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SOUTH AFRICA AFTER MANDELA

EDITORIAL

Dangerous times

WE ARE back to living in dangerous times. Many of us thought, after President De Klerk's February 1990 speech, that we had seen the last of them. The way ahead might be rough, we thought, but never again could it be really dangerous.

So failure to reach agreement at CODESA 2 was seen by many commentators as just another rather more serious hiccup in a negotiating process which would soon get going again. There was always the danger, however, that that hiccup could turn into something more serious. And so it has.

The Boipatong massacre, President De Klerk's insensitive and ill-advised visit there, and the police shootings which followed, have thrown our whole future into the melting pot. The ANC has not only withdrawn from CODESA, it seems no longer willing to talk to the Government at all. A campaign of mass action which can only heighten tension, lead to further public recrimination, almost certainly give rise to further loss of life, and batter an already punch-drunk economy, looms before us.

Can anything be done to stop this dangerous slide to national flagellation? The presence on the Goldstone Commission of respected overseas observers may help. So may the Government's belated willingness to turn to the United Nations Secretary-General. However, unless the Nationalist Party is prepared to take one final step and concede that it will never again be able to direct the course of events here, the deadlock will continue.

FROM WHAT we have heard from Democratic Party and Labour Party and other participants, who have no reason to support the ANC's case, it was on this rock that CODESA foundered. The Nationalist Party could not bring itself to take that final step which would effectively hand over control of the future of the Afrikaner people, and white South Africans in general, to somebody else, and who can blame them? They are being asked to do something for which there are no precedents. They are assured that the ANC's commitment to a Bill of Rights, multi-party politics, regular elections, an independent judiciary, and other accoutrements of the civilised modern state coupled with their technical and financial skills, will guarantee whites a secure and honourable place in the new South Africa. But who can wonder, as they look around them at the world and continent in which they live, and some of the people to whom they are being asked to hand over power, that they hesitate? It is an act of considerable faith that they are being asked to perform.

AND YET, there is no other way. The step has to be taken. But for the faith in which it is taken to be justified, there has to be mutual trust; and there is precious little of that in evidence between the main negotiating factions.

It will need some dramatic act to re-establish it.

Could the Government's acceptance now of a 70 percent majority in our constitution-making body, the sticking-point at CODESA 2, be it? We certainly hope so and that CODESA will soon be called together again.

If it is, the Nationalist Party must take the plunge, accept that it probably won't control the next government, get the best deal it can, including as much regional devolution of power as possible, and hope that the predictions of the continuing influence of our minority communities on our future will be as great as the optimists proclaim they will be.

The alternative is chaos, anarchy and destitution for us all. ●

Join the debate on changing South Africa. Write to:
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unfounded fears

IN HIS article "A simple majority won't work", David Welsh says he hopes to start a debate. I offer the following brief remarks in the spirit of friendly but urgent debate.

For much of his article it looks as if he is on the point of proposing some specific constitutional check on "majoritarianism" but towards the end he says:

> "How we achieve institutionalised coalition may not be a function of the constitution: perhaps it will be more fruitful to think in terms of pacts, solemnly agreed by the major players."

It seems to me very unwise to attempt to build into the constitution any interference with the rights of the majority (except those important ones provided by a justiciable bill of rights, proportional representation, and so on). In any case it seems very unlikely that the current majority (almost certainly those supporting the ANC) would accept such a provision.

Once an "ordinary" constitution has been agreed to, however, it will surely become clear that a pact of some kind (though I think it may prove to be a pragmatic working arrangement rather than something "solemnly agreed") will be almost inevitable. I think it will be a working agreement between the majority party, the ANC, and the next biggest actor, the De Klerk group.

What gives me this idea? And how can I be so confident?

It seems to me fairly clear, and I think it will become clear to almost everyone, that the new South Africa will depend upon sensible day-to-day working arrangements between employers and workers, between majority (which will want to pull towards redistribution) and capital (which will want to pull in the opposite direction), between the current haves (who have important power) and the current have-nots in various categories (who will also have important power).

If I am right, David Welsh's fears about appropriate checks and balances may prove unfounded.

COLIN GARDNER 24 Yalta Road PMBurg

The price of liberty . . .

I CAN'T say it was a pleasure reading of the 'disarray in the DP', but at least your editorial was a fairer reflection of the party's state than others I've had the misfortune of reading.

Some liberal-democrats seem to suffer from the same identity crisis, Nelson Mandela thought he saw in 1953, on the formation of the Liberal Party. Mandela stated: "Liberals are searching for the middle ground where none exists. They condemn and criticize the government for its reactionary policies, but they are afraid to identify themselves with the people . . . the struggle is between oppressors and the oppressed."

Mandela misunderstood the liberal position; as do most South Africans.

For the Liberal South African the major categories are not Left and Right, but Liberal and illiberal.

Leftwing illiberals sometimes believe in civil liberties, but never in economic ones (such as the ANC). Rightwing illiberals sometimes believe in economic liberties, but never in civil ones (such as the NP). For both the notion of political liberties, or tolerance, is foreign. The more extreme illiberal parties get, the more they resemble one another (such as the PAC and the CP).

The latest strategy declaration of the DP, says that there is 'a middle ground' and commits the party to contesting the first non-racial elections as an independent force. Such action, insightfully predicted in your editorial, is long overdue.

So many liberal newspaper editors think they're doing us a favour by urging the party, as *Reality* does, to 'stick together' at least until a liberal-democratic constitution has been accepted by CODESA. Edmund Burke could have told them that 'the price of liberty is *eternal* vigilance and not just until CODESA is over. Liberal-democrats must take heart. Helen Suzman has set a precedent; Alan Paton has given us a text to live by: "It is not necessary to succeed in order to undertake, and it is not necessary to hope in order to persevere."

Liberals must rise from their armchairs and keep up the good fight. Aluta Continua!

BENJAMIN HASWELL National Exec Member of DP Youth, Natal

Make your choice

I AM AMAZED at Alan Sterne's reaction to Ann Colvin's letter. What baffles me, however, is the steadfast insistence on the attitudes of the past. All Ann was pointing out — and this is a fact of life — is that the ANC since 1912 has been advocating non-racial, non-sexist and democratic principles.

This is not true of other organisations. The ANC has always been the people's organisation and will be more so in the future.

The ANC's comradeship with the SACP is hardly an issue as it was brought about by circumstances. Just recently we witnessed the Nationalist Party forming an alliance in order to defeat the forces of evil. Even though we all hailed this for peace's sake, it is important to remember that all the problems we have to deal with are a direct result of the N.P.'s stubborn rule. The ANC/SACP alliance was necessitated by the fact that they had to resolve the armed struggle.

Alan has quoted a number of examples — DP students prevented from writing their matric, etc. etc. What he does not tell us is why this happened and why he came to conclude without any doubt that the perpetrators were ANC members.

In all fairness we must agree with Ann Colvin, that if these white liberals were really liberal, their liberalism must be translated into action by joining or supporting the ANC. The alternative is for us to conclude that they were merely trying to be better devils during the times when blacks were experiencing the worst oppression ever by human beings in a so-called democratic society.

Come on, Alan. The D.P. will not be there for long. You will have to choose between the N.P. and the ANC.

CHRIS MHLONGO Umlazi

PROFESSOR TOM LODGE, of Witwatersrand University, is an authority of the ANC. Here he considers the implications of the departure from public life for the country and for the African Nationalist Congress of the organisation's high-profile leader.

South Africa after Mandela

IT IS not too optimistic to believe that today we are about nine months away from elections in the old South Africa. If this was a real democracy like they have overseas the prospect of a presidential candidate in his mid-seventies would have made doctors the most important figures in the campaign trails. Here, though, the health and fitness of the contending personalities will probably take a poor second to the principles and programmes of the competing parties; it will be some time in South Africa before we reach that mature stage of political atrophy in which one needs pictures to tell the politicians apart.

All the same, it is not unreasonable to speculate about a South African politics after Nelson Mandela. Good presidents sometimes last into their eighties — but the better ones know when to retire gracefully.

The ANC President works a schedule which would tax a much younger man but sooner or later his powers will be insufficient. South Africa has a tradition of strong authoritative executive leadership; the ANC wants to preserve that tradition and the public office Mr Mandela will accede to will be no sinecure.

It is likely, therefore, that within a short time after South Africa adopts its constitution it will confront the issue of succession.

WILL THE business of finding new leadership represent a crisis?

If the same question had been asked two or three years ago the answer would certainly have been yes. In exile, the ANC's executive was composed of a kernel of men and women whose experience dated back from before its banning and a larger group most of whom were very young men (and more occasionally women) when they left South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s.

By 1990 these younger people were hardly nonentities but none of them had the moral and political authority to take over the helm. When Oliver Tambo suffered a stroke it was several months before the ANC could bring itself to admit he was seriously ill; in the interval some of his duties were assumed by Alfred Nzo, a caretaker figure virtually unknown outside the organisation.

With Nelson Mandela so obviously waiting in the wings this hardly mattered, but had he not been, things might have been different.

When the ANC was in exile journalists often speculated about rival claimants to leadership; Thabo Mbeki and Chris Hani were the most frequently named likely successors to Oliver Tambo. Both were popular among the ANC's youthful following in the training camps; Thabo Mbeki was respected in diplomatic circles and Chris Hani had near idol status among street activists in South Africa.

Hani's appointment, though, would have evoked strongly partisan emotions within the broader context of South African politics — to white South Africans, after all he represented one of the most uncompromising advocates of urban terrorism and his Communist Party affiliations would have hardly enhanced his ability to appear as a conciliator.

Thabo Mbeki belongs to a famous family and his affable urbanity as well as his distance from the military command might have won the ANC converts in the more middle class suburbs but his strengths are not those which win over crowds.

IN ANY case, during the 1980s a much vaster movement than the ANC had assembled in South Africa, constructing itself, it is true, within the ideological tradition represented by the ANC, but with its own leadership, with its own loyalties and certainly including personalities with enough popular magnetism and public legitimacy to rival that of the exiles. Nor was the succession problem in 1989-1990 merely a question of too many able candidates. The exile ANC had at best a very restricted form of internal democracy; the elections of its office holders at its "consultative" conferences of 1969 and 1985 were tightly controlled and essentially the same people had occupied the senior positions for nearly three decades.

If dissident reports are to be believed the exile organisation was characterised by a high degree of personal factionalism, with webs of patronage around powerful individuals cross-cutting generational and philosophical distinctions.

None of this was very surprising; tight secrecy, harsh discipline, and personal loyalty were indispensable qualities in helping the ANC survive an extremely hostile environment; it did so rather better than most movements confronted with comparable circumstances and it would have probably foundered if it had been organised in a less authoritarian manner. But qualities like this would have made choosing new leaders difficult.

