting to wipe away history because it was fundamental to the situation which now confronted South Africans.

Despite talk of removing the "pillars" of apartheid, all that had happened was that the scaffolding had been dismantled.

Looking at what needed to be done in the re-shaping of South African society, (a vitally important, but supremely difficult task) Wilson said policies that promoted maximum growth had to be pursued.

He suggested that, given the differences in South Africa's population (privileged economically active insiders and unemployed impoverished outsiders), two programmes could be followed simultaneously.

**'The decision-makers are far removed from the majority of people. Ordinary people need to have a sense that their voices are being heard'**

One policy would be aimed at the "insiders". It would promote growth and create jobs. The other would form more than a social safety net — it should be a coherent policy that would address the needs of the "outsiders", people who had been left out because of historical reasons.

Such policies could include an afforestation scheme whereby the desperate need for more trees to be grown throughout South Africa could be tackled at state level. This, said Wilson, was something that was possible now by setting aside five or 10 percent of the budget to finance such a project.

All plans and debates needed also to be informed by a democratic process. At present the decision-makers were far removed from the majority of people. Ordinary people needed to have a sense that their voices were being heard and their needs addressed.

Wilson stressed that "what counts today is the need for a re-distribution of wealth. Humanity must reply to this question, or be shaken to pieces by it". □



## Breaking the deadlock

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sumer economy to being an outward-orientated, producer nation. However, Munro cautioned that "no country has found a way to convert natural wealth into a strong, outward-looking manufacturing sector". This was what was needed in South Africa.

While the country had made a significant contribution to the international body of scientific literature, the lack of funds spent on research and development meant that money still flowed out of the country to pay for licenses and patents which had been developed elsewhere.

In the USA, manufacturers spent an average of 2,5 percent of their budget on research and development. In South Africa, the SA Apple Growers' Association spent 0,5 percent on research and development, but SA's largest manufacturer, Barlow Rand, spent just 0,12 percent of their budget on research and development.

It was not enough, when speaking about changing economic strategies, to call for deregulation. There needed to be active government concern for the development of manufacturing. While there should not be a reliance on foreign capital, it was vitally necessary and should be sought. Ultimately, said Munro, the decline in the gold price would help to force the economy into a more outward looking, manufacturing orientated system.

**HE POSED** the question whether South Africa's will to survive was strong enough to bring the country together. "If we want success, now is the time to act," he said.

Offering a scenario in which some of the country's most urgent needs could be addressed, Munro said two phases should be implemented.

The first involved massive investment in the black community in the form of housing and electricity, the other harnessed resources and expertise to develop an outward oriented manufacturing sector.

It was essential that the country "change gears" to achieve a higher sustainable growth rate; that it become more producer oriented; raise social standards and develop democracy.

On the fourth day of the conference, delegates divided into three groups to examine in more detail certain key questions. These included how to create an outward looking economy, how to open access to resources and opportunities, and how to move to a more stable political environment to encourage economic performance. Some of their conclusions appear in an accompanying article.

Overall, the urgency of addressing the situation in the country was deeply felt by all. How the ideas from Bellagio will filter back into South African society will depend on the 19 delegates. Certainty cannot be assured, but a holistic approach is essential. Indeed, as Chris Stals commented during the conference proceedings, "everything in economics depends on everything else".

Sue Valentine is Media Co-ordinator at Idasa

SA REVISITED

# ABSURDITY AND OBSCENITY

... and meanwhile there are the glistening valleys and a silver wind

Perhaps I should call this: The first observations of a semi-educated monkey. I have difficulty transcribing the flood of images; like a dull-witted ape I mutate gestures and movements in an attempt at adaptation. For the first time since 1973 I have the chance of travelling through the land. Our peregrinations take us to the periphery (Venda, KaNgwane, the Boerestan around Pietersburg . . .) and my apprehensions also criss-cross the country.

Some regions I know only from postcards or from accounts of the horrors perpetrated there; I meet people – the stinking rich for instance, or the dirt-poor, and all those Robben Island graduates – with whom I'd never had the privilege to become acquainted. Overwhelmingly the unfolding landscapes are deployed before us so that distances, resonances, dimensions and deeper drifts oblige you to broaden your outlook.

The journey is very often disconcerting. Perhaps the extremes of emotions and actions encountered are symptomatic of the Great Release: hospitality and assassinations, reconciliation or even collaboration, and hate. It is conceivable that this country has always been in a turmoil of dislocation, confusion and madness. Would it not also be fair to assume that apartheid was intended to enforce a pattern of rationality upon a reality which could not be integrated?

**'To them apartheid was not,  
and is not, the crime against  
humanity as experienced  
by the majority of  
South Africans'**

But any attempt at macro-economic or large-scale political engineering must certainly by now be doomed to failure. I doubt whether the necessary transformation of attitudes, let alone

**Poet BREYTEN BREYTENBACH makes some sense of the flood of images that confront him as he returns to the country on an extended visit.**

relationships, can still be motivated by ideological considerations. A Democratic Party politician tells me, perhaps with a measure of self-blinding optimism: "Politics here are now no longer black-white, but grey and nice."

Maybe the gentle slowness and the kindness of local life as one re-discovers it, are but control mechanisms for surviving in an insane environment. South Africans are schooled in the techniques of the cut-out – how to categorise aspects of public life and render them invisible. In fact, despite a self-effacing simplicity of manner, South Africans are particularly sophisticated: they know the knack of holding illusion and harsh reality in balance, they move effortlessly between the integration of violence and personal decency, between the institutionalised brutalisation of society and a concerned commitment to change.

Besides, at least over the weekends, the shadows of blood disappear under the passion for sport and a love of nature. From time to time though, a father will wipe out all of his immediate kin, people systematically drink themselves into the grave, and healthy men unexpectedly succumb to heart attacks, cancer and high blood pressure. People don't just kill other people, they stab and stone and hack and burn them.

What stands out like a salient truth is that the Great Adjustment must be made: a radical review of how financial resources ought to be apportioned; an integration of skills and privileges and responsibilities which will make of the decisions-taking power field a truer reflection of this country's real composition and especially of the interests



## SA REVISITED

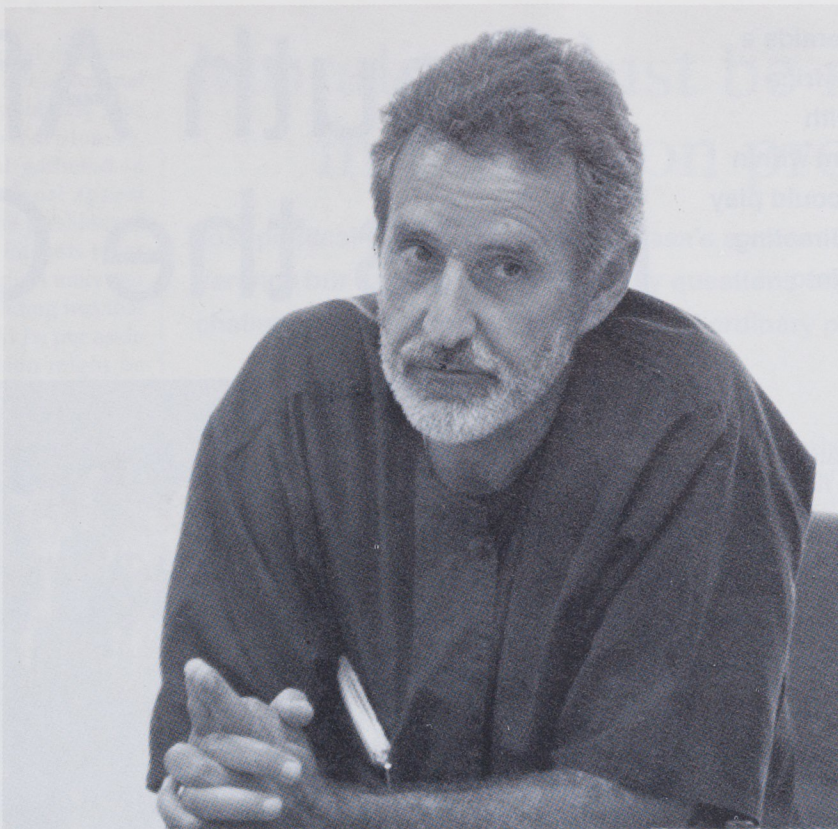
of its people. Only from this background can a contentious notion such as "standards" be usefully debated.

Unrealistic expectations have been fostered on the left and on the right. The whites believe "change" to be a painless adaptation which will not affect their lifestyles. Isn't the country roomy enough for everybody? There are flowers and trees and birds. Enos Mabuza, KaNgwane's Chief Minister who has just now resigned, sadly shakes his head and warns against the cheeky euphoria of comrades "who think they've won a revolution". Ntatho Motlana, Mandela's house doctor, tells of township schools where the principals have been chased away; 14-year-old boys now rule the roost – "but please don't tell our parents or else they'll thump us".

