

In quest of na

What does the commonly expressed longing for a "new" South Africa imply? ANDRÉ ZAIMAN argues that our society needs to be welded by a different consciousness, a new way of looking at ourselves as one society in a united country.

THE KEY question for a liberated South Africa remains how to build and sustain a democracy in a society ravaged by years of authoritarianism, inequality, exploitation and division. This implies that we have to look for practical ways to consolidate and deepen the developing consensus across the social spectrum that South Africa should be a united, non-racial, democratic country.

Politically this means that the process of negotiations should proceed speedily to its logical conclusion of a new, legitimate constitution that has the support of at least the majority of South Africans.

There seems to be growing agreement in South Africa that for democracy to survive and flourish, real socio-economic benefits should flow from the process of negotiations. In other words, we cannot allow socio-economic injustices to be frozen over once political democracy has been reached, as has been the case in many other transitions from authoritarianism to some form of democracy.

Many interesting debates have recently highlighted this fragile but important link between democracy and the economy. It has become abundantly clear from these debates that our country is in dire need of a mutually agreed upon national development strategy. It should be a strategy drawn up by all the major political and economic players as a matter of great urgency, and in that sense could be placed outside the party-political terrain.

Such a "depoliticised" approach could mobilise and focus the energies of our whole society. An agreed strategy would help us eradicate injustices and inequalities in the quickest and most effective way, while helping to secure the kind of national and international financial and human resources that would make a massive intervention possible. We cannot afford any longer to treat poverty, homelessness and deprivation as ideological footballs.

However, democracy will not be secured by

actions in the political and economic fields alone. Our society needs to be welded by a different consciousness, a new way of looking at ourselves as one society in a united country. In many ways there is an "old" South Africa that has existed as a geographical unit since 1910, but remains divided in a socio-psychological sense. Nothing expresses the desire of South Africans to resolve this paradox more clearly than the commonly expressed longing for a "new" South Africa.

The challenge is that we are seeing the collapse of both the hegemonic (apartheid) and counter-hegemonic (socialism) frameworks. The result is a paradigmatic vacuum. It is in this context that Albie Sachs talks of the need to "free the cultural imagination of the whole society", and Njabulo Ndebele argues that we should "free the entire social imagination of the oppressed".

The simultaneous crisis of both the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic conceptions of South Africa has opened up the way to "imagine" South Africa in a way that transcends racial, ethnic and class divisions; a way that increasingly focuses our attention on the common aspects of being South African, rather than on the divisions of the past. One could argue that this is, in any event, the logical

result of a cross-class, non-racial, national democratic struggle.

Some interesting common themes arise, for example, in South African (as opposed to South

Africa's) history. Identifying these themes is also identifying the transformational aspects of our history, which can be either the wedge that keeps us permanently apart or the cement that binds us together.

The most common aspect in the history of all South Africans is the widespread sense of geographical and cultural dislocation.

White South Africans came to Africa, where they were confronted by a foreign continent with foreign cultures, as part of the colonial and imperial sagas. Black South Africans suffered under this type of colonialism for many

Letters

From Page 3

of loosely related positive ideas, including security itself. This wrecks the peace/security opposition with which Nathan began, and begs the question of whether peace is possible without the kind of security analysis which Nathan condemns.

He admits that his interpretation of peace allows the armed forces to use might to contain violence. This contradicts his emphasis on negotiations, since this is what the SADF claims to have done for 20 years. It is classic legitimisation for militarism.

Nathan talks of "peace movements" in South Africa - but where are these movements? ECC and COSG were anti-apartheid organisations. Nevertheless he tells us that peace movements must be supported because of their success in the West. He is mistaken.

Western peace movements have completely failed to stop the West's export of militarism to the poorer nations, including wanton aggression by rich against poor. Even the vaunted reduction in nuclear arms proves to be part of sordid deals between Western and Soviet elites for the mutual benefit of both. Whether or not the Western experience has relevance for South Africa, it is far from encouraging.

Definitely peace movements need clear, well-researched policies. More importantly, they must open these policies up for public scrutiny and debate. In South Africa today, anti-military movements (aspiring peace movements or not) lack both policies and public profiles. Nathan's article does nothing to fill either of these gaps.

*M F Blatchford
Observatory*

Prayer for SA

SINCE Idasa is changing its strategies for the new South Africa, I would like to say that it should affirm democratic education and political tolerance among individuals and organisations.

Political intolerance is rife in our townships these days. It seems people are politically intoxicated.