COMPLICATING MATTERS further were the intellectual effects of the ANC's existence in the diaspora. At the time the ANC was banned it could truly claim to be a broad church of

in this issue

*Cover picture by Clint Zasman

African nationalism; embracing a variety of political persuasions within its simple appeal to popular perceptions of social justice. Even its attempts to develop a more pragmatic dimension with the adoption of the Freedom Charter didn't really make its attraction significantly more specific; oddly enough the Charter was much more discussed and debated in the 1980s than it was in the 1950s.

In exile, though, this "broad church" dimension of the ANC was weakened, at least as far as outward appearances were concerned. Aid from Eastern Europe and the prominence of Communists in important positions, especially the military, as well as the adoption of a revolutionary strategy helped to colour its ideological orientation.

Today, insiders from the Lusaka days suggest that nobody in the upper echelons other than those who wrote for it bothered to read Sechaba, but such disclaimers are difficult to take seriously; to judge from what we know about the educational and political training administered to rank and file, the ANC had a strong intellectual life and it was one in which, for many, the certainties of marxist-leninism had a strong resonance.

When the cadres looked elsewhere for sources of inspiration and encouragement they found them, until the mid 1980s at least, in the people's democracies specifically and international socialism more generally for these constituted the living proof that history was on their side.

Arguably, the ANC after twenty years in exile was a much more heavily ideological movement than it was in 1960, yet with the sudden prospect of needing to win new supporters at home and abroad it still needed the type of leadership who could transcend sectional politics. Oliver Tambo represented that sort of leader; the cohort personified by Thabo Mbeki or Chris Hani was not.

WITH THE resumption of its role as a legal mass movement in South Africa, the ANC required a leader who could bridge the generations of change between the present and the democratic experience which was disrupted in 1960. Nelson Mandela could do this. On the one hand he embodied the social prominence and respectability which had traditionally characterised the old elite of patrician lawyers and doctors who had presided over Congress before the onset of insurgent politics. On the other he symbolised the heroism of armed struggle and prison martyrdom. In manner circumspect and stately he had acquired through his bravery and silence the status of a secular icon. Old enough to command the loyalties of mature generations the myths, stories, and images around his name celebrated a young man, the man pictured in the newsphotos of the early 1960s.

The country's politics at the moment is about ideas as much as people and existing loyalties are likely to survive the departure of even a great man.

Nelson Mandela's contribution to the ANC re-establishing itself as a vital and unified political organisation inside South Africa may well in retrospect be judged his most important achievement.

What about the future, though? Does the ANC need a leader like Mandela as much today as it did in 1990?

Two-and-a-half years have created an organisation which is in many respects stronger even if it faces greater challenges than it did when in exile.

Paradoxically, when the ANC was structurally weak, as it was in the 1980s, it did not have to battle for support in the way it has to contend for it today.

Internationally, in the Third World, but also in Western democracies, its moral standing was hardly ever contested and its diplomatic influence was greater than the governments of many medium sized states, including, of course, South Africa's.

Domestically, it had no effective rivals among those constituencies it sought to influence.

Neither assertion would be as true today. Yet today the ANC has an organised presence inside South Africa of an unprecedented scale and sophistication.

Of course, its existence as a structured bureaucracy shouldn't be overstated, its internal communications remain weakly articulated and many of the branches which were set up in the first phase of organisation building do not function regularly: in the last year its base structures in the Transvaal have been severely disrupted by violence.

IT WOULD be misleading to picture the ANC as a smoothly working political machine.

It possesses, though, sufficient bureaucratic regularity to make charismatic leadership less important than it was in 1990. Then the ANC was a social movement but now it is more recognisably a political party. While its democratic decision-making procedures fall well short of perfection, its decision making processes are complex and contested.

Not all lines of authority flow from the top. Last year's conference witnessed a successful effort by regions and branches to amend the internal ANC constitution proposed by headquarters, the executive and office bearer elections provided similar evidence of grass-roots assertiveness, and current events, alarming as they may be, demonstrate the effectiveness of the ANC's allies in influencing strategic decisions. And though it is possible to trace out lines of ideological difference within the ANC leadership these need not be inherently divisive.

As the ANC has moved closer to power, non-partisan technocrats have become increasingly prominent and the policy-designing efforts of the last couple of years seem to have produced a workable set of compromises between ideologues and pragmatists. Nelson Mandela's low-key personal style as ANC president has left plenty of room for other talented men and women to acquire popularity and respect. The ANC's leadership is collegial without being faceless.

MANDELA HAS a dignity and stature which would make him an effective post-apartheid president; his integrity, courage and compassion would all be crucial ingredients in a politics in which racial conciliation will have to be balanced by social reform. But it is a measure of his greatness that he has not allowed the cult developed during his incarceration to perpetuate itself.

South African politics at the moment does not offer many sources of comfort but it has this. It is about ideas as much as people, and existing loyalties are likely to survive the departure of even a great man. ●

CONSENSUS ON THE ECONOMY; REALITY, ILLUSION OR SHAM?

Dr NICOLI NATTRASS, of the Department of Economics at the University of Capetown, argues that economic restructuring will be limited, if democratic consensus is to be the guiding process.

THERE SEEMS to be a lot of consensus about the economy around these days. The participants in the new macroeconomic bargaining forum have agreed that 'restructuring' the economy needs to be negotiated jointly. The ANC has openly accepted the need for 'financial discipline' and its latest economic policy resolution stresses that policies must 'be guided by the balance of evidence' rather than 'any rigid ideological framework'.

Even the usually evangelistic free-market rhetoric of the business community is being modified. The Nedcor-Old Mutual scenario plan, for example, sees selective government intervention (such as occurred in South Korea), the creation of a Job Corps and the implementation of prescribed assets as 'urgent and necessary'.

If the business community accepts the arguments put forward by the scenario plan, then constructive co-operation between the various economically and politically powerful groups is more likely. With socialists moving away from central planning towards more market-oriented mixed economies, and important business lobby groups talking enthusiastically about the South Korean state, then clearly some common ground is evident. Hard-line Stalinists and Thatcherites have been relegated to the lunatic fringes. The ANC has agreed not to kill the golden egg-laying goose so long as the state and business agree to get the barren fowl laying, and laying fast.

ON SPECIFIC policy levels too, it is possible to point to common ground. In both Nedcor-Old Mutual's 'changing gears scenario' and the ANC's economic policy proposals, housing provision is seen as a socially desirable and economically feasible 'kick start' to the economy. Both accept the need for industrial 'restructuring', fiscal and monetary discipline, and the promotion of exports.

However, it would be a mistake to believe that some form of social democratic consensus is on the cards. In crucial respects, agreement is superficial only, with both sides attaching very different meanings to commonly held policies. Take, for example, the frequent favourable citing by both the ANC and the Nedcor-Old Mutual scenario plan, of the South Korean success story.

South Korea provides the ANC with an example of successful state intervention and shows that planning can be both efficient and necessary for economic success. For the ANC, support for the South Korean model provides a convenient way out of having to adopt a market position in the face of the collapse of central planning in Eastern Europe. For business, South Korea offers an example of a supportive and facilitating state which helps the private sector succeed in rapidly shifting cut-throat international markets. Both sides see what they want to see.

WHAT THE ANC fails to mention about South Korea is that the short-term interests of the consumer and the labour movement were sacrificed, and had to be sacrificed, in the interests of winning export markets. In this respect, the absence of democracy in South Korea was rather helpful. I once heard an influential ANC speaker proposing that the South Korean model should be followed in every way — except of course when it comes to repressing labour. That you could not have a South Korean model without repressing labour, seemed to escape him.

What business fails to see about South Korea, is that the state nationalized the financial sector and used its control over credit to force the industrial conglomerates into areas of production targeted by the State. Sure the state was facilitating, but it was also coercive. Business should prick up its ears when the ANC talks admiringly about 'disciplining capital' a la South Korean style. Restructuring industry towards a more export-orientation will inevitably result in some severe conflicts of interest between industrialists and gung-ho state-planners picking what they see as 'industrial winners'.

There is still an unbridgeable gap between those who ultimately have faith in the market to allocate resources efficiently, and those who believe the state is ultimately in a better position to do so. People in favour of the state will talk admiringly about South Korea forcing a very reluctant group of industrialists into the ship-building industry — a move which resulted in South Korea becoming world market leader in less than ten years. Sceptics who stress the limits of state judgment will point to the recent loss of South Korean market share to Malaysia and other South-East Asian economies. The state can help pick industrial winners, but you need luck, as well as resources, capability and good judgment, to do so.

OTHER PROBLEM areas when it comes to interpretation include talk about 'financial discipline' and 'restructuring'. In early and more recent versions of ANC economic policy, 'fiscal and monetary discipline' and 'macro-economic balance' is seen as vital to the health of the economy. These statements can be taken at their face value. No-one wishes galloping inflation and balance of payments crises on South Africa. However, the ANC also calls for a 'massive injection of finance' in the interests of Basic Needs provision. There is little explicit appreciation of the fact that in the interests of macro-economic balance, the 'massive' injection of finance must certainly not be as massive as popularly demanded. Thus when it comes to designing packages of policies, political interests will probably result in groupings like the ANC tolerating a much higher inflation rate than other constituencies with which they are seemingly in agreement at present.

The debate is at its most obtuse when it comes to the need for restructuring. Like motherhood and apple-pie, everybody is in favour of it.

Yet listening to the debate, one gets the impression that very few individuals

'There is tension between the ideal of democracy and the interests of rapid restructuring. This is a nasty fact to which very few will admit.'

understand the disadvantages that such a process will entail for their own constituencies. 'Restructuring' means diverting resources from some (predominantly import-substituting) industries and sectors to other (predominantly export-oriented) industries and sectors. It means altering the production process, the labour process and the allocation of economic surpluses between wages, distributed profits and investment. The up-side of this is better growth and the reduction of unemployment in the longer-term. The down-side is the unemployment and disruption that would inevitably follow in the short-term if 'radical restructuring' is implemented.

TAKE THE automobile industry for example. It is conventional wisdom that owing to the high level of protection, the automobile industry has too many producers for the limited size of the market. This means that production runs are too short to allow for adequate advantages of scale.

In the interests of economic efficiency, it would make sense to scrap protection and allow the cold winds of international competition to force the industry to consolidate around fewer producers. Do you think that the trade unions or industrialists in the industry are going to take that idea lying down? Of course not. When 'restructuring' is looked at more practically, it becomes clear that specific interest groups — who seemingly support the general idea now — will later become vocal and obstructive in their opposition to it.