Absurdity and obscenity merge into one grey area. In Khayelitsha there are only seven teachers for a thousand pupils; the Minister of Education and Training, Stoffel van der Merwe, says his warning to local civic associations not to over-enroll has been ignored. Note the priorities. Must the kids who are greedy for learning then be kept away from the schools? The universities are also flooded with applicants who cannot be accommodated. Shouldn't young people be taught that book-knowledge is not all that it's made out to be? That it would be senseless to educate a generation for unemployment? That it could be more important to know about repairing a car, or how to live autonomously from and with the soil than to become white-collared pen-pushers?

**'The whites believe "change" to be a painless adaptation which will not affect their lifestyles'**

A spokeslady for the PAC explains their slogan of "one settler, one bullet" thus: the PAC is a poor organisation and cannot afford more than one bullet per settler. But not all settlers are white, she also adds. And meanwhile there are mountains and clouds and sea. It is not even as if the country were frozen, apartheid and a war economy and international isolation impoverished it. The people have been pauperised. Gene Louw, Interior Minister, says the state cannot contribute towards the costs of resettling the exiles (or



Breyten Breytenbach

"returnees"), because South Africa has been flooded by sanctions and he conveniently forgets to remember that sanctions were applied exactly because the same state repressed and maimed people, and forced many to flee the country. Sanctions did help paralyse the economy, but the structures of exploitation have remained intact. When sanctions are lifted the same iniquitous relations as before between capital and labour will surely be re-instated. But then, since when were sanctions intended to provoke a socio-political realignment?

Wherever you go you find a cultural desert. An ANC spokesperson says the cultural boycott must help protect us from an influx of mediocre foreign artists with their moth-eaten wares, seeing as how we do not dispose of adequately competitive infrastructures. Isn't she forgetting that the boycott also delivered fatal blows to a potential cultural infrastructure at home? She worries about the over-population, brutalisation, unemployment. "What are we to do?" she agonises. And with a complicitous hand upon my arm: "They (the lumpen proletariat) are going to kill all of us!"

Images, questions, phrases churn through my mind. I learn about how the Boere farmed with Kaffirs. Black kids in fact unwittingly finance the white supremacist Conservative Party. The CP is funded by the Hervormde Kerk (Reformed Church) which owns the *Hollandsche Afrikaansche Uitgevers Maatschappij* (HAUM) which makes its profits from prescribed books sold to a captive

black market. In the area around Kaalrug where the borders of Mozambique, Swaziland and KaNgwane meet, the South African Defence Force provides local farmers with free labour by rounding up the refugee workers just before pay-day to push them back into the killing fields of Mozambique on the other side of the electric fence.

Medical services in the countryside have all but packed up. Even there the majority of cases admitted are victims of physical violence. There's an almighty outcry against the ANC's handling of the Winnie Mandela trial – seemingly constituting a denial of the due processes of law, but have we forgotten that we have in this country a white legal system where white laws are administered in white courts by white judges for

the benefit and protection of white interests? On the other hand: can we ever allow that presumed black homosexuals be tortured by supposedly social workers just because they shared a white man's bed? Orwellian attempts are made to deny the atrocious nature of institutions by a change of name: prison is now known as a place of Corrective Service. Squatters gnaw away at the fabric of an ordered community. And maggots – the senior civil servants, generals and brigadiers – are plundering the state in every conceivable way. This ship will sink because even the tar between the planks would have been eaten.

**'What stands out like a salient truth is that the Great Adjustment must be made'**

And meanwhile there are the glistening valleys and a silver wind. And in the meantime there is the Big Rot of a regime, a state, an establishment making it morally possible to arm the guns of death squads, an authority now attempting to stifle the needed debate on public ethics by pretending that apartheid and the struggle were equally blameworthy. To them apartheid was not, and is not, the crime against humanity as experienced by the majority of South Africans.

Crimes were perpetrated and mistakes were made on all sides, the president seems to imply, and they were similar in kind, so why should they apologise? Meanwhile the crocodiles are feasting among the children ...



The end of apartheid heralds a new relationship with Africa which will be fraught with complications. But, from within the OAU, South Africa could play an important part in redirecting the continent's course into the next century.

By Peter Vale

IT IS easy to predict the banner headlines the day that South Africa finally joins the Organisation for African Unity. It is also easy to foresee that, all things being equal, the day is not far off. Just before Easter, for instance, Thabo Mbeki was reported as saying that South Africa will be represented at the OAU meeting due to be held in Uganda in May.

For most South Africans, however, the final reconciliation with the continent is likely to be a powerful but painful experience. Every economic and social indicator suggests that Africa is in very serious crisis: economic performance is poor, mortality rates are soaring and infrastructure is stretched to the point of collapse. The image of decay was vividly underscored by David Ewing Duncan in *The Atlantic* recently: "In an age of computers and fax machines", he writes, "it is difficult to raise a dial tone in some Africa cities".

Faced with these impressions, it is easy to see why Afro-pessimism – that abiding negative outlook on the continent's future prospects – is so prevalent: our continent is facing an uncertain future.

### **'The final reconciliation with the continent is likely to be a powerful but a painful experience'**

Periodically, it seems as if the infliction of Afro-pessimism has sapped the rationality of analysts. For example, at the conference on trade in Southern Africa in March, Christopher Coker of the London School of Economics made the eccentric suggestion that "for Southern Africa, the 20th century came to an end in November 1989 when the Berlin Wall came down".

Still there is no gainsaying the fact that South Africa will have to grapple with its own future alongside Africa's uncertain one.

This process, in turn, will be complicated by expectations which Africa has of this country. The most serious one, perhaps, is that South Africa is in a position to offer some form of immediate relief at a time when the continent

# **'South Africa joins the OAU'**



Nelson Mandela meets African heads of state in Lusaka in February 1990.

faces a shrinkage in international aid. To stretch the point for the sake of emphasis: for many Africans, South Africa is a source of wealth and expertise, a new metropole in a world in which resources are increasingly tight.

But as South Africa's own budget has painfully illustrated, its assets are limited. The profligacy of 40 years of ideologically-driven policies (ironically, a condition increasingly familiar elsewhere on the continent) have all but wasted South Africa's own margins.

In these circumstances, it seems likely that the initial years of engagement between South Africa and the continent will be fraught with complications. Of these, perhaps the most serious will be the migration southwards of Africa's people in search of enhanced life prospects. Patterns of labour migration are deeply etched on the collective memory of the sub-continent, in particular. When the walls of apartheid finally crumble, the lure of the rich south will be almost irresistible.

This gloomy assessment of developments in the light of the emergence of a new South Africa is, of course, predicated on the understanding that things will remain stable in Africa. Primarily, this means that the long litany of political disasters are doomed to

repeat themselves in a never-ending cycle of violence, fire and anarchy.

In recent years, however, a threshold does seem to have been passed on the continent: there seems to be a clear-minded indigenous compulsion to break the downward spiral.

Whether or not this will be possible is unclear: can socialist dictatorships give way to functioning multi-party systems with a mixed economy? The sheer uncertainty of this particular condition at this moment in Africa's history was captured by the recent coup in Mali: a 20-year-old dictatorship was overthrown by soldiers calling for the establishment of a multi-party democracy!

### **'There seems to a clear-minded indigenous compulsion to break the downward spiral in Africa'**

Notwithstanding misgivings of this kind, the overall disposition on the continent is clearly different today than it was in the dark days of the '70s and even '80s.



South Africa's emergence as a new force in African politics should reinforce this new mood, and the OAU will be a good place to start.

Like many other international organisations, the OAU was forged on a fundamental compromise. In the difficult days of May 1963 when the ideal of unity proved illusory, African heads of government gathered in Addis Ababa heard an emotional appeal from Ahmed Ben Bella, then the president of Algeria. He called on sectional interests to, as he put it, "die a little so that African unity can become a reality". The understanding was that different models for unity would be put aside so that the continent's attention might be directed towards opposing colonialism and helping to liberate the "white south".

The end of apartheid, therefore, terminates one of the lives of the OAU: its new challenge, in which South Africa can play an important role, will be to redirect the continent's course into the next century.

It will be foolish to suggest that this will be easy. In addition to the manifold economic problems, the continent is riven with political strife. Of these, the hoary and complex question of tribalism looms large.

Actually this issue when gradually linked to the sanctity of African national boundaries was, with Ben Bella's compromise, the only glue which has kept the OAU together for these past 28 years.

## **'SA's most powerful long-term contribution to Africa will be to discover a bridge over its own ethnic divides'**

Vexed and intricate formulae will be needed for dealing with the persistence of ethnicity on the continent. In many ways, South Africa's unhappy experience with ethnic manipulation throughout the apartheid years will be instructive. But its most powerful long-term contribution will be to discover a bridge across its own ethnic divides and offer this as an example to the continent.

Together with Nigeria, South Africa will dominate African forums. Its new fully-representative, non-racial diplomatic corps will be active in African capitals and, almost certainly, South Africa will itself offer aid and assistance to fellow African states. This, incidentally, might be the only way in which to help stem the tide of humanity which, as we have seen, will be drawn to South Africa.

A compelling and exciting African future beckons South Africa. It is true that many will continue to wallow in Afro-pessimism: perhaps, however, like the poor or decrepit, latent racism of this kind will always be with us.



