

The people need to KNOW

Idasa book takes Rapport prize

A BOOK published by Idasa last year, which breaks new ground in South African history, has been awarded the 1992 Rapport prize for non-fiction in Afrikaans.



Die Derde Oorlog teen Mapoch by journalist Hans Pienaar traces the origins of the uprising in KwaNdebele in the mid-1980s back to two (well covered up) wars between the Boer and Ndebele people in the last century.

One of the judges, Dr Johan van Wyk of the University of Durban-Westville, says the book makes a significant contribution to the general historical record in South Africa, containing new information and analysis not reflected in some major English-language histories.

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Starved of information about our future....

South Africa's constitutional future is being formulated virtually behind closed doors by an unelected leadership at the meetings of Codesa. Most South Africans have little knowledge, let alone critical understanding, of the whole process of constitutional negotiations which is taking place at the aptly chosen World Trade Centre.

By HUGH CORDER

Some South Africans probably don't care, but the majority would like to be given some information on who is deciding their future, how they are operating, what they are discussing, etc. Given the ostensible and sometimes vocal and real commitment of most of the participating parties to democracy and the goal of the entire enterprise - a democratic SA - the fact that even the literate and interested public is starved of information is nothing short of scandalous.

How has the situation come about? I would suggest that there are two main groups of culprits, each of which is unconcerned about this matter for a range of diverse reasons.

The first group consists of the media - both written and spoken. One of the founding pillars of democracy is the accountability of the governors to their subjects. Between popular elections, the chief means through which accountability is sought is through the public's



A battery of media...but most of South Africa remains ignorant of the negotiation process.

Ken Oosterbroek, The Star

right to know what kind of people are in government, what powers they exercise, what policies they pursue and so on.

Crucial to the right to know is an openness of approach by the powerful and the duty of the media is to inform the public. In a country in which roughly half the adult population cannot read or write and the electronic

media are funded by the public, a special responsibility rests on the SABC's television and radio services. The SABC's performance has been poor. Apart from full coverage of the two plenary sessions, reporting of Codesa has been sporadic, uneven, boring and unsophisticated. It appears that many of those involved with the news

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DEMOCRACY in ACTION



Idasa's goals are:

To promote the development of a democratic culture in South Africa

To address fear, prejudice, anger and other obstacles in the transition to a non-racial democracy in South Africa

To engage influential groups and individuals who may be outsiders to the transition process

To provide, wherever possible, information on critical issues and to explore ways of addressing these

To facilitate discussion of constitutional and developmental issues relevant to Southern Africa

To assist and encourage others to contribute to the attainment of these goals

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...THE ANC THREAT OF MASS ACTION SMACKS OF A POLITICAL INFERIORITY COMPLEX...

...75%!!?...SOUNDS LIKE A NAT' MINORITY COMPLEX' TO ME.....



The politics of the pilsener

Over drinks at a recent Idasa conference, a PAC delegate offered reasons for his choice of beverage. He'd have a beer, the one with the initials that stand for "Here's to A New South Africa".

- *Made by Settlers' of Azania Breweries?*

Strictly speaking

Traditionally the SABC has had a rigorous policy to ensure the correct pronunciation of foreign names. However, when it comes to their own backyard, standards seem to slip seriously. TV commentary on the Comrades Marathon repeatedly referred to a top ten medallist with the very common surname of Mokoena (pronounced Mokwena) as "Mookoona".

- *Time to move from terre blanche to terra firma.*

Dubious distinction

And still on the Comrades Marathon. The amazed tones of commentators about how well black runners had done to take five of the first 10 positions made it sound as if the athletes were newcomers to the country let alone the sport.

- *It'll take a while for the spirit of the Comrades to triumph.*

Braaivleis bonding

A quick-thinking black truck driver saved fellow motorists from certain serious injury recently when he managed to avoid smashing into a number of cars after the

Ja-Nee

brakes of his truck failed. One white motorist was so grateful to the driver for saving his life that he promptly offered a fitting reward - an invitation to a braaivleis.

- *Maybe he'd have preferred the Chevrolet?*

Two houses to take away

We hear that not only did the visiting OAU delegation buy big in upmarket shopping malls, but certain members headed out into suburbia as well. On a drive through Pretoria one delegation member managed to buy two houses - without even getting out of the car!

- *Question is, who's money was he spending?*

Anxious for an angle

A phone call by an SABC employee anxious that a BBC-run training course for 10 (mainly black) radio journalists in an SABC studio in Cape Town was to train ANC members gave *Argus* reporter Willem Steenkamp the scent of a good story. However, despite confirmation by a senior SABC official and the BBC trainer that the course had nothing to do with the ANC, the *Argus* report focused strongly on the rumour of SABC anxiety.