Mr John Kane-Berman of the SA Institute of Race Relations put our political situation in a nutshell when addressing Inyanza at Nelspruit: "totalitarian language, totalitarian behaviour, totalitarian demands and political monopolism."

I hope you don't forget to put township councillors and homeland leaders in your programmes, because they too need to come with us to the new South Africa.

My prayer for South Africa today is: "O Lord, soften the stone hearts of those who preach and practise intolerance and bigotry, as the sun's setting glow softens the stone walls of your country South Africa." □

*Bangumzi Mayana
Soweto*

onal imagination

years, not only in the cultural sense but also geographically, as the wars of conquest took place.

However, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, in combination with this process, resulted in black South Africans becoming increasingly Westernised. The integration of technology into our societal fabric has made this, in a certain sense, an irreversible process – unless we have some pastoral and romantic idea of going back to a mythical “rural” Africa.

The dislocating effects of moving from rural to urban environments, particularly for Afrikaners and black South Africans; the forced geographical dislocation of many Afrikaner farmers during the Anglo-Boer War; the forced removal of thousands of black South Africans with the imposition of the Land Act in 1913; the severe dislocating effect on black South Africans of the implementation of apartheid; the “homelands” and migrant labour; the mass of South Africans who were and are in exile: these are all examples of a common theme in the history of a society that together (although mostly in opposition) went through periods of tremendous “unsettlement” and dislocation.

These massive periods of dislocation for both black and white South Africans took place within the boundaries of the same geographical area that came to be known as South Africa. The advent of “South Africa” in 1910 established this beyond any doubt. In fact, the ANC

‘A new way has opened up to “imagine” South Africa in a way that transcends racial, ethnic and class divisions’

was founded in 1912 because of the political exclusion of black South Africans from this reality.

Economically, however, South Africa has always been a highly integrated society, albeit in an extremely unequal way. And despite the concerted attempts of apartheid and its ideologues to undo this, it has remained so.

IT IS an interesting exercise to read the books that formed the basis for the formalisation of the apartheid discourse, for example, Geoff Cronje’s “Regverdige Rasseskeiding”, written in 1943. If one looks carefully at this book, it describes a reality of increasing racial integration. But a quasi-religious framework is superimposed and the argument is that such integration is wrong, bad or sinful and that God wants us to be apart.

I do not wish to deny the very real aspects of racism, exclusivity and separation that permeate our society. But surely this is not the full story? Are there no silences in this regard that need to be uncovered, explained and inter-



History could throw light on what binds South Africans together.

preted?

South Africans of all races share a history of war and violence, in particular because we have waged war against each other – be it physically, structurally or psychologically. The violence of colonialism and apartheid have tied white South Africans irrevocably to black South Africans, for one cannot exploit people on such a scale and then turn around and pretend nothing happened

between you.

In wars such as the Anglo-Boer War or World War II, South Africans of all races participated, fought and suffered. The most recent example of this is, of course, the civil war waged between the forces of apartheid and the liberation movements.

I want to emphasise, though, that this way of looking at our past should not be seen as an attempt to completely reconstruct history. Neither is it an attempt to smooth over or deny the injustices of the past and the present, nor an effort to impose a new form of hegemony, a narrow kind of nationalism.

It is rather an attempt to focus on the big silences caused by the discourses of segregation and apartheid. It is an attempt to make being South African more concrete; to provide us with a legitimate and mutually acceptable consciousness within which we can securely and vigorously differ and agree as South Africans. □

André Zaaiman is Regional Director of Idasa in Pretoria.

IDASA AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR OPEN MEDIA

presents a national conference on

THE SHAPE AND ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN A NEW SOUTH AFRICA

November 23-25, 1990

Indaba Hotel & Conference Centre
Hartbeespoort Dam Road, Witkoppen,
Johannesburg

PANEL DISCUSSIONS ON:

- Ownership of the Media
- Political Parties' Perspectives on Press Freedom
- Towards an Open Media for a New SA
- Open Media and the Experiences of Zimbabwe, Namibia and Mozambique

WORKSHOPS ON:

Broadcasting, Bill of Rights (censorship constraints and access to information), Code of Ethics, Media & Society, Rights and Safeguards

PROMINENT SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Pallo Jordan, Benny Alexander, Murray Hofmeyr, Richard Steyn, Essop Pahad, Farayi Munyuki (Zimbabwe), Leite de Vasconcelos (Mozambique), Gwen Lister (Namibia), as well as representatives from Fawu, SAUJ, SABC, Radio Freedom and Radio 702

For further information contact Liesel Naude at (011) 403-3580 or Beverley Haubrich at (021) 47-3127