**Prof Vale, an Idasa trustee, is head of the Centre for Southern African Studies at the University of the Western Cape**

## **NEGOTIATIONS**

# **Morality 'must be restored' in transition process**

**Most political parties turned up at Idasa's seminar on the multi-party conference but their speakers left many questions unanswered – and were challenged to represent the interests of ordinary people in negotiations.**

**By Sue Valentine**

**AN IDASA** seminar on "Perspectives on the all/multi-party conference" brought together an impressively broad range of politicians in Johannesburg early in April and an equally diverse audience of more than 350 people.

The interest in the subject seemed to bear out Bishop Peter Storey's sentiments when he said the issues to be raised at a multi-party conference were "far too important to be left to the politicians".

The aim of the seminar was to hear perspectives as to who should attend a multi-party conference (MPC), what should be on the agenda and what would happen to those who did not attend.

In general the views offered by the eight speakers did not provide much insight into the possible composition and agenda of an MPC, leaving many in the audience frustrated at the apparent lack of substance in the various presentations.

It was Bishop Storey of the Methodist Church, who drew applause for his appeal for the restoration of morality in the transition process and for the interests of ordinary people to be represented at the negotiating table.

"A range of organisations led the struggle in spite of claims to the contrary by others later on the scene. The writing on the wall was made by many ordinary people, the difference about Mr De Klerk is that he was the first state president who could read," he said.

It was not enough to thank those people for their involvement and then relegate them to a lesser role.

Storey said a monitoring group which had no interest in gaining power for itself was needed to monitor developments. Those making the constitution faced a paradox: to achieve as much as possible in terms of political power or to balance as many different interest groups as possible.

On the dilemma of violence, Storey said both the government and its opponents had trained people to use violence to achieve their ends.

There could be no impetus for a peaceful resolution while any party held open the possibility of using violence as a last resort.

Concluding with a word to all political organisations, Storey said: "As long as you rely on violence, you must not expect us to take you

too seriously when you speak of peace."

Idasa director of policy and planning, Van Zyl Slabbert, said many people assumed wrongly that there would be a "magic moment" in the transition process when the government would be overthrown, the old flag struck and a new one raised in its place.

He argued that because of the nature of the transition in South Africa, the government of the day (National Party) would be involved in the change.

Three mechanisms to assist in the transition process had emerged, he said. A multi-party conference, an interim government and a constituent assembly. No matter what one called these various forums, the issue remained that responsibility for the transition had to be shared by the different political groupings. An MPC would decide on the agenda of the transition. From that conference would flow the decision on the status of the negotiating parties.



**Bishop Storey: a range of organisations led the struggle.**

"The only other way to manage the change is through revolution, partition or external intervention. The process that is dominant at the moment is negotiation," he said.

A member of the ANC's legal and constitutional committee, Penuel Maduna, said there was broad agreement on the need for an all-party conference. However, he suggested a limited agenda for such a conference, arguing that a constituent assembly was the most democratic mechanism by which to transform racial rule.



## Morality in transition

From Page 9

Four key issues had to be resolved: basic principles underpinning the process of transition; arrangements surrounding an interim government; appropriate and democratic mechanisms for constitution making; the place and role of the international community in the transition.

The chairperson of the NP's study group on constitutional matters, Frik van Heerden, said there was a difference between an MPC and a final negotiation forum.

The MPC had several objectives. It aimed to initiate the process for finding consensus about the negotiating forum; to establish the criteria for participation in such a forum; to set out the guidelines for assessing proven support; to decide upon methods to persuade unwilling parties to participate; and to determine how decisions will be taken by the negotiating body.

"AN MPC is a pre-requisite for a constitutional assembly," he said, "we will be amazed at how much common ground there is among all South Africans."

A representative from the PAC's legal department, Richard Ramodike, said the PAC was opposed to an MPC.

He said the most widely accepted way of determining the will of the people was by the vote. The only way to reach this point was through a constituent assembly.

The vice-president of political education in Azapo, Molahlegi Tlhale, also rejected the idea of an MPC. Tlhale said there was no way Azapo would be "smuggled into the negotiation train". Black people no longer sought to reform the system, because that gave credibility to it.

The SA Communist Party, represented by lawyer Firoz Cachalia, endorsed the idea of an all-party conference. He said it needed to be as inclusive and as representative as possible and would help create a political culture of tolerance and institute a political pluralism. If need be, it should be delayed to give more time to persuade others to participate.

Cachalia said a new political discourse was emerging, one that had the potential to reconcile as well as liberate. It would be a mistake to involve the all-party conference in transformational issues such as the land question or the economy – these were policy matters for a constitutional government to decide.

The need for tolerance was also emphasised by Inkatha Freedom Party representative and KwaZulu Finance Minister, Denis Madide, who said South Africans had to find out how to live together.

He suggested three important functions of an MPC – to prepare people for the abandonment of apartheid; to reconcile irreconcilable groups; and to synthesize the various divergent viewpoints.

Madide said a constitution was a compromise document, but before people could learn to compromise they had to stop seeing each other as enemies.

"I do not care why De Klerk is going to call an MPC, all that is important is that I don't want to die a slave, I want to die a free man." □

By Ronel Scheffer

**IF IDASA'S** seminar on "white fears" in Port Elizabeth in March confirmed anything, it was that there is little tolerance out there (in the new South Africa!) for those who define themselves, or their disposition, as "white".

From the outset, participants in the debate made it clear that the organisers were wrong to initiate a discussion on whites' fears about the future outside the context of the myriad of concerns of broader groups like, for example, "blacks", "humans" or "democrats". Observing the sprinkling of whites among the 100 or so people present, one could not help but sympathise with these sentiments. Should whites' fears be taken seriously, in fact, if they don't even bother to show up at an event dedicated to their concerns?

Among the representatives of political parties present, there was some acknowledgement that the fears whites harbour of "black" rule could become an obstacle to the transition. However, there was no agreement on whether these fears should be addressed or if it was at all possible to allay them. But there was a feeling that whites could at least be encouraged to realise that many of their fears about the future – losing control, a breakdown of law and order, drastic suffering and so on – were shared by the majority of people, including blacks. Frankie Connel, a counselling sociologist from Wits, said such an understanding could produce a foundation of hope and promote solutions.

Ms Connel, and a few members of the audience, fought gallantly against a convincing analysis of Stellenbosch political scientist Jannie Gagiano, who said "white fears" were really "middle-class" fears and suggested that these could not be allayed without retaining several, if not all of the features of the current system of domination.

Using the results of numerous surveys among white university students, Gagiano illustrated the systematic links between these fears and whites' current position of power in society. Their fears include losing control of government and accompanying privileges, declining law and order, expendability, drastic suffering, becoming subordinate, black revenge, cultural obliteration and losing status and influence. Successive surveys showed that black government was associated with, among other things, an increase in white unemployment, corruption and tribal conflict, a decrease in personal safety and the collapse of welfare services in general.

The challenge, according to Gagiano, was how to moderate these fears to prevent them from becoming a powerful force that could affect the negotiation process.

What made this challenge more daunting was the current depressed economic climate. He argued that middle-class fears would be best addressed if the negotiators opted for economic growth and order and stability as immediate goals. This would mean that the goals of political participation and equity – around

FEAR OF

# 'White human

**Whites' fears about the future w  
participants in an Idasa seminar  
indicated that black people would  
expressed by "P**

which much of "black fear" revolved – would be "left on ice for a while"

In his opening remarks at the seminar, the Rev Mcebisi Xundu, a member of Idasa's board of trustees, stressed that the alleviation of whites' fear should not "cost the oppressed too much". He said the fears of minorities in South Africa had caused tragedies of national proportions in the past and these should not be repeated.

**'The alleviation of whites'  
fear should not cost the  
oppressed too much'**

After years of being misled by the false promises of a white government, black people had difficulty in accepting the bona fides of the government. "Blacks are genuinely saying, 'when can you begin to trust a white'. Is this negotiation process not just another sugar coated pill?" asked Xundu.

Mark Shinnars of the PAC warned that the topic of the seminar might be pandering to the the worst "swart gevaar" predilections in



Jannie Gagiano (right) with Max Mam



# ears' vs fears

in a rather lukewarm reception by Elizabeth recently. The discussion was keen to attempt to address fears of "democrats".



Mark Shinnars and Frank Mdlalose.

society. Whites' fears were caused by an "over-concentration of power in white hands", and could only be allayed by an active commitment to Africa, he said. The white community could rest assured that in future majorities would be determined by issues and not by race.

## 'Many of the positive fears are not only whites' fears but true democrats' fears'

The PAC, he said, was not concerned about the future of whites, but about the future of humanity "because the injustices that stalk Africa are the very injustices that stalk humanity".

Regarding a future system of government, Shinnars said the PAC believed that African nationalism and "herrenvolkism" must find a historical synthesis in Pan Africanism. This would mean a social order which was "Africanist in orientation, democratic in form, humanist in outlook, socialist in content, dynamic in force, continental in scope and progressive in principle".



sa's regional director in Port Elizabeth.

Dr Frank Mdlalose, chairman of the Inkatha Freedom Party, said although his party was committed to a totally colour-blind society, it believed that cognisance should be taken of white fears.