This problem is going to make its presence felt in the recently initiated macroeconomic bargaining forum. After its first meeting in January, representatives of both labour and capital talked positively about the 'common ground' they had found on the issue of restructuring. Given that both unions and management have an interest in maintaining industrial protection (to protect profits and jobs in the short-term), the nature of that restructuring is bound to be limited. Even though economic growth (and hence the interests of those currently without jobs) would be promoted in the longer term by radical restructuring, powerful interest groups such as organized labour and employers will object to it.

Interestingly, Bruce Scott (one of the Nedcor-Old Mutual scenario planners) observes in his contribution that restructuring is best done *before,* the transition to democracy takes place. He argues that under democracies, those with vested interests are able to influence policy and hence would limit the inevitably painful process of restructuring. Given that no transition from inward-oriented to export-driven growth has taken place under democratic regimes, this analysis must be taken seriously. It is thus disturbing that both the ANC and the Nedcor-Old Mutual scenario planners seem to believe that radical economic restructuring in South Africa must and can be done democratically through consensus.

THIS, UNFORTUNATELY, is a sham. Given that those who will benefit from restructuring are currently in the minority, while those workers and capitalists who will lose are highly organized constituencies, it is safe to conclude that restructuring will be limited if democratic consensus is to be the guiding process. One doesn't have to be a political-economist to recognize that there is tension between the ideal of democracy and the interests of rapid restructuring. This is a nasty fact of life, and these days when no-one wants to appear anti-democratic in any way, very few will admit to it.

This is most unfortunate as it leads to bad political strategy. The demand from the left that no restructuring of the economy must take place before the transition to an interim government is, in my opinion, seriously misguided. It is in the long-run political interests of the ANC to have De Klerk start the painful restructuring now — and let the National Party deal with the resulting flack! In a few years time, when the economy is on a better footing and a democratic government is installed, the ANC will be able to reap the rewards. ●

GREAT SO FAR! BUT NOT YET GREAT ENOUGH

THE BOIPATONG tragedy and its aftermath are yet another sad example of the South African political malaise. We urgently need a political arrangement to give us a credible government representative of the entire population — a black-white coalition of national unity that has both Mr Mandela and Mr De Klerk in the leadership.

This is only possible if these two main players on the political scene commit themselves jointly to the basic rules of parliamentary democracy to which they have pledged themselves separately. They should make a personal, unprecedented and visible statesmanlike gesture before it is too late.

by
HANS MIDDELMANN
past president of ASSOCOM and honorary LLD of the University of Capetown.

It has been said that an economic upswing is a prerequisite for a political solution. The steadily declining path of our economy suggests the opposite. No lowering of interest rates, no "kick-start" or any other gimmick, is likely to make our economy take off while uncertainty about the succession to the present minority government persists. The longer this uncertainty lasts and the greater it becomes, the greater the danger of the economy suddenly sliding further. Another set-back could have tragic consequences when set against the background of the falling gold price, persistent inflation and the drought.

The State President and Mr Mandela still travel the world separately, which forces them to highlight their differences. They would both be far more convincing about South Africa's future — to their

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respective hosts and to the South African public — if they were seen working together, despite disagreements on many issues.

These disagreements and the widely differing policy views of all the other major parties in South Africa will, of course, never go away altogether, as shown by even the best democratic countries. But pragmatic compromises can be reached only once there is a clear determination to work together on an equal basis and within a framework that makes co-operation possible.

In the words of Mr De Klerk's landmark speech in February 1990, we must have "a dispensation in which every inhabitant will enjoy equal rights, treatment and opportunity in every sphere of endeavour — constitutional, social and economic". He added that the country's future was "linked inextricably to the ability of its leaders to come to terms with one another".

Codesa I and II nearly arrived at this result but too many cooks (and perhaps too many advisers) have spoilt the broth. At the very moment when — in line with world developments — there was near agreement on how to level the playing field and on the rules of play, we are sliding back alarmingly towards ideological confrontation.

other state services. There is no other source. But such people put their skills, savings and borrowings at risk only if there is a reasonable expectation that the state and government are likely to remain stable and if the law applies equally to all citizens.

Wealth is not created by "the state". Eastern Europe and most of Africa have demonstrated this for all to see. The saying "We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us" expressed the true nature of the failed socialist/communist experiments of the "workers' republics".

The ANC's latest statement suggests this insight has been understood. The people in our deplorable townships know that governments cannot deliver. They all know that the creation of their very townships is the result of a costly, failed experiment. They also know that, when conditions are right, an individual *can* walk out of poverty by effort and enterprise.

South Africa's greatest enemy is poverty. To reduce or possibly eliminate it must be our principal aim. It cannot be done by government edict, whatever government is in power. It can only be done by work and wealth creation. Those who are anxious, willing and able to get the economy going — and that includes the workers and the unemployed — have little say in the matter. They depend entirely on the politicians to create the conditions of confidence and stability without which progress is impossible.

Any majority government would be equally unrepresentative if it were constituted to exercise unrestricted rule. Yet this concept of unrestricted rule heads the agenda of many leaders of the voteless.

To have abolished practically all apartheid legislation is a truly remarkable achievement by a government and party which put the policies on the statute book. But to remove something that obviously had broken down is only part of the answer to our problems. As long as the government does not include people legitimately elected by the yet-voteless blacks it will remain unrepresentative. On the other hand, any future majority government would be equally unrepresentative if it were constituted to exercise unrestricted rule. Yet this concept of unrestricted rule heads the agenda of many leaders of the voteless.

Entrepreneurs, investors call them what you will — the people of enterprise and innovation who alone create employment and real wealth — will not start or expand activities in times and areas of uncertainty. The wealth they manage to create is the only source of taxation which pays for education, health and

South Africa has everything going for it. In the last two years almost unbelievable progress has been made in bringing people of all colours together in common endeavours to mutual benefit. It happens in sport, in small business and in large corporations, in health care, education and all other fields. And it is a success. The country is poised to give added momentum to these efforts.

The outside world is ready to assist. Yet all this progress can be lost if the near agreement at Codesa is not taken to a successful conclusion.

Two great South Africans — F.W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela — have shown exceptional statesmanship in taking their constituencies to the present position. Will they be great enough to take what was begun two years ago to the point where the new South Africa becomes a reality? ●

In Search of 'Acceptable' Democracy:

DAVID WELSH has recently written two articles concerned with the problem of "majoritarian democracy", with particular reference to its inadequacy in deeply divided societies. His conclusion in both (one published in *Reality*, May/June 1992) is the same — Mandela's wish for "an ordinary democracy" in South Africa cannot be achieved, and he advocates we avoid the "tyranny of the majority" by adopting a system of "institutionalised coalition government".

He states that "the more common basis of democracy in deeply divided societies has been the broad based coalition found in the classic European consociations — Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland and Luxembourg," — and further that "however states like Lebanon, Sudan or Nigeria attempt to restructure democracy, one thing can be confidently predicted: majoritarian systems that exclude significant political players from a share of power in the national government have no chance of succeeding". In his *Reality* article: "We ignore the possibility of the crystallised majority/minority syndrome at our peril. How we achieve constitutionalised coalition may not be a function of the constitution; perhaps it will be more fruitful to think in terms of pacts solemnly agreed to by the major players."

Running through his arguments are two threads: First, that the majoritarian principle may be adequately translated as winner-takes-all, and, second, that ethnic divisions lead to largely ethnically-based party-political divisions. These minimise the floating vote, and can result in permanent exclusion from government of minority groups.

The first thread gradually transforms itself into a near synonymity between "winner-takes-all" and "the majority may ride rough-shod over minorities". "Winner-takes-all" becomes defined as "non-democratic".

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DENEYS SCHREINER, former vice-principal of the University of Natal, challenges the view of David Welsh, professor of political studies at the University of Capetown, that the vision of a non-racial democracy based upon 'simple majoritarianism' is not only seriously flawed but is incapable of realisation. Schreiner contends that majoritarianism is fundamental to democracy: no viable alternative can exclude it.

ONLY ONE WAY

The second thread again leads to his conclusion that majoritarian government may be defined as "non-democratic", and leads him to advocating the legitimacy of a pact or pacts which depart from democracy — this is done by post-election collusion in an "institutionalised coalition" at government level. This is introduced to overcome the assumed, and quite possibly actual, inability of the minority to become a majority.

Three examples, Northern Ireland, Israel and Ceylon, are used to provide evidence of the permanence of powerless minorities (33%, 18%, and 12% respectively) and the tyranny of their majorities, despite each country having, in large measure, many of the trappings of democracy. Again I quote: "As Sammy Smooha notes, Israel (excluding the occupied territories) qualifies as a political democracy on many counts: there is universal suffrage (including for Arabs) a multi-party system, fair elections, reasonably regular changes of government, civil rights, an independent judiciary, and a free press. *While Arabs enjoy the vote, they are nevertheless second-class citizens* who are in practice subject to various forms of discrimination. Arab or preponderantly Arab parties have never participated in a (coalition) government . . . Israeli democracy (is presented) with the severe problem of the "tyranny of the majority"."

But the origin of this tyranny, and all similar ones, needs to be examined. It arises because the Israeli majorities have ignored a fundamental requirement for the proper existence of democracy. This is that democracy demands from each of its citizens, and, therefore, from any aggregation of those citizens, the recognition that every person, every citizen, who belongs to that nation, that country, has exactly the same rights and privileges. *There can be no 'second class citizens' and the majority, in a democracy, however great it may be, is not released from its obligations to those citizens who belong to its minorities.*

If one takes the "social contract" view of democracy one cannot limit the state/individual contract as applying only to the majority group. Northern Ireland and Ceylon are just as guilty of ignoring this fundamental democratic principle.

WE CANNOT ignore the evidence from Horowitz and others that Welsh sets out. When he says of "non-racial democracy" that "if it refers to an attitudinal predisposition that animates ordinary individuals on a large scale and penetrates the warp and the woof of political and social life, it will be a long time in the making", one cannot easily disagree with him. Nor can one quarrel with his recognition that the "tender plant of real democracy" will need the opportunity to grow rather than to wither under "majority tyranny" with the possibility of even deepening divisions, whether based on ethnicity, class, or religion. There is no question that the democratising of South Africa involves the wish that the new rules within which we are to be governed will not be perfect. They are unlikely to be as imperfect as those by which we have lived in the past. But if there is to be a time in which South African democracy is to be allowed an opportunity to grow, it must be under a system of rules which themselves nurture, or at least do not damage, the concept itself, and therefore its potential to grow.

Those liberals who are convinced that South Africa is so deeply divided that majoritarian democracy would lead to a disaster, are entitled to advocate "consociational government", "enforced coalition government", "institutionalised coalition", or a "government of National Unity". But, if they do, they must realise two things: They are abandoning a fundamental principle of democracy for another system, and that this new system, while it is in place, does not lead automatically to a strengthening of democracy. It does not lead to a smooth transition to democracy at some later stage. The nature of parliament must necessarily change: for political parties that are embedded in government cannot preserve the same cutting edge of criticism as the official opposition.

