

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# ABSURDITY AND OBSCENITY

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

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

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

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

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South Africans'**

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

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

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

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

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

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



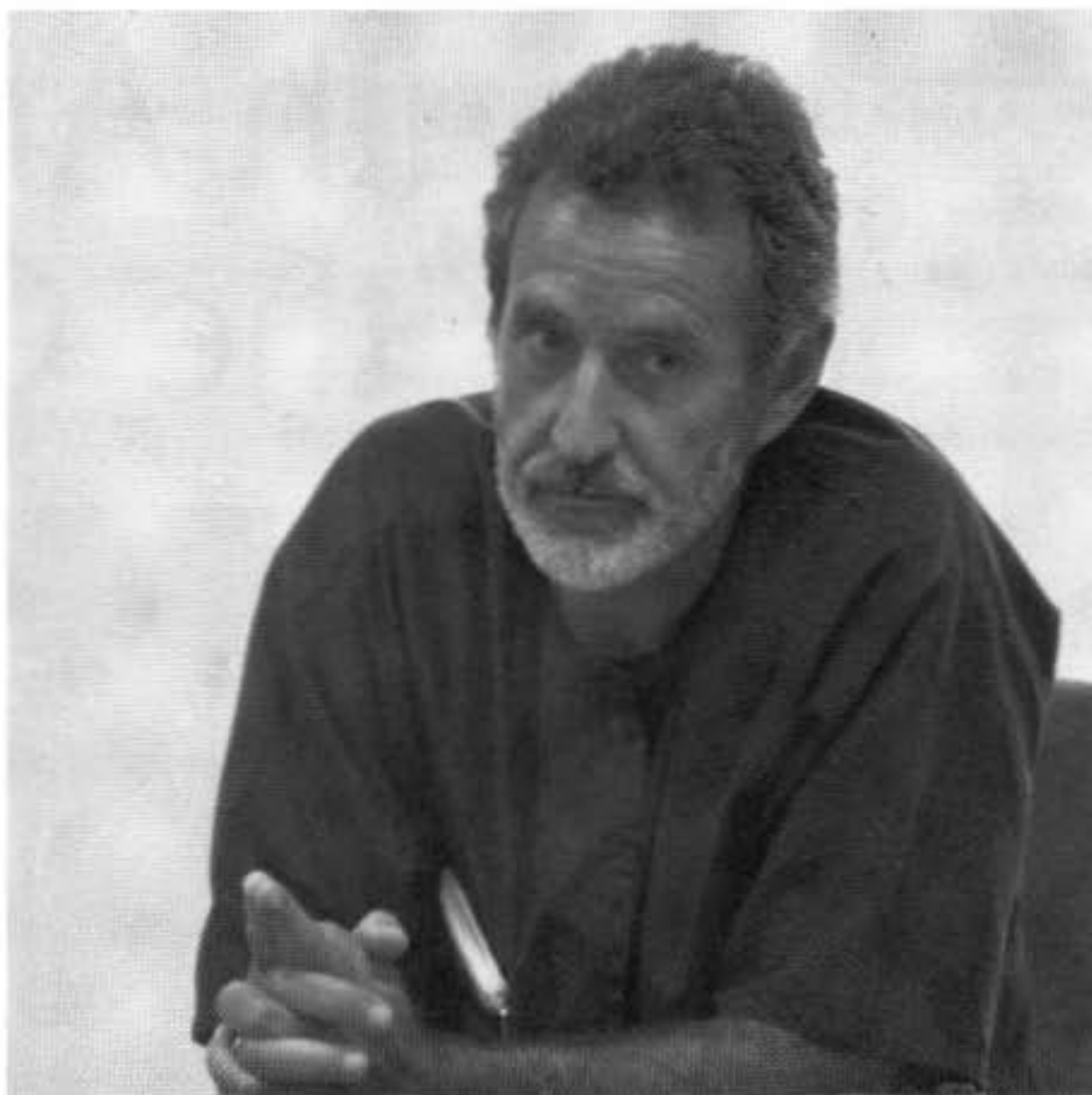
of its people. Only from this background can a contentious notion such as "standards" be usefully debated.

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

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

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

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



Breyten Breytenbach

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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