He said fear of the future was simultaneously one of the greatest assets and impediments of the negotiation process.

"The negative fear is that which does not want to let go the chains of oppression. It is the fear that elevates racism to a principle, the fear that denies we are all born equal. It is the fear of prejudice, of greed, of baasskap. This is almost exclusively, though not entirely so, a fear that we could call a white fear."

The positive fear of the future, said Mdlalose, was not grounded upon holding negative values, but upon the realisation that the transition from the past to the future could be a transition "from the awful to the terrible".

## 'In future majorities will be determined by issues, not by race'

Many South Africans feared that their country might go the way of Angola, Mozambique, Uganda, Zaire, Tanzania, etc. "There is unfortunately a very long list of examples to our north of countries that have destroyed everything they had at independence. Some of them who inherited an efficient civil service 30 years ago were now "totally corrupt and inefficient". There were countries whose per capita GDP has declined every year for the past two or three decades.

Mdlalose cautioned against ascribing only negative fears to whites, "lest we be accused of racism ourselves". Nor should blacks' fears be deemed of a lesser importance.

He said Inkatha believed only a small minority of whites held negative fears and that these attitudes were formed by apartheid, "by their apartheid-fed perceptions of blacks and the liberation struggle, and by genuinely bad government elsewhere on our troubled continent".

These attitudes could be changed by education and by example. "But we cannot countenance our enshrining their negativity into our

constitution as revamped apartheid or minority rule."

One key strategy might be to acknowledge the need for a transitional period in which certain fears were dealt with in a temporary fashion, as a stepping stone towards a full normalised society. "There are numerous ways in which we can reconcile a general principle with a strategy that minimises trauma and instability," said Mdlalose.

He added that many of the positive fears were not only whites' fears, but true "democrats' fears" of, among other things, state repression, internecine black violence, political hegemony and economic stagnation.

"What we are concerned about is a destructive white backlash sabotaging all the gains we have made, as well as what we could call a mainstream anti-democratic tradition of black township politics which is the antipathy of all that the IFP stands for."

Mr Robert van Tonder, leader of the Boerestaat Party, said his party was fighting for the freedom of the "Boer" nation. Their policy was not based on fear but self-determination. "I don't talk about colour, I talk about culture," he said.

The current system, and any future system to result from negotiation process, would give the Boer nation increasingly less say in government.

Ms Connell, who has run many "fear workshops" locally and abroad for workers in situations of violent conflict, shared some of the fears of those caught up in the current violent conflicts on the Reef.

She said with large sections of the community turning against each other, the violence was destroying the much valued sense of community of township dwellers. Violent crimes were on the increase and a new dimension was the ruthlessness (for example, burglars urinating in cooking pots) of the perpetrators.

Overall, there was an "increasing feeling of dread of the future" and people generally were immobilised. "There was a sense of waiting. People are saying 'we don't know where to start'."

Ronel Scheffer is Media Director at Idasa



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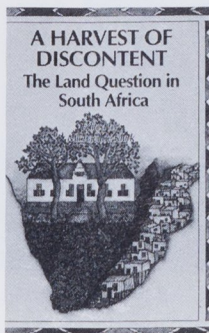
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## New service to public on political leaders

**SHELAGH GASTROW**, author of "Who's who in South African Politics" has joined Idasa in order to extend the service offered by her book which is now in it's third edition, locally and abroad.

Through gathering information for the book, a collection of articles on the key political players across the whole spectrum of South African politics, Shelagh has developed an extensive database not only of those who appear in the three editions but also of many other leading figures throughout South Africa.

Ms Gastrow, a history and social anthropology graduate, will extend her services with a regular edition of the book as well as offering quarterly updates, information about leaders at a regional level, and background for conference, seminar and business staff development planners.

Now, as the transition to a new South Africa takes place, the emergence of new leadership has made the need for information such as that contained in "Who's who" essential for the ordinary citizen and decision-maker alike.

She already has a large number of people who rely on her database for information and she will be developing a subscriber service for companies and organisations who want to keep in regular contact with the changing face of political leadership.

**ANY** person or organisation interested in subscribing to the service or access to the growing database may contact Ms Gastrow at the Natal office of Idasa.

Shelagh will be extending her search for the "movers and shakers" of the present and the future into the Southern African region and further afield into Africa as South Africans become more aware of their need to develop links with the continent.

Shelagh set to work on the first edition while dealing with being a parliamentary spouse – half a year in Cape Town and the other half in Durban – and has since seen the book reach sales of 8 000 in the first two editions.

The first edition appeared as there was a new upsurge in resistance and political activity following the launch of the UDF in 1983. The second followed during the State of Emergency in 1987. The third appeared after the February 2 speech of 1990.

**Paul Graham**  
Regional Director



Shelagh Gastrow

### UPDATE OF DEMOCRACY IN ACTION MAILING LIST

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# Remember why we aren't talking?

**The causes of the vast gulf in communication in South Africa were not acknowledged at a recent conference in Pretoria where the importance of communication during the negotiation period was proclaimed loudly.**

**SUE VALENTINE reports.**

**THE ISSUE** of "communication in the negotiation era" came under the spotlight at a one-day conference in Pretoria recently as delegates examined the urgent need to reach common ground in the quest for a peaceful settlement in South Africa.

However, it was perhaps just a little too easy, in the serene surroundings of the CSIR's conference centre, to emphasise the need for compromise and tolerance without acknowledging the South African context and the reasons for the divisions in our society.

Delegates to the seminar ranged from the Bureau for Information, TBVC states' representatives – including Ciskei's Brigadier Oupa Gqozo – and members of the ANC's Youth League. While there was a clear willingness to proceed with the job of urgent and effective communication between all parties and among all South Africans in the negotia-

tion period, there was little sense of acknowledgement of the history which has contributed to the vast gulf in communication – and the inability of many people to communicate in the manner of debate and discussion dictated largely by Western modes of behaviour.

The director of the Regional Research and Report Corporation (which organised the conference), Dr Hanneke du Preez, said in her introduction that South Africa's only hope for finding common ground was through communication.

Communication in the apartheid era had been characterised by the attitude "I here, you there"; the message communicated by black resistance groups was "you owe me". However, the central theme in negotiation communication, said Dr Du Preez, was "we are all here together".

The deputy editor of *Rapport*, Dr Piet Müller, said the ending of apartheid would not necessarily mean the end of poverty. The promise of "total victory" had not been achieved and this had to be explained to the people on the ground. To secure meaningful negotiations political leaders would have to explain the toning down of long-term demands.

"Negotiations will only succeed if political leaders succeed in communicating the political realities to their supporters," he said.

In one of the most thought-provoking addresses of the day, Stellenbosch University philosopher Professor Johan Degenaar examined "the controversial nature of key political concepts in South African negotiations".

He said words and meanings had power

over the minds of people. If people were not conscious of this, they would become victims of them. He said it was vital to be aware of the role of language and to realise that it did not mirror the world neutrally.

**'A meaning of democracy needs to be negotiated ... the negotiation of meanings should not be seen negatively'**

"Since language helps us to construct a world and ourselves along with it, we need to pay attention to the way in which we speak, for example, about 'politics', 'state', 'nation' and 'democracy'. We must ask ourselves whether it is an appropriate way of speaking, or whether we have become victims of an outdated, limiting and dangerous discourse," he said.

One of the terms to come under Degenaar's dissection was "nation". He poured scorn on those who used the term as if "nation-building was the type of activity loyal citizens should inevitably be involved in", explaining that "nation" had a range of meanings related to its various historical contexts.

For Degenaar, the concept which poses the least problems and which overcomes the conflict between a "transcendent culture" and particular community cultures was the concept of a democratic culture. A democratic culture allowed for a plurality of cultures to exist.

Rather than futile effort being channeled into the romantic notion of nation-building, the only

worthwhile goal to pursue in a country such as South Africa was the building of a culture of democracy, said Degenaar.

All important to this concept, however, was the assumption that everyone had the same meaning of democracy. It was not enough to agree on the goal of democracy, South Africans had to choose what they meant by the term.

Degenaar argued that a meaning of democracy needed to be negotiated. For those dispirited by the controversial nature of key

political concepts, Degenaar urged that the negotiation of meanings should not be seen negatively. Questioning what people meant by the words they used and negotiating a common understanding was a rewarding and exciting process.

The head of the Centre for Intergroup Studies at the University of Cape Town and a mediation expert, Pro-

fessor H W van der Merwe, said successful negotiations in South Africa would depend on the extent to which the major contenders in the country come to terms with the realities of the situation, the extent to which other political actors felt part of any negotiated settlement and the extent to which the leaders could sell to their followers whatever agreement they make.

"We have to find ways of involving the broader population. We have to communicate, educate and promote an appreciation of a democratic system as well as *participation* in the process."

Leaders and followers from all groups and in all organisations needed to learn negotiating skills, while new values of trust and tolerance had to be cultivated.

Addressing the question of how the media could contribute to effective communication in the negotiation era, the editor of *City Press*, Khulu Sibiyi, said that on the whole, the media had increased racial division in the country.

"Newspapers talk about 'black news' and 'white news'...they published different 'Extra' editions because they do not want to offend white readers, but they want to keep a high black readership and get greater advertising revenue."