Crawford Young, as quoted by Welsh, says of India "at the summit is a national political elite who are committed to reconciling differences through bargaining amongst themselves."

Welsh himself refers to the Congress Party as having "itself been a broad-based coalition providing a roof for many of India's disparate minorities", but he rightly excludes it from his own concept of "broad-based (institutionalised) coalition", which enables "any and every minority to plug into power and exert leverage that is roughly proportional to its size". Both systems, the formal separate-party coalition and the over-arching dominant single party coalition lead to just what Crawford Young has described: a system which distances the electorate from ultimate decision making, and which enables an elite to exert its final power by reformulating and amending the expressed will of the majority. The longer such a system lasts the more complete is the divorce of the electorate from an understanding of decision making, and the more are the voters denied their rightful knowledge of how and why the compromise bargains have been struck.

BEFORE THE decision that a consociational or coalition compromise must be chosen, it is necessary to be certain that there are not alternative democratic constitutional provisions which can be used to curb outrageous majority tyranny, and leave the principle of majoritarian government in place.

A written constitution contains the social contract between the state, on the

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From Page Nine

one hand, and its citizens and their aggregates, on the other. Governments and citizens are equally bound by its explicit provisions and by the rules that allow for its variation. But such a constitution can only warrant the appellation "undemocratic" if it is recognised that it implies also a contract between individuals, and therefore also between aggregates of individuals, whether they are majority or minority aggregates. This is the contract which outlaws the establishment of "second-class citizens".

In societies where an alternative majority government is unlikely, and, particularly, where the population divisions are acute and harsh, the protective balance contained in a constitution must be swung toward the individuals and their voluntary aggregations. The deeper the divisions, the more specific must the constitution be in limiting the powers that could be used by a majority government to introduce inequality of treatment.

The restriction of majority power can be achieved by a number of different constitutional techniques, federal groupings with devolved power, bills of rights, etc. Their suitability will depend on many factors, the most important of which is the level of trust that exists between the competitive groups when the agreed constitution is reached.

In South Africa this is likely to be very low because of past behaviour patterns, of ethnic differences, of long standing and current levels of violence, of major differences about suitable economic policies and because of the separation of the press into two groups whose readership, in large part, coincides with ethnic and economic differences.

But perhaps most immediately important is the major problem that, while the National Party adheres to the belief that "power sharing by enforced coalition" and "democracy" can comfortably coexist, the ANC insists that "democracy" demands "power transfer" to the majority, and accepts that "very generous provisions for language and cultural rights" coupled with "a justiciable bill of rights" and a "proportional representation electoral system" will ensure that minorities will be adequately represented. Therefore, fears of "the tyranny of the majority" are unfounded. Included in the ANC package is an Upper House with regional representation, but not, as in the Nationalist proposal, with inflated representation of minority parties.

Welsh dismisses the National Party proposals very briefly: "It won't fly." But his final judgment is that we need to achieve "constitutionalised coalition government", if not by constitutional methods, then by "pacts solemnly agreed to by major players". Although this appears to be an attempted compromise, it only adds to the potential confusion. For the "pacts" to be effective, they could only be so for as long as the "major players" remained just that.

Would a new major political party, formed of dissident members of the original major players and some others, be bound by such "pacts"?

If the "pacts" can be adequately formulated, why could they not form a part of a constitution, and derive from that fact greater force?

Despite his statement that "the vision of a non-racial democracy, based upon "simple majoritarianism" is not only seriously flawed *but incapable of realisation"* Welsh seems to be seeking an interim period in which a general and genuinely democratic climate can be created, because he asks the question "is this not another reason for supporting the view that a *power-sharing coalition is likely to be the most hopeful instrument for ushering in a democratic South Africa?"*

But does his "institutionalised coalition" differ in principle from the National Party proposals? I would suggest not, and that it, too, will not fly.

THE MOST constructive way of "ushering in a democratic South Africa" should not start by abandoning the principle of majoritarianism and by placing real power in the hands of a composite elite.

The limitation of majority tyranny should be controlled constitutionally so that if there is government error, it can be seen to be caused by one party and blame can be appropriately apportioned.

It is true, if Horowitz's conclusion about the close coincidence of ethnic political parties and ethnic origins is valid, that this kind of government will not produce the obligatory inter-ethnic daily working co-operation that coalition demands. To this extent the growth of inter-ethnic individual respect and trust could be slower. But the consociational principle can itself be used practically to encourage or ensure inter-ethnic contact.

A SIMPLE example will suffice: An "independent judiciary" is an agreed essential by all concerned with our new constitution. The power of appointment is quite rightly vested in the government of the day, and "independence" of the judges is ensured by life appointments and by conventional behaviour that excludes them from party political involvement and pressure.

But the South African tradition has in the past included in the power of appointment the power of selection. This is not necessary, and in deeply divided societies selection itself may tarnish the image of the chosen person in the eyes of many, and, therefore, potentially discredit the system of justice itself.

This could be avoided if, constitutionally the power of selection of judges was made by consensus in a consociational committee. The introduction of a wide measure of consociational selection, not only of judges, but also of senior civil servants, members of government commissions of inquiry, and of administrative boards of various kinds, could do much to formalise and promote the influence of minorities, and to control, in part, majority tyranny. This is itself a departure from "simple democracy", but it does not insert the "consensus concept" into the major structures of government, and leaves the lines of democratic disagreement open to public knowledge.

THIS TYPE of use of consensus methods on the fringes of government has an obvious and immediate appeal because it means that representatives on opposite sides of deep divisions must meet, talk, and agree to compromise. This could be a useful process, blurring inter-ethnic differences and leading toward a tolerance which could further democracy. But, if ethnically based political minorities derive their major power from being admitted to coalition structures, they will be driven more strongly to maintain their separate ethnic bases.

Welsh asks for a constructive debate which seeks to find a viable alternative to simple majoritarianism. But he states that "Black and White are not monolithic categories . . . blacks are politically as divided as whites."

I hope that it is a constructive contribution to say that the most hopeful path to follow is to accept that majoritarianism is fundamental to democracy; that no viable alternative can exclude it; and that a power-sharing coalition is highly unlikely to further the cause of democracy. A firm constitution based on majoritarianism but setting out the responsibilities of the majority in relation to minorities and individuals is the most acceptable starting point. ●

In another challenge to David Welsh, COSMOS DESMOND asks: Why jettison democracy because of divisions deliberately introduced and sustained by apartheid? Desmond is an ex-priest who was banned for four-and-a-half years. He worked in Britain as British director of Amnesty International and is author of *The Discarded People* and *Persecution East and West.*

Bid to protect privilege

DAVID WELSH does indeed, as he suggests himself, counter his own argument when he points out that blacks are as politically divided as whites and that it is not known how Indians and 'coloureds' will vote.

In that case, who constitutes the minority about whose rights he is concerned? They are not an ethnically or culturally homogeneous group; they are people who differ politically from the ruling group elected by the equally heterogeneous majority. They are 'The Opposition' in an 'ordinary democracy'. There is no reason for anybody to 'ride roughshod' over them. And they are quite able to become the majority if they can persuade enough people that they can represent their interests better than the existing majority; though they would then, of course, not be a minority.

In Britain, the Labour Party, the Liberals, the Social Democrats, the Greens, the Monster Raving Loony Party and numerous other minority groups have not been able to do this for the past thirteen years. Should they too give up the pursuit of democracy?

Britain is just as divided a society as South Africa. London schools, for example, have children with well over a hundred different home languages. But the basic divide, not as pronounced as in South Africa, is between the haves and the have-nots. People vote according to their perceived economic interests, not according to their language or ethnicity. On the other hand, the inter-black solidarity and their alliance with the white working class in the 1970s was fragmented by both Tory and Labour governments' emphasis on ethnicity. They may have learnt the lesson from the Nationalists; or perhaps it was a British colonialist idea in the first place.

I HAVE no doubts at all about David Welsh's commitment to anti-racism, but I do think that he is implicitly assuming the validity of apartheid's definitions of people and of groups. A person's culture and ethnicity (I do not believe that the concept 'race' has any validity) are very important but it is apartheid which *defines* people in those terms.

Why jettison democracy because of the divisions deliberately introduced and sustained by apartheid? Steve Biko, for example, categorically rejected the concept of 'so-called guarantees for minority rights', precisely because of the echoes of apartheid inherent in it: 'guaranteeing minority rights implies the recognition of portions of the community on a race basis. We believe that in our country there shall be no minority, there shall be no majority, just the people.

But perhaps that is too liberal even for Liberals.

Concern for minority rights serves only to perpetuate the divisions which presently exist in South African society. It thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that democracy will not work. It is apartheid which has created the abnormal society in which David Welsh claims 'ordinary democracy' cannot work. The obvious solution is to get rid of apartheid and thus create a normal society; then we can have an 'ordinary democracy'.

Getting rid of apartheid means righting the economic inequalities and compensating for the past inequities and iniquities. That is a prerequisite for, not a consequence of, democracy. And it is something that should be being done *now.* But it isn't. Concern for the future seems to make people forget the past and neglect the present. Any effort made now to redress the balance would improve the chances of a future 'ordinary democracy'.

IT IS apartheid's apologists who would have us believe that 'race' and ethnicity are in themselves causes of division and conflict. Apartheid made them so. But as Rick Turner, to whom nobody (apart perhaps from those who killed him) really listened, said many years ago, 'the major cause of conflict is the unequal distribution of wealth. Neither cultural nor racial differences are in themselves inherently causes of social conflict . . . if the wealth gap is done away with, there will no longer be any inherent reason for conflict. Cultural or racial groups can and do co-exist when they are not also divided by different economic interests.' (*The Eye of the Needle,* p.70) And elsewhere: 'Conflict will not end until the grievances and the privileges end. But once these have ended, there is no basis in race difference for further conflict. That is, there is no reason why whites should expect to be discriminated against in a democratic South Africa because of their whiteness'. Neither do we have any right to expect special treatment.

Creating an egalitarian society will not automatically bring about 'non-racialism as an attitudinal predisposition'. But politics are not about attitudes; they are about actions. As Sivanandan has written, 'People's attitudes don't mean a damn to me, but it matters to me if I can't send my child to the school I want to . . . if I can't get the job I'm qualified for and so on. It is the acting out of racial prejudice and not racial prejudice itself that matters.' People can be as 'race-conscious' as they like but if they have no power to do anything about it that is not a cause of social conflict. Prejudice is, in any event, the product, rather than the cause, of a discriminatory society. That is as true of religious prejudice in Northern Ireland as it is of racial prejudice in South Africa.