- *Never let the facts get in the way of a good story.*

We were getting there – what's gone wrong?

It all looked so promising a few months ago. What's gone wrong? Here are a few unpalatable reasons for the present situation which has caused so much anxiety and concern.

Firstly, many naively believed in almost inevitable progress towards normality, as if the negotiation process would move steadily out of the valley of discord and distrust to new vistas of understanding and acceptance. All of us, in our optimism, hopelessly underestimated the smouldering anger which is the consequence of long years of repression, racism and abject poverty.

The failure of Codesa II to deliver is a painful reminder of the legacy of apartheid and the need to build trust in the midst of conflict. In the long term, the breakdown should destroy the cosy club atmosphere of an unelected body and bring a new sense of harsh reality.

Secondly, the negotiation process has largely been confined to a group of elites. This may be inevitable, but a dangerous consequence is the ever-widening gap between the grassroots and those at the top. At the very least, there must be a radical improvement in the communication between top-level negotiators and those they purport to represent. The secrecy surrounding Codesa committees and the inevitable leaks and rumours have not helped either.

Thirdly, the deliberations of Codesa have had no effect whatsoever in lessening the mindless violence with its bitter harvest of death, injuries and destruction of property. It is the unabated violence which is the greatest problem facing all of us, and which threatens not only to derail the negotiations but to tear asunder the very fabric of society.

Bloody-minded

Fourthly, the two major partners in the negotiations, the National Party and the ANC, must accept much of the credit and the blame for both progress and breakdown. The NP in particular has in recent weeks demonstrated a bloody-mindedness reminiscent of the dark days of apartheid. As the can of worms spills its inelegant mess of state corruption and involvement in the deaths of activists, the response has been not remorse but defiance.

The apparent indifference of Mr De Klerk is particularly worrying and in sharp contrast to his courageous actions in 1990 and 1991. Can the originators of apartheid be trusted? Is the government willing to accept the consequences of its brave statements on democracy and surrender its monopoly of power? These and other disturbing questions are being asked inside and outside of Codesa.

On the other hand, the ANC, coming out of a long period of enforced exile, imprisonment, bannings and harassment, has found it difficult to adjust to the demands of a political party moving towards elections. It is no secret that coming so close to the corridors of power, the ANC has often taken its eye off the negotiating ball and looked rather at the goalposts. This is understandable, but it also creates enormous problems. Compromises are made, only to find that they are not leading to the desired result. Pressurised by a demanding constituency, most of whose lives have been totally untouched by the negotiation process, the

ANC is forced into a position of talking tough and using the threat of mass action as an alternative to negotiations.

Temptation

The ANC should resist the temptation to encourage stay-aways, work stoppages and mass demonstrations, particularly in a time of economic downturn. Further, whilst the ANC has every justification in posing serious questions to Inkatha and the security forces, it would strengthen its own position if its leaders quite candidly stated "yes, we are no angels, there are many in our ranks who have succumbed to the use of intimidation and violence. We are opposed to this and will fight it at every level".

Finally, there are many other factors at work: the controversial role of Inkatha, the exclusion of the PAC and the Conservative Party from the negotiating process and, more significantly, the sinister activities of rightwing forces.

What can we do in the short term to make the best of an extremely difficult period of transition? This is not the time to wring our hands and bemoan our fate. We are in a trough, let's accept that the going will be hard and that the resolution of conflict and reconciliation is going to take much longer than originally imagined, and that, like all transitions, it will be messy. This is a time for courage, patience and action.

Action

Secondly, there must be a clearing out of the stables! Mr De Klerk must make a much bolder response to government corruption and allegations of state and security force involvement in death squads and violence. It is now no longer a question of laying the blame at the door of minor officials or even heads of departments. If there are ministers and senior people in government who have been involved or are involved, then appropriate action must be taken. Heads must roll. This will restore a sense of trust and strengthen Mr De Klerk's negotiating position.

Thirdly, negotiations must get back on track and if this calls for innovative ideas and extraordinary meetings then so be it. We cannot allow the negotiation process to weaken by simply muddling along and sticking to prescribed times, dates and places. In particular a rapid move towards an interim government must be attempted, whatever it takes. This objective should be reached before the end of 1992.