The black media were under severe pressure to be propagandists for the black community and black journalists were reminded constantly of their political role.

The media were the custodians of the well-being of all South Africans, they should fiercely protect their independence from any government and give space to all views objectively and accurately. □



Du Preez: "We are all here together".



Sibiyi: Media increased racial division.



Degenaar: Democratic culture worthwhile goal.



# Wanted: TV time for women's voices

## Women not uniting for peace just yet?

**A MEETING** convened by Idasa in Johannesburg recently to focus on the approach of women's organisations to violence – and their ideas for peace – sparked much interest and fairly heated discussions.

Disappointingly, the four speakers – drawn from the Inkatha Women's Brigade, the National Party, the PAC and the ANC – chose to remain broadly at the level of rhetoric or generality.

Both the ANC and Inkatha, for example, have substantial experience of war and peace; they have been engaged in a range of local level experiments in peace-making which would have served as fascinating examples to open the discussion about the way forward. But neither of their representatives touched on these issues.

Elizabeth Bhengu, head of Inkatha's Women's Brigade, said the problem could only be overcome if the conditions which caused the violence – poverty, unemployment and lack of education – were altered. This theme was reiterated by other speakers and in the open discussion.

Adrienne Koch, vice-chairperson of the constitutional committee of the President's Council, angered and astonished many with a somewhat disjointed presentation, which she started by saying: "I am not going to stand here today and apologise for the past. But I am going to try to explain why we did what we did."

She gave a long personal history, punctuated with assertions about white attitudes, and scattered with references to a range of issues, from sanctions to chopping down trees. Tenge Ntsintso of the ANC spoke for many present when she said to Koch: "Without sounding quite rude, Adrienne Koch says she comes from a liberal view – one wonders what is the conservative?"

Patricia de Lille, PAC secretary for foreign affairs, noted that most women were far removed from the struggle, and not in touch with the changes that are taking place. The challenge lay in understanding the experience of those women, particularly in relation to violence.

Getrude Shope, head of the ANC's Women's League, speaking on the way forward, said the ANC was developing a charter of women's rights, and encouraged other women's organisations to put forward their ideas as well. Ntsintso said her party was working to set up a united front of women's organisations, and it would therefore be open to working with the organisations represented by the speakers. De Lille's position was rather more distant, since she argued that it was not possible to talk peace in the present context. □

In March, Idasa hosted two events in Johannesburg on the current violence, looking specifically at what women were doing, and could still be doing, to address the situation. **BARBARA KLUGMAN** reports on the two meetings.

**WOMEN WITH** an intimate knowledge of the violence in different parts of the country, shared their experience with others on March 23 in Johannesburg in what turned out to be a fast-flowing and fascinating event, revealing different levels of experience and challenge.

Chaired by Boitumelo Mofokeng of the SACC, the meeting also underscored the general need for women to make their voices heard in South Africa. An outstanding proposal was also made for women to demand a regular slot on television to voice their concerns about the violence.

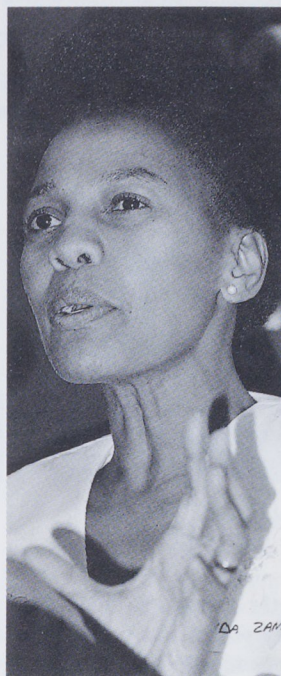
Alinah Monhyokoseli, co-chair of Women for Peace, spoke about life in Daveyton and about the problems of communication, especially between those with education and those without. "We do build bridges, but we fail to cross them".

Throughout the meeting she returned to this theme, arguing that women should take the lead in resolving community problems, but are often excluded, for example because of the use of English at meetings. She argued that "the present political atmosphere recognises the equality of women – we can't blame traditional culture – the present political culture makes us move, yet we do drag our feet".

Hilary Wiles, a social worker on the East Rand, gave a horrifying account of the experience of Phola Park residents through a series of shack demolitions, and violence. She asserted that "there is a connection between the violence of demolitions and the recent violence of the East Rand" – in terms of the anger that demolitions unleash and the tensions with the police.

Wiles described the appalling effects of the violence on the women and children refugees, including the premature births of five babies; parents still searching for lost children; children screaming in terror when a car backfired – thinking it was gunfire; all of the women suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. "Time can make the memories fade but can never undo the harm fully."

Wiles argued among other things for the



Linda Zama: not the white electorate that's getting battered.

involvement of women in decision-making, and for those with resources to begin supporting and sacrificing for those without such support.

Linda Zama, a lawyer and information officer for the ANC in Southern Natal, gave an overview of events in Natal and singled out some of the contradictions that have arisen in attempts at peace. In particular, she described inconsistencies in the relationship between the SAP and KwaZulu police. The SAP gives the KwaZulu police support when they need it, but will not intervene when they behaved badly – on the grounds that KwaZulu is beyond their jurisdiction. "If the white electorate was being battered, something would have been done years ago," she said.

Several other interesting questions and proposals were discussed in the debate which followed.

**THE MEDIA**, particularly SABC, was criticised for not reporting township violence accurately, for not doing investigative journalism and for failing to report women's efforts in this area. References to women were almost always relegated to the women's pages.

To me, the most significant proposal to come out of the day's focus on "women taking up the challenge" was the suggestion that women request a slot on SATV where they – women from the broadest possible range of organisations – can campaign for peace. In the words of Linda Zama, "it should be meant to shame our men who have not handled the situation properly!"

One would like to see Idasa offering a follow-up meeting for women who are specifically interested in challenging the SABC's coverage – to develop proposals for women's voices, and indeed the voices of grassroots people generally, to be heard by the people in the country as a whole. □

Barbara Klugman is an academic and vice-chairperson of the Black Sash



# Becoming active in the 'trenches'

By Sue Valentine

**NO MATTER** how well worded a constitution is, it cannot ensure democracy for all South Africans. Arguably the best way for voters to ensure that the government acts according to their interests, and not those of a small powerful elite, is through strong civilian pressure groups – civic organisations.

In a seminar organised by the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (Cace) at the University of the Western Cape recently, the question was raised whether community organisations and unions should retain their independence from the state in a post-apartheid society.

Sharing his thoughts on the subject of the state and civil society was a visiting Canadian researcher, Dennis Howlett, who said no neat, clear lines divided the state from civil society. In searching for a definition of civil society he suggested that it included all social organisations in society, excluding business.

Howlett is a popular educator and chairperson of the Education and Communications Committee of the Pro-Canada Network – a

co-alition of movements opposed to the social policies of Canada's conservative government led by Brian Mulroney.

He said that while the ANC should be taking up local matters such as rents in their political campaign, civic organisations should still organise around those issues in order to keep up pressure on the government.

In line with the thinking of the Italian social theorist of the 1920s, Antonio Gramsci, Howlett said civil society formed the "trenches" which kept the state in power. Although the government of the day and its policies might change, control of society was maintained through social organisations such as schools, churches, cultural bodies and the media. To truly change the nature of the state, it was also necessary therefore, to change these institutions, otherwise the same forms of domination and control would continue.

In an explanation of what social movements had achieved in Canada, Howlett sketched the development of the Pro-Canada Network. He said the emphasis was on informing the Canadian public about certain policies advocated by the Mulroney government and the need for creating news events that would ensure access to the media in order to get their message across.

"Political parties tend to follow public opinion rather than to lead it," said Howlett. It was not enough just to oppose certain measures, but consensus had to be built around an alternative.

He said that all governments – even the most well-intentioned – were caught up in bureaucratic structures. Strong social movements were needed to force governments to focus afresh on the demands of citizens and to move in a direction which benefitted the broader society.

"**AS THE** ANC becomes a political party, we need to ask what kind of groups and structures will ensure that this kind of dialectic continues," said Howlett.

Responding from a South African perspective, United Democratic Front executive member Johnny de Lange said the majority of people had not been part of political society and attention had been focused on building the ANC through civic organisations.

Since the ANC's unbanning, resources were being transferred from civil society to political society, but it was important that civil society should not be neglected. He said the disbanding of the UDF, "the most coherent political force in civil society in the Western Cape", would have serious repercussions.

## Long struggle to unity... in Germany

**WHILE MANY** South Africans are inclined to believe their country's problems constitute the be-all and end-all of global socio-economic and political affairs, many people in the newly united Germany have a similar national self-obsession.

Reiner Erkens, a senior researcher from the Free Democratic Party in Germany, spoke to a small group at Idasa's Western Cape office early in March. He sketched some of the difficulties confronting the new nation which is worlds apart – in spite of speaking the same language.

No one, he said, had been prepared for reunification when it came. It happened very quickly, in a revolutionary rather than evolutionary way, but with very little violence. However, the rapidity of the transition and people's lack of preparedness is causing some serious problems.