WHITES HAVE reaped the benefits of 300 years of minority rule. Are we now to cry 'foul' at the prospect, albeit still distant, of majority rule? Of course whites will suffer, whatever the ethnic composition of the majority. But we will be losing privilege not rights. There is no way in which our past, and even current, life-style can, or should be, protected while millions are hungry and homeless and will continue to be even under majority rule. We cannot have our cake and eat it: be rid of what we have always known was a totally immoral system and yet not pay any price. The majority have already oversubscribed their contribution.

To argue for a 'power-sharing coalition' because the Nationalists 'will not acquiesce in a majoritarian system' is

Cont. on Page Nineteen ➡

MISERY IN HAPPY VALLEY

Dejection, anger and indifference

WENDY LEEB hoped that simply by being there to witness the forced removal of 40 families and the demolition of their shacks she and the others monitoring the event would prevent more violence. Here is her account of what she saw.

June 9, 1992

MY DAY began like any other day, no premonitions, no feeling that something different could happen. While I was in the bath the phone rang; dripping, shivering and cursing, I went to answer. The voice on the other end asked me to come quickly, the Happy Valley squatters were being forcibly removed. I went.

All of us know about forced removals, all of us know about "squatters", but what most of us don't know is how it really is when it happens.

I have seen people forced to flee their homes; I have dealt with refugees; I have seen people, in the heat of the moment, force other people out of their areas, but never before have I seen seemingly cold-blooded officials carry out their orders by destroying peoples' houses.

I had been out to this community on Saturday. There had been an intimation that the destruction of this settlement would take place. There were barricades on the road — erected NOT by the "squatters" but by the "legitimate" residents around them in order to stop the "squatters" removal.

One needs to know the circumstances. Forty families; refugees from the violence in another area; small children and dogs and puppies; settled in plastic, cardboard, and if they were very lucky, corrugated iron shacks; there for three years, no expansion, no problem; council land — a slope dotted with wattle and blue-gums that couldn't be used for anything else; allegedly no complaints from established residents; no theft; no trouble; in fact, the established residents supplied them with water.

So what was the problem? Nothing other than that the authorities decided they should move; that they were a public nuisance. How the city councillors of Pietermaritzburg came to the decision is a mystery. None of them lived near there, none of them came to see the carrying out of their decision, none of them seems to have cared. They also seem to have forgotten the real responsibility of government; if you sign the execution order you should be prepared to watch the execution.

HOWEVER, I digress. What is a forced removal like (and do remember that the group areas act has gone)? Before I try to tell you I must remind you that this is not an objective account. I can only write from the position of what I saw, what I felt and what others who shared the experience said they felt. It is strangely impossible to be objective about watching peoples homes and possibly, their lives, destroyed. One must remember that these are materially poor people, people who were forced to flee from established homes because of violence, people who just want to survive. They are people who work hard to get through a lifetime of setbacks and problems. They are people who want to have more but who cannot afford it and therefore try to make the best of what they've got. Unfortunately, today what they've got became what they had.

AT THIS point, it becomes difficult to describe what I saw, because I want to do it for you as accurately as I can, and I am, against my inclination, going to use racist terms. I drove to the place, accompanied by another monitor, both of us realising that there was nothing we could do other than to present a presence which would, hopefully, prevent violence from either side. We were basically witnesses. As I scrambled down the bank I heard the protestations. Of course, I was forewarned. There had been the riot-police and their vans on the side of the road, there was a Pietermaritzburg Corporation truck and various other corporation vehicles were parked nearby.

I saw black municipal policemen stripping the plastic off the wattle pole structures. Standing by were five riot-policepeople dressed in camouflage, and three white plain clothes people, one with a radio (walkie-talkie). Around them stood a group which consisted of women, very young children, a few youth and a few old men. In addition, on the road had been a pick-up truck (mello-yellow), and numerous other riot police-people.

There was an air of unreality. Both sides knew this shouldn't really be happening, and both sides knew who stood to lose — them and South Africa. But the script had been written and it had to be acted out. The "squatters", justifiably, were extremely angry. Every last shred of their privacy was being

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From Page Twelve

violated. The white officials could simply reiterate their excuses: "We are simply following orders — don't talk to us — talk to Pat Cornell and the city council." The riot-police were under orders not to talk at all — someone knows that if they talk they may begin to feel . . . and we need to think very carefully about that.

The beginning of the nightmare happened next. Black municipal police began systematically to demolish the shacks, most made of gum-pole uprights and plastic or cardboard walls. As they crashed down, one young boy aged about thirteen, very dirty, and obviously mentally retarded, fell onto a piece of IBR plastic, and crouching down, began to wail — "waiouu waiouu". For him, this was the end of existence. While this child was howling his desolation, and while the other "squatters" were expressing their frustration, the white officials and the riot-policemen laughed. Only the black municipal policemen showed any sign of empathy.

WHILE WE, and the officials, watched, the destruction continued. At one point, I asked a woman whether I might hold her baby, and she gave her to me. Here was this little thing, maybe five months old, dressed in a beautifully crocheted little white dress, and wearing a clean white nappy. One must remember that there is no running water in the area and then realise that this baby is as loved and cared for as any of yours or mine. This led me to really look at what was happening. This was not about politics, this was not about power, this was about people being totally insensitive, uncaring, oblivious about other peoples' feelings, needs and humanity. This was the Third Reich all over again. Just as ordinary people, acting under Hitler's orders, killed the Jews, so, too were these officials acting against their fellow people on other peoples' orders.

Who is to blame?

AS THE shacks began to be dismantled, the life of the people in the shacks began to be apparent. Every shack was somebody's home. The walls went down and I saw a piece of green Christmas tinsel hanging from the roof struts, brave and wonderful — but no, the strut was demolished. Another wall went down, and there was somebody's bed — made of thin wattle strips with a half inch mattress; someone had made their bed so they could lie in it — and now, they never would again. Next wall down (another house), revealed a coffee table, covered in a beautifully crocheted white cloth, with three carefully cultivated pot plants, each surrounded by tinsel.

With the destruction of each wall more and more was revealed. The perfectly packed nappy-bag with four napkins, two baby-grows, and two jerseys, all clean to start with, but all too soon to end up as rags in the rubble.

Women wept and cursed, much to the disgust of a police lieutenant who believed that the swear words being used should not either be uttered by or before women. What he simply couldn't know is that these women had gone beyond convention into the realm of desperation. Their homes and their lives were being destroyed; their children were at school for the first time; their men were at work; and the women were witnessing the destruction of the framework they had and have worked so hard to achieve.

One could go on and on forever. There are no limits to what we witnessed. But, one of the things that sticks in my mind is the fact that every one of those shacks was a *home*. Every single place belonged to someone, every wall that came down had something stuck to it. Each part was personal. There were paper roses, Johnny Walker magnum whisky bottles from a decade gone by, the interior spinner of a washing machine, rags and tatters. And each thing had a use and a meaning, everything was cherished and used, and all of that was dissipated and destroyed. Why?

I HAVE a theory, and as I told you before, I am not objective. It is because of power and ownership and standards and a whole lot of language that precludes us, whoever we are, from understanding, from caring and from identifying. And I end with an anecdote from today:

The person in charge was an "elderly" white man, complete with radio (walkie-talkie). He was under orders, and he took, I think, more strain than he would have had the Council appeared. Nonetheless he stood by his orders. And he "did his job". For hours he was harassed, importuned, insulted — and he simply stood by his orders. On the other hand there was another old man (a kehla, an old man of the people who simply watched). And then he said to the official: "You obviously don't know Jesus — you don't know what he wants people to do. You wouldn't do this if you knew". Very shortly after this interchange that particular official left.

I am not a Christian, but I believe that not a "sparrow falls" that is not recorded somewhere. What happened today is in my memory, in yours if you read this, in every person who was there, no matter on what side.

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June 10, 1992

WE WERE called out again today. When we got there we found not only the riot police, the municipality security forces and their police, but a professional and militant private security force called COIN. Immediately we went on to the site it seemed that the 30 to 40 black members of this force were not South African, and couldn't speak a South African language. The white members were totally uncommunicative. The uprights of the peoples' shacks,

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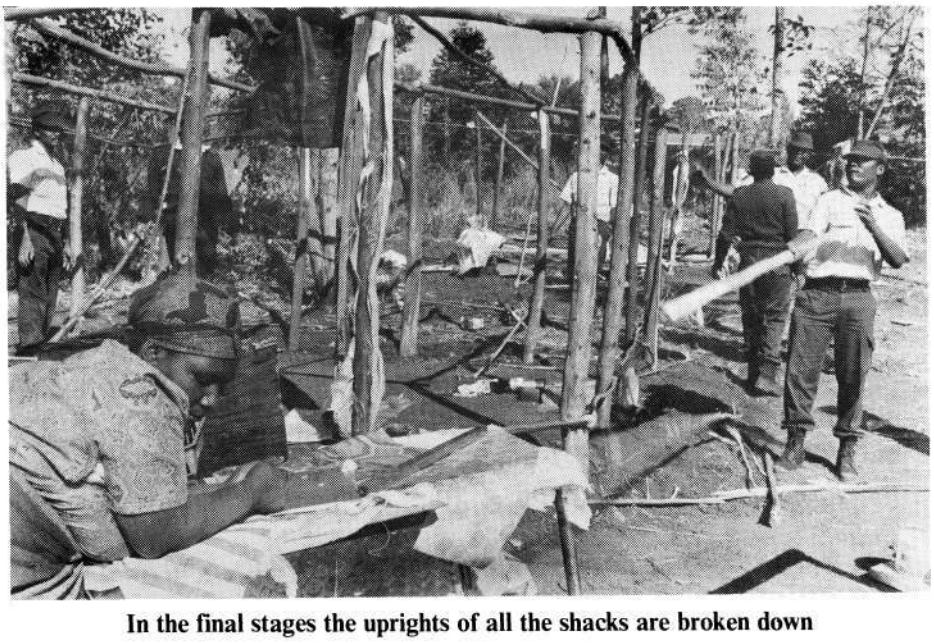

In the final stages the uprights of all the shacks are broken down

Fourth Reich blues

LOUIS TRICHARDT is set in the 'real Africa'. It is a bushveld town of mopani and baobab, with the occasional kiepersol, in a landscape of elephant grass and rock and red soil. It nestles against purple mountains of pine and shadows. It happens to be a true 'Voortrekker' bulwark, or perhaps 'Dwarstrekker' bulwark would be a more appropriate description. It was established many years ago, when lion, elephant, buffalo, rhinoceros, and various kind of antelope roamed the plains, and the Boer and Matebele killed each other in great numbers, not to mention nearly annihilating the beasts in unison, and harmony?

It is also a town of extremes. Winter is lovely. While most in South Africa are reaching for electric blankets, warm water bottles, for their wives, this town rejoices in springlike days and cool nights. But then, summer arrives, and the heat is a constant reminder of the concept Abaddon. Thunderstorms luckily intervene on a regular basis, providing some heaven-sent relief, while at the same time destroying crops.