Fourthly, and most importantly, the strongest action must be taken to reduce the violence. Here the major players have an awesome responsibility, but if, despite all the good intentions of the peace accord, the state, the ANC and other actors, violence persists, South Africa should seriously consider inviting an international mission to assist in monitoring the violence. Impartial, professional observers from the European Community and the Commonwealth, working closely with the peace secretariat, could assist in identifying causes and those responsible. No initiative should be turned away from if it can lessen the carnage in our townships.

*Alex Boraine
Executive Director*

PRETORIA

The play's the thing

From June 30 to July 16 a group of American schoolchildren will spend time in the Pretoria region workshopping a play with their South African counterparts.

With Idasa's assistance, children from four schools (black, white, Indian and coloured) as well as several South African actors and playwrights will participate in the production which will be performed at the end of the two-week exercise.

The project was initiated by the American-based grouping, Creative Response, which specialises in breaking down racial and cultural barriers through theatre.

Afrikaners in the new SA

Afrikaners quo vadis? A public meeting on options for the Afrikaner will be held on **July 15** in Pretoria. Speakers include Van Zyl Slabbert, Jan van Eck,

Koos van der Merwe and others from the NP, CP, HNP and AWB.

JOHANNESBURG

Winter school for teachers

From **July 10 to 23** Idasa's Training Centre for Democracy will run a **personal enrichment and skills advancement course** for teachers at a hotel in Swartkops between Johannesburg and Pretoria. The course will focus on issues of developing democracy and citizenship through the formal education system.

Teachers throughout the country are invited to apply to The Administrator, 39 Honey Street, Berea 2195. Only 50 places are available.

DURBAN

Naidoo: the prospects for peace

Jay Naidoo, a member of the National Peace Secretariat, will discuss progress and setbacks in the work of regional and local dispute resolution committees at a **Future Forum** lunch in Durban on **June 23** from 12.30pm to 2pm.

The cost is R50 and reservations should be made with Louella at (031) 304-8893.

EAST LONDON

Marching to a different beat

A **public meeting on conscription** will be held at the City Hall on **June 26**.

• Another meeting of the ongoing **Gender Forum** will be held at Idasa's office on **June 18**. Affirmative action is the subject under discussion and all women are welcome.

• On **June 6** an **education seminar** will examine ways of ensuring education for empowerment in the Border, Ciskei and Transkei areas.

Rural govt meeting

Rural local government comes under the spotlight at a conference to be held on **July 17 and 18** in East London.

The role of tradition and democracy as well as the allocation of land and services and the sustainability of rural development will be among the topics on the agenda.

Conference participants will include traditional leaders as well as representatives from civics, business, local and municipal government and political parties.

WESTERN CAPE

City seminar series

The role and place of **local government administration in transition** is the subject of the third City Future seminar. The

meeting will be held on **June 17** at 5.30pm in the Bellville Holiday Inn.

Karoo conference

Poverty and development in the Karoo will be the focus of a conference to be held from **June 26 to 28** in Beaufort West.

Rev Beyers Naudé will open proceedings which will be attended by farm workers, local community representatives, development agencies as well as business, church and other interest groups. The conference is open to all.



Rev Beyers Naudé

Making democracy work

A meeting will be held on **July 8** to look at **democratic mechanisms for new cities**.

How people participate in decision-making, how to ensure accountability and what are the most effective forms of representation will be among the questions discussed.

BLOEMFONTEIN

African study tour

A group of 40 farmers, teachers, academics, politicians and business leaders from the Free State will be heading off for a **study tour** of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi from **June 27 to July 16**.

The aim of the visit is to gather first-hand knowledge of the successes and failures in land reform, socio-economic development, education, local government and civil society in those countries.

The group, which will form an informal OFS "think tank", will reflect on the similarities or uniqueness of South Africa in relation to the experiences of other African states.

UN aid likely soon?

By WARREN KRAFCHIK
TENTATIVE PLANS for United Nations socio-economic assistance to South Africa were laid at a conference of South Africans and UN officials in Windhoek in May.

The United Nations group included representatives from 26 affiliated agencies. The South Africans represented political parties, organised labour, business and non-governmental organisations.

In the discussion on socio-economic needs, education, health, housing and job creation were prioritised. It was stressed that these priorities must be addressed within the context of a national development strategy capable of meeting goals of growth and redistribution, simultaneously.

Participants recognised that the first step in addressing socio-economic needs was to mobilise existing resources in South Africa that are not efficiently utilised. However, given the scale of inequality, external finance would also be required. United Nations assistance will further be useful in the fields of technical expertise, human resource development, institutional capacity building and poverty relief programmes.