Erkens said that in the beginning West Germans feared the imposition of a mixed economy which retained elements of East German socialism. However, it was soon realised that conditions in the East were so bad that once East Germany was incorporated into the West, no changes towards a socialist economy were likely.

On paper the East German economy was said to be the 10th largest in the world, in reality though, the economy of the former German Democratic Republic was found to be totally uncompetitive on international markets.

"**IT IS** estimated that by the end of 1991, only 20 percent of the old GDR industry will survive," said Erkens. East German car factories would probably also be closed down because the cars produced (for which there had been a waiting list of 15 years in the GDR) were unwanted and were piling up with no willing buyers.

It was expected that economic growth would begin in the old GDR and Hungary only in about 1994/95.

What was needed was a movement of qualified people into eastern parts of the country to offer their expertise there. There were 50 000 lawyers in West Germany, but only 300 in the East. These were trained in Marxist law and had no thorough understanding of the new constitution, taxation policies etc.

The question was, how to convince skilled West Germans to live in such a dilapidated part of the country? Tax incentives had been one suggestion.

Offering his conclusions of what all this meant for South Africans, Erkens said countries in Europe, and Germany in particular, were concerned with their own problems first and those of Europe second. The rest of the world barely featured.

"You have to do it on your own in South Africa; you cannot wait for someone else to help."



Dennis Howlett: no clear dividing lines

coalition of movements opposed to the social policies of Canada's conservative government led by Brian Mulroney.

To merely write about Howlett's presentation is to do it an injustice, however, for after sitting in on his dynamic lecture of civic movements in Canada, the message lingers on in the form of vividly drawn illustrations and symbols rather than from copious notes.

This method, nick-named the "Ah-ha" method (because people exclaim "ah-ha" as they realise a concept clearly for the first time), aims at helping participants to piece together their individual experiences in a way that clarifies



# A glimpse behind the bamboo curtain

**COMMUNISM** had produced "great achievements as well as great setbacks and mistakes" in China, according to a visiting academic, Prof Ge Ji.

Prof Ji, who visited South Africa in March and is a founder member of the Institute of West Asian and African Studies (Iwaas) in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, has been researching African affairs for 30 years since Mao Tse Tung ordered the establishment of the institute in 1961.

Offering a brief history of China at a gathering in Cape Town, she said communism in China differed substantially from the nature of the system forced on East European countries after World War 2. The Chinese people had "chosen" communism in 1949, she said.

Herself a victim of the notorious "cultural revolution", Prof Ji was forced to move with her husband and two children to a small rural community in the early 1960s, to "learn from the peasants". It was only China's burgeoning contact with post colonial African states – and the need for academic expertise in that field – that hastened her recall to Beijing. She then continued her work as an academic specialising in British Commonwealth affairs and African development.

Although critical of the excesses of the "Gang of Four" who succeeded Mao, Prof Ji staunchly defended the achievements of the People's Republic



Prof Ge Ji: China "more or less" a just society.

of China over the last 41 years.

"If you compare the old world and the new world – China is now politically strong enough to stand up among the nations of the world." Referring to eight years of Japanese occupation before World War 2 and America's "open door" policy imposed on China throughout the 19th century, Prof Ji said: "No one dare invade us again; even the Americans have to respect us now."

**ASKED** about current world political trends which dismissed communism, Prof Ji was strongly supportive and defensive of what Chinese communism had

achieved. Although the overall standard of living in China was low, she said there had been vast improvements under the Communist government since 1949.

"We are a more or less a just society. The gap between the highest and lowest pay is not that great. I as a director of Iwaas earn about double that of someone who sweeps our offices."

The present Chinese government was pursuing far more contact with the West because it needed the technological and managerial expertise those countries could offer. While admitting that central planning could not plan for every aspect of the

economy, Prof Ji said that on the whole, China could meet its own needs and that was why most Chinese still supported their communist government.

**FARMING** techniques had ensured that although China occupied only 16 percent of the globe's arable land, it fed its 1,1 billion citizens – 22 percent of the world's population.

Since 1978 China had made "great progress", said Prof Ji. "If you force through central planning against the law of development, you will meet great setbacks." Accordingly, there was a growing small business sector which was encouraged to take initiative and develop independently from state interference.

Asked about China's efforts to control its population growth, Prof Ji said improved medical care had increased the life expectancy of Chinese people from that of 25 years of age in 1949, to 65 years in 1990.

In the old days families had produced eight or nine children and only one or two had survived. As a result of the changes from 1949, more and more children were surviving into adulthood, producing a vast and rapid population growth.

**ABORTION** is available on demand and strict family planning is advocated by all state institutions.

"In old China thousands died from hunger; is this less inhuman than allowing abortions?" she asked. "We must have strict family planning otherwise we cannot feed our population. The slogan today is, 'one couple one child'."

As an incentive, all first born children in China have free medical care and a government subsidy is given to the parents. However, should the parents have a second child, they must pay the medical costs themselves. Couples who choose not to have children also receive a government grant for added old age security.

## Canadians pledge support

**YOUTH** involvement in violence and the overwhelming impoverishment of the Winterveldt area were two of the issues that most concerned a top fact-finding delegation from Canada which recently visited the country.

Idasa's Pretoria office, which has extensive experience in rural interaction, was requested to set up meetings in Soshanguve and Winterveldt for an Oxfam delegation from Canada.

The group included former members of parliament, an ex-mayor of Ottawa, a political scholar commentator and a mandated representative of the

United Church of Canada and the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa.

Their visit to South Africa focused on the current violence, negotiation for change and establishing the needs of poor South Africans and grassroots groups.

Their experiences here will be used to encourage Canadians to support the social and developmental needs of South Africans and help mitigate the violence.

Paul Zondo  
Regional Co-ordinator



# Exiles face hurdles, bring hope

**ANC** regional executive member and representative of the Natal Repatriation Committee, Dr Nkosazana Zuma joined other returnees to speak about the problems and opportunities of the repatriation programme at an Idasa luncheon in Durban recently.

Describing the return from exile through the eyes of the children who had never seen South Africa except on TV, she explained that there were many hurdles to overcome.

The children have never known apartheid and come home to a society that has not yet changed.

They speak English – sometimes as a second language – but often neither Afrikaans nor a vernacular language. They must therefore attend the newly

“opened” schools understanding neither why the children in the township are not at these schools nor why they are the object of such attention.

Special classes, transport, uniforms and so on make their reintegration a financial burden which families cannot always bear.

Returning to Natal places extra demands on returnees and communities. Many houses have been destroyed and families displaced. In some cases, returnees are receiving news of bereavements for the first time. In others, their homes are in areas where local leadership suspects exiles and resists their return.

Dr Zuma reminded her listeners that people had gone into exile as patriots, had trained and worked in exile, and had

expected to return to a new South Africa. However, they were returning to a South Africa in transition where conditions were often far worse than those they had known when they left.

She called on everyone to work together to ensure that the repatriation programme benefitted the country and assisted the transition to a new South Africa. Many of the exiles were highly skilled although they had often obtained their qualifications in countries not recognised by South Africa. Employment for these and for those less skilled but with the experience of living in other countries, could only bring benefit. Unemployment, on the other hand, as one participant pointed out, could leave South Africa with the most politically skilled unemployed ever.

Thanking her, Paul Graham of Idasa raised the spectre of a badly managed repatriation programme producing a “Vietnam” type syndrome – with only a segment of the community welcoming, a sense of incompleteness and unfulfilled expectations, and an inability to integrate into a community which has grown and changed – no longer needing or wanting the returnees.

He called for Durban to consider a welcome and reconciliation celebration in which all communities were involved.

At the luncheon were people who had recently returned from Tanzania, Russia, Zambia, Angola and Switzerland.

**Paul Graham**  
Regional Director



Dr Tetiokin (left) meets SA Communist Party members Tony Yengeni and Ray Alexander in Cape Town.



Ambassador Solodovnikov addresses luncheon guests in Cape Town.

**CO-OPERATION** between Idasa and the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee (SAASC) goes back to early 1988 when Alex Boraine visited the USSR. The relationship gave rise to the Leverkusen conference later that year, bringing together for the first time representatives of the Soviet public, the ANC and prominent members of the academic community in South Africa.

Three prominent members of SAASC – Vasili Solodovnikov (USSR ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, vice-president of SAASC, corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Sciences), Dr Samandar Kalandarov (secretary general of SAASC) and Dr Vyatcheslav Tetiokin (consultant to SAASC),

## Total onslaught against SA was ‘fiction’

were hosted by Idasa on a fact-finding mission in this country during March. Although the three visitors have each devoted several years of their lives to change in this country – or perhaps because of it – none of them had previously visited this country. It turned out to be a moving experience for them, and, in the words of Ambassador Solodovnikov: “All of us are therefore experiencing very special human feelings, stepping for the first time into the land of your beautiful country”. They visited most of the major centres in the country. The Pretoria office of Idasa was involved

both at the beginning and end of their stay, setting up a hectic programme of meetings and interviews on the Reef.

Within 48 hours of arrival they had held meetings with members of the national executives of the ANC, PAC and SACP. Later, they also met with Azapo, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the SA Institute for International Affairs and members of the Cosatu leadership.