Blame for this latter phenomenon must be allocated, and to whom else but the Government. What with its integration, a flagrant disregard of God's word.

LOUIS TRICHARDT hosts around 9000 pale skinned inhabitants, a big town by South African standards. Most of these souls are pure Afrikaner stock, with pedigrees to match. They come in all shapes and sizes, although an awful lot of men look like honorary members of the Charles Glass society.

Louis Trichardt counts many times more black people. They are only considered part of the town's population for as far as they render services to the cash flow. The same applies to the 'kypies', or coloureds.

The 'kerriegatte', or Indians, pose a problem. They are also not regarded part of the town, yet they own half the real estate. The town council, in it's infinite wisdom, once passed a motion that Indians were not allowed to operate businesses in the white area. The ironical, if not comical, result was a fair number of pure boere flocking across to the shops in the Indian area. Forgotten were the pleas for support to the 'brotherly' white businessmen. These emanated, inter alia, from the ultra conservative dominee. He turned his back on the Dutch Reformed Church, and started his own fire and brimstone version of a holy sect, where a white skin is paramount for membership. He is considered by his many followers to be a true prophet, nearly in the same league as former dominee Andries Treurnicht, and former nobody Eugene Terréblanche.

IN THE entertainment field, a good time is 'boeremusiek' by Oom Japie and his merrimen. The folk dances the 'sakkie-sakkie', a shuffling of feet, which resembles a South African Bureau of Standards test to ascertain the durability of certain brands of footwear. Lots of pugilistic activities in between lighten up proceedings, ek se, to the delightful squeeling of women and girls, and chanting of men and boys. As the evening progresses, and the alcohol flows, hysterical laughter, or gratifying screams, can intermittently be heard, as rear ends and other body parts are squeezed by over zealous young men and 'oomies' alike.

A good time is also Otto Karl's German Oempha band, playing march music. The purists motivate themselves clamorously for the future armed struggle, which will return to the white man the power to absolute rule.

The non-purists, and believers in human equality, more than often stare at themselves in the mirror the next day, asking why they did not speak up, why they even agreed, why they showed no guts.

A MUSICAL performance by Bles used to be the highlight of the year when even ultra conservative tannies behaved like groupies. But then Bles caused terrible pain. He left his lovely wife for a harlot. And was it not he who preached of love, commitment, God and love, in his, oh so very romantic, songs?

From Page Thirteen

which had been left intact the day before, had been demolished, and the place was in chaos.

People were even more angry, if that was possible, than the day before. They had survived a night, without shelter, in sub-zero temperatures; and now all hope of rebuilding was being removed. They concluded that the members of the security firm were not South Africans, and resented this fiercely. They resented the guns being pointed at them, but most of all they resented their perception that their vision of hope in a new South Africa had been betrayed, and that they were helpless and powerless.

Again, through sheer power of will, they forced the authorities out of the area.

Yes, there were weapons. The police and the municipal police were armed to the hilt. The people armed themselves with sticks and bottles and pieces of aluminium and bricks. Both sides were restrained, and it became obvious that neither side really wanted blood shed. The security forces withdrew, including the security firm which then regrouped on the road and gave a military show which would have done justice to any state occasion. It seemed, for the time being, the people had won.

In a gesture that could only be interpreted as spite, bravado or pure foolishness the municipality then proceeded to demonstrate their supposed power by cutting down trees in the area. Presumably this was to remove all possible reconstruction material. Needless to say after two or three hot, futile and fruitless hours the plan was abandoned. The "squatters" hung their washing out, and began rebuilding their shacks. Life went on.

WHAT WE need to think about is why and for what purpose are these things happening, and why are we allowing them to happen?

If we are people who care; if we are people who want a new South Africa that is equitable; if we want to change the ravages of the apartheid system which we all, including the government, acknowledge as wrong; can we afford to let our fellow people suffer both by being forced to be perpetrators and being perpetrated against again and again? ●

Also high on the list of popularity, is Danie Botha. He is a true 'boerseun', and perfect husband for a lot of Getruidas and Hetties and Annas. Then there is Carike Keuzenkamp. Her husband is a Nationalist, but she can hardly be held responsible for his ignorance, ek se. Also Ken Mullen. Okay, so he's a 'rooinek', but he surely makes the ovaries flip, from a woman's point of view. And then, the 'Griekse boertjie'. He is a genuine convert to the Afrikaans faith.

The Afrikaans new wave, Johannes Kerkorrel, and the Gereformeerde Blues band, Koos Tonteldoos, Nataniel, etc. are what was termed 'hippie music' a few years ago.

Classical music, 'Bach se gelag', is for most a noise not unlike 'tannie' Annatjie's chickens make, when they realize they're being chased for ultimate feasting purposes. For an elect few, it is cultural enlightenment, to possess classical music, to display it where everybody can see it, never to listen to it.

READING is not a high priority, and that is putting it lightly. It includes the two local newspapers, which are largely anti-government in their approach. For the woman literary works are still Susanna M. Lingua, C.F. Beyers Boshoff, Konsalik, Edgars' newest fashions magazine, Russells' monthly furniture offerings and some articles in the Huisgenoot. Those few ignorami who read the perverse Johannesburg English dailies are automatically communists, atheists or traitors, or a combination of these. Imagine some of the reactions to Andre P. Brink, Etienne le Roux, Breyten Breytenbach etc.

Going to the movies is impossible, the movie house now being a second hand furniture store. There are four video shops. As far as these go, videos in which Arnold Schwarzenegger, Rambo, Claude van Damme, or lately George Segal, display their pugilistic prowess will always be popular. The more gore, the merrier.

Theatre is a visit by Mike Schutte, or Martino, or the Alabama student choir. "Hey, ek se, old Mike can not only wrestle, he tells lekker jokes too, huh?" "That Martino is a genius. How else can he shoot that chick from the canon into the kas?"

Dining out is the Spur, for a kingklip measuring ten by ten centimetres (it lost some of its juice en route), or 'Oom' Kallie's Chinese take-away, with a variety of dishes that 'skrik vir niks'.

FOR THE 'true liberals', there is the Bergwater Hotel, with an owner who admittedly votes National Party. The hotel is theoretically open to all races. In practice, a coloured person will not enter the public bar, not unless he wants to get seriously hurt by the blue blooded 'Afrikaner seuns' who frequent the place. The a la Carte restaurant is also not open for coloured people, by management order. If a coloured person should want to stay for the night, a room, separate from those of the white people, will be allocated.

Politics for most is hating anybody who differs with the Conservative Party, Jaap Marais, the AWB, or in the case of the Wit Wolwe, if you can find them. The fraternity that beds black women now and then, write it off as a little indiscretion, and keep it secret at all costs. Often the same people boast about how many 'swartgatte' they nearly killed, and describe in detail what the black's fate will still be.

Politics is also big 'Afrikaner seuns' hitting small black Sunday school children having a picnic in a park, with sjamboks. The excuse for this action; they will grow up to be terrorists one day.

Political rallies are a chance for the guys, especially those with 'kwaai vrouens', to break away for a while.

CONCLUSION:

PERHAPS, I have not presented a balanced picture of Louis Trichardt. This is not for lack of trying. The simple fact is that, the more I searched for this balanced picture, the more worms I uncovered.

I do not for one moment suggest that Louis Trichardt has not got any decent and clear-thinking people. There are indeed a lot. Unfortunately, they are more than often overrun. I believe the Afrikaans proverbs apply. 'n Stil bek is 'n heel bek' and 'Liewer bang Jan as dooie Jan.'

Finally a reminder, albeit clichéd: A small rotten spot on an apple will eventully spread, and decay will set in over the whole apple. The fruit will have to be thrown away. Louis Trichardt, and a lot of corresponding towns, especially in the Transvaal, have grown alarmingly big rotten spots. ●

– JOHAN G.C. PIEK

FAMINE

WE DID not realise that we were to witness a famine. It was 1974, a few short years after the emergence of the state of Bangladesh. The country was still grappling with staggering problems inherited from colonial times including the disastrous 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent into a disparate Moslem nation of two widely separated parts — Western and Eastern Pakistan — and the largely Hindu India. The eastern wing which comprised most of the former Bengal was to last just 23 years before it seceded from Pakistan after a bitter and bloody liberation struggle. But in early 1974 relief operations were giving way to development projects and various specialised agencies were arriving. That was why we were there — to assist the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute in developing the technology for greater food production.

We were living in Dhaka and slowly coming to terms with the pervasive poverty which reached right up to our garden walls. Clusters of emaciated families living in the streets. Solitary women with baby on hip begging for food. Swarms of beggars on street corners, at traffic lights and on river ferries pleading for alms from travellers trapped and vulnerable in their cars and rickshaws. The ghastly, misshapen bodies of children deliberately maimed at birth crawling or wheeled in carts chanting for baksheesh. Gaunt figures straining every fibre as they pedalled rickshaws overloaded with people or goods for a daily pittance. Long queues of the poor squatting patiently in the road for a meal of rice and vegetables offered by a sympathetic Bengali family. Children, scrawny cattle and wretched pyedogs scratching and sniffing together through piles of garbage tipped on vacant lots. This was the reality of Dhaka, this was the normal situation.

by
Dr David
Catling
of the Land Development Unit,
University of the Western Cape

BUT IT was to get much worse. As the famine took hold and people in the countryside were denied even a

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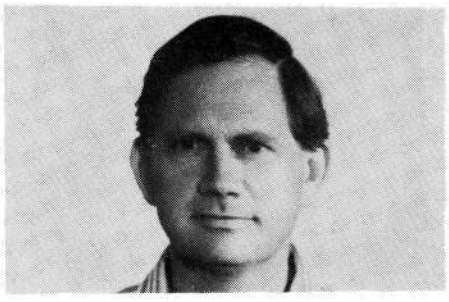
From Page Fifteen



Dr Catling who worked in Bangladesh from 1974 to 1981 and India from 1986 to 1988 for the International Rice Research Institute and the Overseas Development Administration of the UK.

minimum diet they descended on Dhaka in ever increasing numbers in the hope of finding food, shelter and work. Thousands occupied the verandahs of old houses, railway platforms and any open space. Whole families settled along the capital's main roads and thoroughfares, jampacking the broken pavements in huddles of bodies and meagre possessions. Some survived on food from official soup kitchens and private handouts. But many, particularly the young, the old and the disabled did not.

* * * *

UNTIL FAIRLY recently famines were inherent in the Indian subcontinent. In the 19th century, seven great famine affected more than 200 million people. The severe famine of 1876-1878, believed to have resulted in more than five million deaths, finally prompted the British administration to develop an appropriate strategy for combating famine; the comprehensive Bengal Famine Code still serves as a guide for handling relief.