Most of the debate at the conference focused on the appropriate institutional mechanisms to channel UN assistance to South Africa during a transitional period. The South Africans raised two issues:

Firstly, as socio-economic functions are unlikely to fall under joint control in a transitional government, assistance from the UN would need to be channeled through a more representative institution. It was suggested that the socio-economic negotiating forums, which are emerging at a local,

In the footsteps of Plaatje

Two years ago Idasa decided to sponsor the publication of an Afrikaans book which offers a critical reinterpretation of an important slice of South African history. The book, edited and produced by Idasa's media department, was recently awarded the 1992 Rapport prize for non-fiction in Afrikaans.

Hans Pienaar has a minor but nevertheless serious regret about his award-winning *Die Derde Oorlog teen Mapoch*. In the rush to meet printing deadlines, his original intention to dedicate the book to that great South African journalist, Sol Plaatje, was forgotten.

This omission will definitely be rectified in a future edition, says Pienaar, who has drawn much of his inspiration for *Mapoch* and journalism in general from Plaatje, editor of one of our first "black" newspapers at the turn of the century and author of the journalistic masterpiece, *Native Life in South Africa*.

Quotations from Plaatje's work feature prominently in Pienaar's book, which illuminates the fibre of Boer life in much the same way as Plaatje reflected black people in his time - without fragmenting the total South African experience.

Pienaar is quite chuffed about his Rapport prize. No more so than Idasa. Ever optimistic, we accept it as another small sign that the Afrikaner establishment is beginning to face up to its history. That is what *Mapoch* set out to achieve: it is history that at times pierces the myth with devastating accuracy and at other points suggests misunderstandings, always trying also to affirm the reader's right to accept or reject, to take responsibility or to lay the blame elsewhere.

It is a harrowing and, at times, wonderfully humorous, tale of a hundred years of conflict between Afrikaner and



Hans Pienaar: encouragement for probing journalism in Afrikaans.

By **RONEL SCHEFFER**

Ndebele (the Mapoch people or Ndzundza tribe) which culminates in the recent history of uprising in KwaNdebele in the mid-1980s. Most of the suffering is experienced by black people but we are given glimpses of heroes - on both sides of the divide and a few who straddle the two camps. That at least makes it a little more palatable.

Pienaar cut his journalistic teeth in the mainstream Afrikaans press, then freelanced, then moved to the alternative *Vrye Weekblad*. Working on a novel now, he is employed again as a sub-editor on *Rapport*.

Mapoch essentially is a product of the hard slog of inves-

tigative journalism (hundreds of interviews, long hours of collecting and sifting through documents) and it is enhanced by Pienaar's imaginative treatment and writing talent. He hopes that the Rapport award will serve as encouragement to probing journalism in Afrikaans, that Afrikaans journalists in the mainstream will start taking a leaf from the book of publications like *Vrye Weekblad* and *Die Suid-Afrikaan*.

Pienaar plans to rework the book for publication in English in the near future.

Ronel Scheffer is production editor in Idasa's media department.

The book is available from The Media Department, Idasa, 1 Penzance Rd, Mowbray 7700. Price: R30,00

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regional and national level, constitute the most inclusive, legitimate structures presently able to play such a role in South Africa.

Secondly, the capacity of the different UN agencies to respond in a co-ordinated way to support growth and redistribution goals simultaneously was questioned.

The UN group acknowledged that future technical co-operation with South Africa would be more demanding than in other countries. Special institutional mechanisms would need to be created to facilitate greater programme co-ordination and to deal with grassroots organisations rather than only with a central government.

What was important, from their point of view, was that substantial effort be invested in building up the capacity and central co-ordination of the negotiating fora to enable them to act as facilitating and implementing agencies for external assistance.

It was agreed that a follow-up meeting would be held to further consider these issues as well as concrete programme proposals.

Warren Krafchik is an economics consultant with Idasa.

A key symposium by the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce:

Affirmative Action and Black Advancement in a Democratic SA

August 12
Mount Nelson Hotel
08h15 - 16h50

Speakers include:

Franklin Sonn, Wiseman Nkuhlu, Albie Sachs, Linda Human, Clive Thompson

Cost: R150 per delegate

For details contact:

Leigh James,
CT Chamber of Commerce,
PO Box 204,
Cape Town, 8000.
Tel (021) 23-2323.

Mislukking - en mislik - in Malawi

Deur HENNING MYBURG

Erens uit my kinderjare is daar herinneringe van President Hastings Banda van Malawi wat met groot trompetgeskal in Suid-Afrika aankom op amptelike besoek om die goeie verhoudinge tussen die twee lande te bevestig.