A six-hour “township” experience took the visitors through Marabastad, Bantule, Lady Selbourne, Winterveldt and Soshanguve

A five-hour scenic drive to KaNgwane, where they were hosted by Chief Minister Enos Mabusa, followed. A particularly moving experience was a visit to the site where President Samora Machel’s plane had crashed, taking four of their comrades down with it.

Their final appointment was a widely advertised public meeting in Pretoria on the relationship between the Soviet Union and South Africa.

Ambassador Solodovnikov was clear in his understanding that the “total onslaught” had been a figment of the imagination in South Africa. Other views expressed included that the Soviet Union did not want to interfere in South Africa’s affairs; that far from having been a failure, socialism remained the answer to the world’s problems. Dr Tetiokin blamed the failure of Soviet socialism on the gradual erosion of political democracy in the Soviet Union, denying people the right to question the policies of the central government.

While this delegation was not an official Soviet deputation, they do “pull a lot of weight” in the Soviet Union, and their findings are being eagerly awaited in Moscow.

**Ivor Jenkins**  
Regional Director



## Fast pace of reform surprising most – Mbeki

**THE** process of reform was happening much faster than most had anticipated, Thabo Mbeki, ANC director of international affairs, told a public meeting in Port Elizabeth recently.

In fact, Mbeki said it would not be altogether impossible to have a new constitution by the end of 1991 – provided processes like the return of exiles and release of political prisoners were speeded up.

Mbeki visited the city as the guest of Idasa. During his stay he also addressed 40 leading businesspeople and a capacity audience of students at the University of Port Elizabeth.

Some 350 people attended the public meeting where he also highlighted the following aspects:

- That one person, one vote should not lead to a domination of minorities; the ANC therefore

endorsed a system of proportional representation.

- Regarding an interim government, he rejected the argument that South Africa was a sovereign state which could not permit such a structure. Rather the issue was one of the acceptability and legitimacy of the present government, most particularly during the transition process. "If Kaiser Chiefs are playing Orlando Pirates, the former can't referee the game at the same time!"

- On the acceptability of a white president in a future South Africa: "I don't know what Nelson Mandela would think, but

it could be a very good thing!" Mbeki seriously believes that non-racialism, as "an idea of the heart", must also find practical expression.

- Cautiously positive remarks were conveyed to the SA Police for their apparently more impartial conduct during the events of the previous weekend in Alexandra.

An excellent discussion took place between Mr Mbeki and the businesspeople and early indications are that it could lead to the establishment of a working group between the ANC and the local business community to address the

housing crisis in Port Elizabeth.

At UPE's "apolitical" campus, Mbeki received a standing ovation from the 500 students present.

Mbeki told the students that sanctions would remain in place not until the ANC called for their repeal, but until political stability was reached and investor confidence restored.

He also emphasised that it was imperative for students to become involved in political debate as politics could, and should, be influenced by the entire South African community. The ANC's policy documents, he said, should be available on campus so that their policies could be intelligently debated and criticised by the student community.

**Keith Wattrus**  
Regional Director

## Action, not guilt, needed from whites

**FEELINGS** of guilt, warmth and solidarity in themselves are ineffective regarding reconciliation. What is needed is action, according to two British activists.

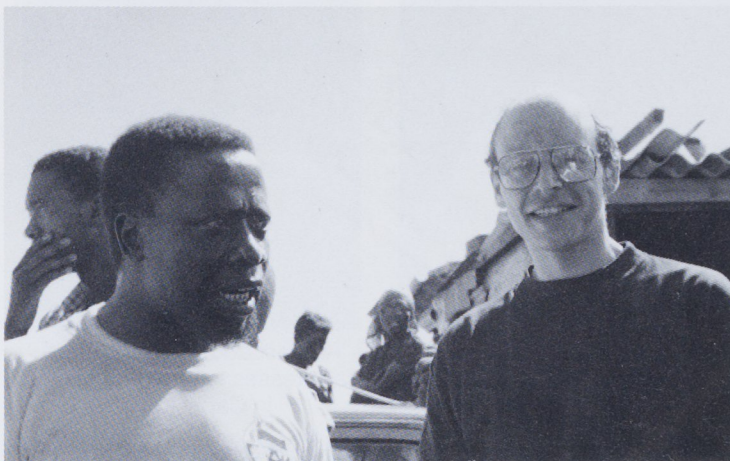
Robert Haines and Frank Anti of the Churches Anti-Racist Enterprise (Care) in Liverpool, who were guests of Idasa in Pretoria recently, made some important observations after meeting a wide range of local organisations.

"The government seems to be unaware of or unwilling to accept the sophistication of political analysis at grassroots level," they said. They saw evidence of commitment, hard work and disciplined action at the local level. "This apparent ignorance strikes us as being most dangerous."

Mr Haines and Mr Anti were introduced to a variety of NG Kerk ministers, the Pretoria Council of Churches, the SA Catholic Bishops' Conference, and visited Soshanguve and Winterveldt. They attended a mass meeting at a squat: camp, and an ordination service in Winterveldt, at a church which serves Mozambican refugees.

"The order of commitment and dedication to prevent violence and build confidence and hope, was high and impressive.

"This experience led us to



Robert Haines (right) with Idasa regional co-ordinator Paul Zondo in Soshanguve.

believe that the perception of whites of the situation in the black community is so different from the actual that their perception of what is to happen and when it has to happen is dangerously deficient.

"One perceptible area of similarity between here and the UK is that 'liberal' whites, who seem to regard the government's reforms at face value, talk of reconciliation and 'individual enlightenment' as if the key to the reordering of things is to be found primarily at the level of beliefs and attitudes. There is the similar talk of 'de-programming' and the establishment of contact, encounter, et cetera.

"Whilst not writing the above off, the more stark, and in our view, realistic analysis, is the one which seems to be more prevalent amongst black activists and their allies – the reordering of society must begin with structural and institutional change which attacks the economic injustices which oppress the majority of people in this country. Sympathy without relief is like mustard without beef.

"Community organisation and mobilisation at grassroots level seems to be orientated firmly in this direction through civics, community committees and local networks.

"Apartheid was not born out of

racist beliefs and attitudes alone; these were nurtured as an "anaesthetic" to allow the rulers to ignore the pain and destruction of the policies they pursued in order to gain and hold wealth and power.

"To repeal racist laws without rapidly following this up with a programme of restitution is a cosmetic exercise which does next to nothing to ameliorate the lot of the great mass of people.

"For every racist law repealed, 'positive action' or just law must be promulgated, and worked out in practice and detail by the present regime.

"Luring the liberation movements into a semblance of 'democratic' politics before this has happened could however be disastrous for the whole country.

Mr Haines and Mr Anti said the government must "put its own head on the block wherever there is failure" – not the head of the ANC.

"A political sleight of hand whereby the government raises expectations, calls and loses an election, and leaves the mess to its successors, would be a serious blow to the likelihood of peaceful and just progress to unity and a redressing of the balance." □

**Kerry Harris**  
Regional Co-ordinator



# Apartheid's everyday insults in relief

By Shauna Westcott

COOLIE LOCATION, by Jay Naidoo,  
S A Writers and Taurus, 228 pages. R34,99.

**I PROBABLY** would not have read this book had I not been asked to review it. (I certainly would not have bought it at such an outrageous price.) I grudgingly squeezed it in on a lazy Easter weekend between some superb science fiction – C J Cherryh's "Cyteen" – and Marion Foster's wonderful whodunit, "The Monarchs are Flying". The interesting thing is that while "Coolie Location" is vulnerable to criticism on many levels, while it may be described as a "slight" work, while it suffered unfairly next to Cherryh and Foster, it nevertheless lingers on in memory, exerting a great and insidious charm.

An indicator of that charm is that despite the compulsory nature of my appointment with it, and despite the lure of "Monarchs", I was disappointed when the book came to an abrupt end – with the author about to leave the country for what he believes will be the joys of England. I wanted to know what happened to young Jay Naidoo (not the Jay Naidoo of Cosatu fame, apparently). I still do.

The "blurb" on the back cover describes "Coolie Location" as a "finely wrought portrait of boyhood and youth in the Pretoria Indian Location... fashioned with a gentle humour and an elegant pen". It is.

Naidoo has a wonderful eye for detail and an unusual ability to convey atmosphere and feeling. Part of the charm of his narrative is what can only be described as an innocence – a literary equivalent of the naive mode of painting. He draws scenes and people in simplicity and vivid colour. He infuses the ordinary with a kind of luminosity. Above all he is unselfconscious and wry about himself. He does not shrink from showing himself in a ridiculous or shameful light. He is not beset by the grandiosity of ego that tramps through more portentous works.

He observes with the eyes of a child and it is this that lends an unusual (in these days of the political cliché) power to his descriptions of what the "blurb" calls "the ordinary insults and the easy cruelties of Fifties and Sixties apartheid". Embedded as they are in his guileless accounts of goings-on at home, on the street, at dreaded and despised Tamil school (the equivalent of the ghastly Scripture lessons I had to endure twice a week, every week, for 10 years), the fortunes of the Swaraj football team and the weekly feature at the Royal cinema – his descriptions of these "easy cruelties" become stunning indictments of our local evil empire.