The Great Famine of 1943 in which one million to two million people perished in Bengal remains a controversial issue to this day. Of this tragedy much has been written which is emotive and misleading. What does emerge clearly is first, that the famine was mainly a rural phenomenon and second, that deaths were not from starvation alone.

Many died from epidemics of cholera, malaria and smallpox. The shortage of food grains was variously ascribed to excessive monsoon rains, an outbreak of ice disease, an inefficient war-time administration and corrupt officials.

Research has shown that there was in fact enough food in the region to feed all the people. The traditional explanation, known as food availability decline (FAD), does not take into consideration the relationship of food with people. The basic cause of famine is that the poorer sections of society are unable to get enough food. That is, food entitlement works against the poor and the system fails to deliver food to them. Farm labourers and the rural landless suffer the most because while the food price rises, the wage rates fall in absolute terms. The poorest sections of the community then die quietly of starvation and disease — sometimes alongside large stores of grain. It is now generally accepted that the main cause of the 1943 famine were the increase in the rice price due to inflation in the booming war economy; an uneven expansion in income and purchasing power; speculation and hoarding; and administrative panic and failure to import food from other provinces.

THE OFFICIAL death toll in Bangladesh's 1974 famine was put at 26 000 but the true number was undoubtedly higher and may have exceeded 100 000. Thus compared to the past this was a minor famine. Some authorities still contended that the primary cause was the severe floods which affected the three annual rice crops: winter rice, premonsoon rice, and wet monsoon rice. Indeed the 1974 floods were the highest for 50 years. But once again, as the rice price soared the wages fell and it was the farmworkers and small farmers who suffered the most. Hoarding and profiteering pushed up the price and corruption was rife.

Famine beckoned again with the even higher floods of 1987 and 1988 but prompt and effective distribution of massive supplies of food relief and medicine by the military government — under the watchful eye of international observers — averted large-scale starvation. So hopefully the terrible famines of the Indian subcontinent, where thousands or even millions of people perished, is now a thing of the past.

* * * *

TO THE severe crises of economic recession, the AIDS epidemic and political instability as democratic reforms sweep across our subcontinent, now comes drought and famine of cataclysmic proportions.

What are the lessons for South Africa from the Indian and Bangladeshi experience?

It is common to most or all famines that farm tenants, the rural landless and small farmers, especially those in remote areas, are the most vulnerable. They are the hardest to reach and often the first to be affected by local food shortages. This happens even when there is sufficient food available in the region as a whole — and in Southern Africa there is a shortage of between seven million and 10 million tons of food grain.

Thus the first priority is to mount a campaign to provide food relief for the poor in remote country areas. It may be necessary to subsidise the cost of food grain to hungry, destitute populations and take strong measures to control prices. The region's transportation and communication systems must be geared up to handle the passage of the largest tonnages of *incoming* grain ever to be transported in Southern Africa.

South Africa's existing infrastructure and expertise must not only be used to bring relief to her own people, but should also be made available to her neighbours whose systems are far weaker. We must make great efforts to curb hoarding and profiteering —always liable to flourish during such desperate times. Lastly, food aid must be channelled through proven, experienced organisations which are directly in contact with the poorer in society.

IN THE longer term it is essential to develop a national food security scheme fully integrated with the existing network in the SADCC countries to the north. An early-warning system for spotting incipient food shortages is absolutely necessary and a national food grain reserve of at least one million tons should be established.

Greater public awareness of the food security question is necessary. It will be mutually advantageous to pool the region's agricultural know-how on basic food crops. South Africa can contribute its valuable knowledge of commercial agriculture while the other countries have much to offer concerning smallholder agriculture. All of these objectives could be served by forming a strong regional NGO. This body should include representatives from all famine-prone sections of society so that they can be involved in policy and strategy decisions.

Surprisingly, some positive features may yet emerge from the present situation. The famine throws the spotlight on the region's agricultural sector — an area often misunderstood and sometimes overlooked by some government planners and many economists. And inevitably the tragedy will bring together Southern Africa's previously embattled countries and demonstrate their unavoidable interdependence. ●

SANCTIONS

COLIN LEGUM welcomes the international community's switch to the use of sanctions as the most civilised way of dealing with gross offenders of human rights.

THE CONVERSION of the international community to the idea of sanctions as a weapon against governments whose behaviour is condemned by a majority of UN members is as sudden as it is welcome.

Sanctions are the most civilised way of dealing with gross offenders of human rights; but are they the most effective? That still remains to be tested in three latest decisions — against Libya, Iraq and Serbia. Sanctions against South Africa, though crumbling, still carry UN endorsement.

Why this sudden, almost universal, turning to sanctions to bring errant governments to heel? Thirty years ago when my wife and I wrote a book, *South African Challenge to the West,* in which we argued the case for sanctions as a means of averting violence and embitterment in the struggle against apartheid, we were roundly criticised by the same leaders and opinion-makers who are now most vociferous in calling for sanctions against the Libyan, Iraqi and Serbian authorities.

Three main arguments have been deployed over the years against sanctions. It was wrong, argued Mrs Thatcher and her successors in the present British Government, to use economics as a weapon — meaning, of course, that it is bad for trade. They and successive American administrations, argued further that sanctions would impose hardship on those least able to bear it. And, finally, the crunching argument was that 'sanctions have never worked.'

The example of failure usually quoted was the supposed oil sanctions by the League of Nations against Mussolini's Italy over the Invasion of Ethiopia. This juicy red-herring ignored the fact that the Anglo-French decision to apply an oil embargo was, in fact, never implemented: no wonder it failed.

Later, when there was a clamour to impose comprehensive sanctions against the Smith regime over UDI in Rhodesia, there was a slow and half-hearted response. The flawed weakness of the campaign against Rhodesia was that its borders with Portuguese Mozambique and South Africa were never closed, and no action was ever taken against Lisbon and Pretoria, both of which openly flaunted their breaching of sanctions. Despite these obvious weaknesses in the sanctions net, the embargo did help in the end to bring down the Smith regime for two reasons other than the mounting pressures of the liberation struggle: while the regime could maintain its trade, it suffered twice — because the sanctions-busters paid below world prices for Rhodesian exports and charged extra for imports; and because one sanctions' measure was effective — the Smith regime remained internationally isolated, even from Lisbon and Pretoria.

Although not comprehensively applied, sanctions against South Africa were marginably one of the major factors that finally undermined apartheid, which was recently admitted by Pik Botha. They brought about the country's cold isolation in the world community; closed down its participation in international sport; deprived the country of essential military supplies, especially aircraft and naval defences; diminished the volume of exports; encouraged disinvestment (an unfortunate development), and contributed to the failure to attract new investment.

Now, when the sanctions measures were adopted against the Libyan, Iraqi and Serbian regimes nothing was said about the unwisdom of using an 'economic weapon' (i.e. trade) or the hardship that would be suffered by the weakest; nor were we told that 'sanctions never work.'

Zimbabwe — the current African member of the Security Council — was alone with China in abstaining on the Serbian decision; that was not because the Mugaba Government is against the principle of sanctions or sympathetic to 'Slob' Milossovic's repugnant policy of 'ethnic purification', but because of its resentment of what it sees as the hypocrisy of those major powers who had been reluctant sanctioneers when it came to meeting African demands but who turned their own arguments on their head when it came to issues affecting direct European and American concerns.

Nevertheless, Zimbabwe was wrong to have abstained on behalf of Africa over the decision against Serbia because the use of sanctions is an idea whose time has come, however briefly. It hardly needs arguing that a non-lethal economic weapon is a more civilized way of dealing with offenders against internationally-accepted codes of conduct — such as the Charter on Human Rights and the UN declaration against recognising conquest of territory through aggression — then going to war against them.

The tragedy of the Gulf War was that American and Saudi impatience led them to war against Iraq before giving the decision on sanctions time to work. It was just because the stupendous military attack on Iraqi was only half successful that recourse was subsequently taken to sanctions to complete the punishment of Saddam Hussein.

Now that sanctions promise to be a key element in the slowly evolving new international order, it is vitally important that they should be applied only under the right conditions. There are three absolute prerequisites.

First, that sanctions should be applied only through a UN decision.

Second, that they should be made binding on all UN members through invoking Chapter 7 (Article 41) of the UN Charter which make it mandatory for members to observe the decision.

Third, that they should be comprehensive and enforceable.

It is ridiculous, for example, to have made the decision to invoke sanctions against Libya without including an embargo on its oil (as in the case of both Iraq and Serbia). The only reason oil was excluded in the case of Libya is because an embargo would have short-term effects on the economy of Germany, Italy and France. Yet, oil is the Achilles heel of the Libyan economy; by excluding it, the pressures on Gaddafi have been greatly reduced.

Finally, it is important to recognise that sanctions work slowly and require patience to allow time for attrition. Unless nations (especially the United States) are prepared to be patient and to accept the need for a long rather than a short haul, they should not venture on the path of sanctions.

Sanctions as a non-violent means of maintaining world order are too important to be allowed to fail. ●

THE S A POLICE : AMNESTY ALLEGES PARTISAN ROLE

SOUTH AFRICA: STATE OF FEAR.
— A REPORT BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

IN ITS recent controversial report on security force involvement in the violence, Amnesty International has documented a vast array of cases which presents policing of the discord as ineffective, partisan and a contributory factor to the violence. The report concludes that the failure of the police force to operate with impartiality and professionalism seriously threatens the reform process and a democratic transition in South Africa.

The main body of the report outlines details of incidents involving security force conduct which occurred between January 1990 and March 1992. It contains a disturbing indictment of police involvement in the conflict by detailing patterns of police conduct which serve as examples of partiality.

The first chapter examines the question of covert officially-sanctioned killings, which is essentially an analysis of security force involvement in 'death squads'. It also deals with the failure of the Harms Commission to 'accomplish the vital task of restoring a sense of accountability to the security forces and so curbing their extra-legal activities', and the vindication of allegations of police involvement in political assassinations by the Kriegler judgment. The chapter concludes with evidence of continued political assassinations under suspicious and unexplained circumstances.

The examples of partiality in the policing of the conflict have taken the following forms: a reluctance to investigate allegations, failure to prosecute wrong-doers and active assistance to vigilantes where the police have escorted them into areas prior to attacks and have rendered actual assistance to them. The KwaZulu police are also implicated for complicity in killings and assaults, as well as for their unwillingness to investigate cases involving the assault and murder of ANC supporters.

The systematic pattern of partisan policing outlined in the report is further illustrated by security force conduct in the "taxi wars" in Cape Town. Even with the absence of Inkatha supporters in the area, police appear "to perpetuate conflict as a means of seeking to prevent peaceful political transition."