Dit was met hierdie gedagtes in my agterkop dat ek geesdriftig die grenspos tussen Zambië en Malawi bestorm het om my kort besoek aan die land te begin. Dit sou interessant wees om iets te sien van die land wat in 1991 'n ekonomiese groeikoers van 10 persent kon handhaaf.

By die grenspos is daar die gewone toegangsdokumentasie wat voltooi moet word. Ek vul in: kom vanaf Suid-Afrika, werk vir Idasa, is 'n politieke fasiliteerder van beroep.

Skielik is daar beroering. Ek moet herhaaldelik verduidelik presies wat ek in Malawi wil doen, naamlik voorbereidings tref vir 'n politieke studietoer deur 'n groep Vrystaters.

Uiteindelik begin hulle 'n vorm invul getiteld "Arrest on entry". Drie ure na my aankoms by die grenspos word ek Malawi binnegeleat onder 'n "Provisional Restriction Order" met streng opdrag om reguit Lilongwe toe te ry,



Henning Myburg...
"arrest on entry"

by 'n spesifieke hotel in te boek en die volgende oggend by die doeane-kantore aan te meld.

Ek doen so en rapporteer om 08h00 die volgende oggend by die aangewese kantoor. Weer dieselfde storie: verduideliking en uiteindelik aan die Kommissaris van Polisie! Om 17h00 is almal ten einde laaste oortuig van die onskuld en goeie bedoelings van my sending en word ek toegelaat om weer te vertrek Zambië toe. (Die tyd begroot vir Malawi was om).

Op pad terug na die grenspos maal die woorde van 'n kelner in die hotel die vorige aand deur my kop: "Ons is ontevrede en opstandig omdat ons niks mag sê nie, ons het geen geld nie, die regering het al die geld, die moeilikheid gaan oor demokrasie."

Henning Myburg is streekdirekteur van Idasa in die Vrystaat.

The people need to know

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gathering and presentation (particularly on television) are having difficulty adjusting to a different political game.

The print media (with singular exceptions) are marginally better, but most reporting is tucked away on the inside pages and analytical pieces are seldom encountered: hardly a fulfilment of our newspapers' much-vaunted independence and public service function. The media are not fulfilling their function in this regard.

The second group which must carry the blame for the lamentable lack of information comprises all the parties at Codesa.

One appreciates that government in this country has long been characterised by paranoid "official secrecy" and an imperious style. One readily acknowledges, too, that political compromise and negotiation can often be achieved more effectively and expeditiously behind closed doors. But it is equally true that outrageous statements, stupidity and stonewalling are unlikely to be indulged in when the full glare of publicity or at least the possibility of disclosure, is brought to bear.

'It is not good enough that some clever public relations agency be called in once the talking is over'

Few, if any, of the delegations have been prepared to divulge their policy on a number of crucial constitutional issues and the names and backgrounds of their delegates and advisers. It does not help to reply: "Oh, but these are only discussions about transitional arrangements," for the shape of those plans will have a considerable influence on the final constitutional form. In addition, Codesa is apparently drawing up a list of constitutional principles which will form the building blocks of the future constitution and bill of rights.

It is not good enough that some clever public relations agency be called in, once the talking is over, to sell the final product to the people before an election for a constituent assembly. The future electorate has a right to know what is going on, and to be kept

informed by intelligent and critical public commentary. If this does not occur, the finished product will have little chance of legitimacy.

'An uninformed society cannot be democratic; an ignorant electorate cannot be effective'

Here are some practical steps which will go some way to rectifying this sad state of affairs:

- A state-funded information campaign, using commentators acknowledged to be non-partisan and critical, and a Codesa equivalent of Hansard in printed form.
- Greater allocation of time and resources by the SABC and the press to achieve a continuing and analytical treatment of the negotiation process (eg regular radio slots - we no longer have "Parliamentary Report" - but we still have several stock exchange reports!).
- Accessible presentations of this information. The media could employ journalistic devices like weekly Codesa supplements, profiles of the leading public actors, a Codesa barometer, fact files and joke columns.
- Information campaigns (adverts, newsletters, meetings) by the political parties to inform and consult with their constituencies. They have a duty to inform and educate their constituents.
- A massive public education campaign about democratic government, its demands, benefits, structures and procedures, to establish a democratic culture in a country which knows only authoritarian violence as a means of political expression.

There are many more mechanisms which could be imaginatively explored. The first steps need to be taken urgently to inform the public. An uninformed society cannot be democratic; an ignorant electorate cannot be effective.

Prof Corder is a member of the Civil Rights League and a lecturer in the Department of Public Law at the University of Cape Town.