For instance, Naidoo describes his first day in standard six with mundane impressions that will be familiar to anyone who has survived



school – the friend he shared a desk with, how the classroom looked, the fact that boys and girls were studying together for the first time, the excitement of having new teachers. Enter the principal, a "thin, bespectacled figure" called Mr Caulinek, to introduce the class to the new subject of "race studies". Mr Caulinek reads the children the following extract from a work by "one of South Africa's foremost historians":

**"SCIENCE** is only now gradually discovering the remarkable physiological differences between the brain of the white man of European descent and that of the Bantu – differences which are innate and constitute the measure of their respective intellectual capacities ...

"Today science brings us proofs that the cerebral capacities of what we conveniently call 'native', are, when he has reached the age of puberty, distinctly inferior in comparison with those of white children of a civilisation of 2 000 years. We know now that many of the ganglion cells of the native's brain remain undeveloped; and we know, with some degree of certainty, that his intellectual development – which before the age of puberty is more or less comparable with that of a normal white child – comes to a standstill, as if it were not capable of further development."

Jay tries to relate this to some racist behaviour of his own described earlier in the book, but his meditation is interrupted as the race studies teacher maunders on about "the head measurements of the different races". The incident – reminiscent of what Hannah Arendt calls "the banality of evil" – ends not with any incantatory condemnations but with this:

"Later he went on to mention someone called

Mendel but it was the last period of the day: my concentration flagged and the heat of the past-noon sun made me feel drowsy – I had to fight off sleep until I was saved by the bell.

"Race studies, however, didn't last long: for Mr Freen became ill and he wasn't replaced. The last period on Tuesday afternoons became a library hour."

But if Naidoo brings the insights of a naïf to bear on racism with moving effect, he remains lamentably and disappointingly unconscious of the sexism that exerts an equally poisonous influence. Women – with the exception of his mother – feature in "Coolie Location" purely as objects of titillation. That this is par for the course from so many male writers does not make it any less objectionable.

**A MITIGATING** factor, however – and one that gives rise to some hope that the next instalment of the life and times of Jay Naidoo will be more enlightened – is that the brutality which so often characterises the sexual relations described by male writers is entirely absent in Naidoo. So, however deformed his interactions with women are, they are at least capable of transformation. He is willing to be vulnerable. He is open to the erotic rather than bent on domination. And he retains the charm of a naïf.

This is how he describes his first encounter with girlfriend-to-be Soobathie, for instance:

"I looked into her eyes and at her lips and then reached quietly and cautiously for her hand. She touched my arm and, with the other hand, played with a button on my cardigan. I wondered how Patrick in my place would have behaved. He'd ask her for a kiss. Yes, that's it, I'll ask her for a kiss – that'll break the ice.

'Can I – may I kiss you?'

"She smiled and demurely nodded assent. I bent forward; a wisp of her hair brushed softly past my temple. A warm tremor ran through my body. I sensed the joy and fragrance of her body and the pristine promise of flesh: soft, inviting, mysterious. I closed my eyes, pursed my lips and plunged. Our lips touched, my thoughts and intelligence blacked out. A soft delicious vibration skipped and jumped through my flesh and blood. I opened my eyes and drew back.

"I wasn't sure if I was waking from a dream or if I was really doing what I had done. I suddenly felt a desperate need to be away, to be alone, to pinch myself and to convince myself that I had really done what I did – that my kiss was deed and not dream, that I had received the gift of flesh and desire, that I was, indeed, awake."

So, here's hoping for more from Jay Naidoo. Someone should turn the book into a TV series in the meantime. □

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# Keeping Green on the agenda

**Despite recent setbacks, the Greens movement is still having a significant impact on world politics. South Africa needs fully-fledged Greens representa-**

**tives to take their place at the negotiating table when the country's constitutional future is hammered out, argues environmental writer JOHN YELD.**

THE 1990's have been heralded as the "decade of the environment". South Africa, too, though buffeted and bruised by the whirlwinds of political change, at last appear to be taking environmental issues seriously, though unanimity in this regard seem as elusive as elsewhere.

Worldwide, green concerns have become inextricably part of people's everyday lives; in Britain, for example, more than four fifths of respondents told a recent opinion poll that "the environment is the most important issue facing the world today", and more than two thirds of them claimed they would be willing to accept zero economic growth, if that was the price for saving their environment.

Much of this popular concern for environmental protection has been translated into political support for the Green Party. In 1988, for example, the party attracted two million votes in elections for the European Parliament. South Africa lagged behind in this regard, although the emergence of Earthlife Africa and changing perceptions among other non-government conservation bodies suggests the formation of a fully-fledged Green Party is only a matter of time.

But given the country's already crowded political arena, is there really a need for yet another organisation? And have recent events elsewhere not suggested that early predictions for the decade were seriously optimistic?

FOR AT the end of last year, West Germany's Greens – the vanguard of the movement – were resoundingly thumped during the first elections for a united Germany, and the party failed to retain any seats in the Bundestag, the national parliament. From a high of 8.3 percent of the overall vote in 1987, the Greens' share slumped to just 4.7 percent – below the 5 percent required for representation. Complete annihilation of the Greens movement at national parliamentary level was only averted by the election of two East German Greens.

But Ms Niki Kortvelyssy, convenor of the international committee of the Green Party Council in London, pointed out that one of the main factors in the poor showing of the Greens in these elections was that – surprising though this may seem to outsiders – both the East and West German Greens had opted to oppose unification, and had accordingly contested the elections as separate parties. In addition, each had taken positions relevant to their own electorate.

The East German Greens had reaped the benefit of this anomaly because of their close links with citizens' movements like the New Forum, which had spearheaded the revolution against the former German Democratic Republic

government. But in the Federal Republic (West Germany), environmental issues had been forced down the agenda by the unification issue and the electorate's belief that other parties had adopted environmental protection into their political manifestos.

This latter factor was to the Greens' credit, Ms Kortvelyssy argued. "It seems a tragic irony that the heritage of the partition of Germany, which predated the launch of the Greens by a generation, should now be one of the factors in a serious electoral setback for the party. Nevertheless, Greens parties are being established all over the world and are entering parliaments under the kind of proportional representation which will inevitably be introduced in Britain as it integrates with Europe.

"Such a world-wide trend is not likely to grind to a halt because of one regional anomaly in Germany," she concluded.

Indeed, less than two months later, the Greens reversed their losses and increased their vote substantially in elections for the Hesse regional parliament, forming a "red-green" majority with the Social Democrats. Their renewed support was closely linked to strong anti-Gulf war feelings in Germany, and in that sense was perhaps not a true test of the electorate's response to the Greens' sometimes controversial environmental stance.

THERE ARE those Greens who argue that the loss of parliamentary representation is no bad thing and that the movement functions best in an informal capacity. Advocates of this theory include Ms Gabrielle Bietze of Berlin, who wrote in a letter to *The Times*:

"Of course it is regrettable that the Greens (or at least those in West Germany) will have no representation in the national parliament on such important global questions as world climate and the ozone layer, nor to be able to exert a progressive influence in the areas of peace and abortion policies.

"What that will mean is that the Greens will have to express themselves more strongly outside parliament, via campaigns, demonstrations and blockades – which, ironically, for a large part of the membership will mean a return to political roots. Although historically the party may be said to have failed, it still has a very clear future – as a pressure group which

is no longer hindered by the need to make parliamentary compromises."

But for Joschka Fischer, German Greens leader in the Hesse parliament and a member of the "Realos" (pragmatist) wing of the party, there was no doubt that parliamentary representation was vital. In an analysis of his party's failure in last year's elections, the former Minister of the Environment said:

"We ignored at our peril the laws of political physics and were asking for trouble by taking too low a political profile. Our lack of structure and the absence of strong personalities at federal level left us unable to project ourselves ... In order to survive we will have to become a real party, a party committed to environmental reform."

IF THERE is anything for environmentally minded South Africans to learn from this European experience, then it is probably that the formation of a Green Party, whose major political philosophy is protection of the environment, is now an urgent priority.

It is true that existing political groupings in South Africa are increasingly introducing environmental components into their manifestos. The Democratic Party led the way, but it has – or rather, is – being followed by both the ANC and the PAC. The latter in particular is reported to have commissioned a highly professional, comprehensive environmental policy document for consideration by members.

However, if environmental protection is to be a feature of the new constitution for South Africa, it is vital that specialists are among those negotiating its expected stormy passage. If Fischers' comments are anything to go by, the realists among Germany's Greens have come to the conclusion that environmental lobbying appears most effective from within formal political structures. Also, the Namibian experience of the transition to a constitutional democracy has demonstrated that environmental issues can be dropped from the agenda when the political bargaining starts. Swapo commissioned the drawing up of special environmental features for their proposed constitution; by the time the final version had been approved by the constituent assembly, these clauses had been dropped.

In South Africa, successful constitutional negotiations are likely to be substantially more drawn-out, the bargaining tougher, the political trade-offs more extensive – and environmental protection could be one of the first casualties, particularly when highly controversial land issues come up for discussion. □

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