IN ITS conclusion, Amnesty makes recommendations for measures that the authorities could take for the prevention of this phenomenon, including independent investigations of police misconduct as well as effective protection to individuals and communities in danger of attacks or extrajudicial executions.

Amnesty contends that, despite the reform process which began two years ago, partisanship in policing is still highly prevalent and stems from the campaign of identifying the more "radical" groups as enemies of the State. They comment on the "enormity of the gap between the intentions and pronouncements by officials, on the one hand, and the conduct on the ground of the security forces on the other."

If Amnesty's analysis of the perception of partisanship is true (it is a perception that South Africans are not unfamiliar with) it is inexcusable because active partisanship involves the police directly in criminal attacks and inaction is a definite violation of the legal responsibilities of the force.

Since its release the report has been criticized for its failure to document the dual role played by both Inkatha and the ANC in the violence, especially in view of the Goldstone Commission's second interim report on the prevention of public violence and intimidation.

Amnesty acknowledges in its report that the ANC and its supporters have also been responsible for "deliberate and arbitrary killings," yet fails to document any evidence of this assertion. As a result one of the greatest weaknesses of the report is that it can easily be dismissed as a biased perception of the violence.

IN SPITE of these limitations, the report does, however, highlight some of the most vital issues facing policing and should not be so easily shrugged aside as malicious propaganda.

While keeping in mind the serious issues that pervade the report, it is however, impossible to ignore the blatant flaws in Amnesty's analysis of the violence in South Africa. Amnesty appears to overlook a vital aspect of the transition process: the task for limiting the conflict lies not with the police alone but with all the players in the contest, as pointed out by the Goldstone Commission.

More importantly, Amnesty does not concede that the effective restructuring of the police force requires co-operation and involvement of political groupings across the South African spectrum if it is to be successful.

Another shortcoming is its failure to acknowledge an obviously marked improvement of police conduct, especially in the areas of mass demonstrations and riot control. While a great deal more needs to be accomplished the recent improvements have to be understood in the context of their dubious past to be fully appreciated.

Unlike in the past, mass demonstrations and political meetings are being allowed to take place and police restraint, especially in crowd control situations, has been evident. This should have been acknowledged by Amnesty.

THE ALLEGATIONS contained in the report are not novel. But now that the point is made by a credible international organisation the authorities appear to feel a need to respond.

However the shortcomings have provided a convenient excuse for authorities to dismiss the report as one-sided and partial. Amnesty's basic proposition that the failure of the police force to reform long established traditions will seriously threaten the state's wider reform process should not be underestimated. The organisation's unfortunate failure to provide a more balanced view of the dynamics surrounding the violence should not prevent recognition of this and other important questions raised in the report. ●

– SARAS JAGWANTH
Research Fellow, Centre for Criminal Justice, University of Natal

Chilling insights into a sick society

IN THE HEART OF THE WHORE by Jacques Pauw. (Southern Book Publishers, Half-way House.)

THE ANALOGY of the whore — a degraded and depersonalised victim of society — is, in many respects, an appropriate one for apartheid's death squads. It is, however, not their bodies but their very humanity that these dealers in death prostitute. This book by *Vrye Weekblad* assistant editor Jacques Pauw tells the compelling story of these squads and, in the process, provides penetrating — and chilling — insights into the nature of our sick society.

It is a journey into our very own heart of darkness.

The book opens with a familiar enough South African scene: Braai fires at sunset on a river bank. It is, however, a braaivleis with a difference, for as those assembled eat, drink and are merry, the bodies of two men who have just been cold-bloodedly 'eliminated' slowly burn to cinders on their nearby pyre. The story then moves to a different setting with a graphic description of the brutal assassination of lawyer Griffiths Mxenge, the subsequent shooting of his wife Victoria, and the cover ups which accompanied these murders.

The ensuing chapters cover, in great detail, the stories of former security policeman Dirk Coetzee and some of his fellow hit men, the security structures of which they were part, and the events set in motion by their revelations, initially published in the *Vrye Weekblad*: The Government-appointed Harms Commission of Inquiry, and the ensuing defamation case brought by General Lothar Neethling against the newspaper, which finally vindicated Coetzee and those journalists who had dared, at enormous risk, to publish the truth.

IT IS not a pretty story: It tells of the way in which the government waged a massive disinformation campaign against opponents of apartheid, and of the devious means used to destroy them — at huge cost to the taxpayer — through subjecting them to various forms of harassment, torture and death. It describes the impunity with which cross-border attacks on activists were carried out in total disregard for the sovereignty of neighbouring states. It details, too, the deliberate destabilisation policy of the government, in its support of movements such as Renamo, and its manoeuvres to disrupt elections in Namibia.

The prevarications and blatant untruths of government ministers, and senior policemen, are laid bare. So too, is the way in which the judicial system of the country has been subverted, through drawing convicted criminals into police operations, and the way in which policemen themselves combined their political duties with illegal activities such as diamond and pornography smuggling and car theft.

This strategy was rationalised by ingrained beliefs about the legitimacy of the task, and was facilitated by unquestioning obedience to authority.

DEATH SQUADS operate in many countries, but it is the national disease of racism, which permeates our society, which gives the local version its unique character. With notable exceptions the victims are almost all black. It is inconceivable that so many whites could have been murdered, or simply disappeared, and nothing done (just as it is inconceivable that the euphemism unrest would have been applied if over 6 000 whites had died in political violence in Natal).

As a result of the separation caused by apartheid, the majority of whites have neither known, nor even wanted to know, the realities of black life in this country. The central message of this book is about the frightening consequences of grossly distorted power relationships, and of the accompanying secrecy and lack of accountability on the part of such a government, and as such holds important lessons for the future.

There is, however, a glimmer of hope: The book points to the way in which whites can be transformed through encounters with 'the enemy', and the reconciliation which is still possible. Dirk Coetzee, e.g. learns that ANC members are not the ogres he had been led to believe, and accept him in spite of what he has done.

It also highlights the important role of both good investigative journalism and the courts in ensuring that justice is done.

THERE IS still a very long way to go. The legacies of the past, Dr Van Zyl Slabbert warns us in the Foreword to this book, must be recognised and transformed if a new start is to be made. The recognition has been but grudging and partial, and there is little sign that the necessary transformation process is taking place. The murderers and perjurers have still not had to face the consequences of their deeds. The 'country's madness', as Pauw calls it, is still upon us. The credibility of the police must be restored: Unless the perpetrators of the ongoing violence are arrested and brought to book, the transition our society makes will, to use Slabbert's words, be a 'gearshift into madness'.

That gearshift must be avoided at all costs. This book is a timeous warning about the dangers of not knowing, and not wanting to know. It presents an opportunity to know.

Its greatest strength — the painstaking documentation and attention to detail — is also its major weakness for a non-academic readership. Better, however, to read even parts of it than nothing.

– MARY DE HAAS

From Page Eleven

surely to bow to the continued tyranny of the minority which we have had for 300 years. So either way we will have a tyranny. Is it perhaps the 'majority' rather than the 'tyranny' that is to be feared?

The 'tyranny of the majority' as John Stuart Mill noted (approvingly) was feared by 'thinkers' and the 'important classes'. (In South African parlance, I presume, that would mean 'whites'.) Mill also believed that there were 'exceptional individuals who instead of being deterred, should be encouraged to act differently from the mass'. Again, in the South African context, that doubtless means 'whites'. The proponents of 'minority rights' seem to be claiming not equal but more rights for the minority than for the majority.

The new-found concern for minority rights seems to me to be a thinly veiled attempt to protect white privilege on the rather spurious basis of individual human rights. But neither one's individuality nor one's minority status can be the basis for human rights. They are both factors which separate one from other people, whereas human rights are based on what we all have in common, our humanity.

Nobody can enjoy them fully unless everybody does; and no individuals or groups can arrogate some to themselves. ●

VIVA! VIVA!

by DAVID BASCKIN

WHAT FOREIGN OBSERVERS CAN ADD TO THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS

LORD SOAMES, Grand Architect of the Lancaster Agreement, had some unique perceptions of elections in Africa. In his view, they differed from the Western variety in this curious way. "They (the voters of Africa) think nothing of sticking tent poles up each other's whatnot and doing filthy, beastly things to each other. It's a very wild thing, an election."

I can only say that, despite massive provocation, we of the former Progressive Party never used to do this sort of thing at all. I remember once, in the company of some other Highbury Old Boys, heckling a United Party candidate in such a way that inferences about his whatnot were drawn by every member of the audience. But heavens above, the very thought of tent poles never entered our minds. Apart from anything else, it violated both the letter and the spirit of the Qualified Franchise.

TEN BUCKS EQUALS ONE RHINO

WHAT WITH the buck in your pocket shrinking by the day, the SA Reserve Bank, in response to consumer demand, is soon to issue new, improved bank notes. Not only will they be bigger in a numerical sense, but that jolly Dutch imperialist Jan van Riebeeck is to vanish as decoration. In his place comes a whole game reserve of ideology-free animals with a green ten rand note featuring a rhino; the brown twenty carrying a buffalo, the red fifty a lion, the cool blue century an elephant and the orange two hundred a leopard.

But sadly, all these giant animals are just part of the general inflationary trend. In terms of the reality of purchasing power, different fauna would have been a whole lot more suitable. The two hundred should feature a female baboon viewed from the rear, the hundred a puff adder, the fifty (soon to be the most common piece of paper in your wallet) a black rat, and the twenty a locust. Rumour has it that the entire printing of the new tens has already been bought out by a major confectioner as wrapping for bubblegum.

WHAT WINE WAS THAT?

POISONED BY drink from a night of cabernet excesses, I was secluded with my wordprocessor pounding the keys at random hoping that this column might just appear of its own accord. After a few minutes of this I managed to open my eyes. The screen offered no evidence of the power of automatic writing. Successfully hitting the delete button on the third attempt, my wandering eye chanced upon an unopened bottle of something on the desk. Judging from the litter of similar empties on the floor, we had cracked a case of whatever it was the night before. Closer examination revealed that it was not cabernet, but pinotage. A sip from a brimming glassful revealed the classic pinotage acetone nose with an aftertaste not dissimilar to that following an unsuccessful petrol siphoning attempt.

Realizing that something definitely out of the ordinary was in the glass, I carefully examined the label. The total lack of Afrikaans was a dead-giveaway. This was not a genuine Cape wine! Despite the Reserve Superiour appelation, it came from Zimbabwe where it would seem that the local viticulturalists have successfully hybridized the Cape Hermitage grape with maize. The resulting wine is a startling experience well up with the very best that Algerian and Bulgarian wines have to offer. But a small word of advice to the infant Zimbabwean wine industry. Take a leaf out of the Austrian winemakers' book and add a good dose of antifreeze to the mix. Believe me, it can only improve the taste. ●

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