

sufficient leeway to wrest control out of the ruling Party's hands. As a matter of governance this entails firm executive control. The character may alter; econocrats may indeed replace securocrats in the inner sanctum. Whoever the functionaries may be, their master will perpetually be the President. Parliament's subordinate role is assured. Political power in the current circumstances rests with the President and the advisors and bodies with whom he chooses to deal.

Van Zyl Slabbert has usefully depicted South African politics under the state of emergency as being in unstable equilibrium. Nowadays, I would say it is in stable disequilibrium. There's always despair; but there's always laughter; and there are delicious moments of euphoria. Life is never, never dull. Untamed, South Africa is inherently ungovernable. That's really no bad thing. But many of us, it is true, would rather be ungoverned by someone else. □

by **DORIAN HAARHOFF**

THE METEORITE AT THE END OF THE LENS

Future South African-Namibian Relationships as depicted in two drama scripts.

DULLY: Well, I can't see this meteor
 JITTERWIT: Have you looked through the telescope?
 It's a blazing golden ball
 With a fierce blue circle around it
 And around that circle, a fierce red bigger circle,
 And around that one, a fierce purple circle –
 It's rushing to swallow us up, bigger every minute.
 (Ted Hughes, **The Tiger's Bones**)

In Ted Hughes' **The Tiger's Bones** the Master and his entourage are convinced that the approaching meteorite seen through their telescope, is about to land on their heads. Dully unscrews the telescope to find a blob of growing penicillin on the lens. Perhaps this image offers an appropriate introduction to an article dealing with perceptions of an independent Namibia's future relationship with the former colonizing power, South Africa. There are many speculations as to the size of the South African meteorite in the Namibian imagination. To what extent will South Africa loom large on the Namibian lens? Will independence remove the fungus and prove its power and influence an illusion? An example of the removable fungus theory was recently reported in **The Namibian**. At an election rally Ms Maria Kapere, Deputy Head of Mobilization in the SWAPO Election Directorate, asserted that "the election in November is the first chance that Namibians have had in their history to rid themselves of South Africa forever" (5 Aug. 1989:5).

What follows is my personal version of a possible future scenario as depicted in two drama texts scripted by me and performed by University of Namibia students. Perceptions are of course by definition subjective and speculative. **Orange** was performed at the Grahamstown fringe and in Windhoek and Swakopmund in 1988; and

Skeleton in Pretoria, Grahamstown and Cape Town during 1989. The earlier play was directed by Aldo Behrens, Head of the Department of Drama at the University of Namibia and the latter one by Gerrit Schoonhoven, (**Piekniek by Dingaen**, et al) lecturing in a temporary capacity in the same Department. I am indebted to both these dramatic men for their structural insights.

In each case I produced a script which was discussed and workshopped with frequent consultations with director and cast. If one thinks of a continuum with a fixed, unalterable script at one end and a floating non-formed idea at the other, then the scripts I brought to the first rehearsal were placed thus:

FIXED	Orange	FLOATING
SCRIPT	Skeleton	IDEA

After shuffling sequences, crisping dialogue, attending to rhythms, I rescripted the production product where necessary.

Issues

Orange and **Skeleton** both deal with a number of related issues, one of which is the South African-Namibian connection that I wish to explore. Both plays set in the future 1990's, deal with the colonial past and its present play-out. In the **Orange** scenario, Nango, a returned exile with a D.Cit (Dr. of Citrus), comes home to invent a machine, the **William of Orange**, which affects the current of the Lüderitz coast and produces a high rainfall area. What once was desert is now the fertile SWARANGE plantation, producing oranges juicier than Outspan. The oranges come in three sizes. The largest, the Loftus

Orange, is injected with oranje-wit-en-blou-blitz and exported to the rugby crowds down south. The medium is bound for Europe while the smallest, the Ovambo Orange, is kept for home consumption.

NOPU (Namibian Orange Pickers Union) lead by Witbooi (descendant of the famous fighting Hendrik Witbooi who led his white-head-band warriors against colonial forces) want the oranges for Namibia. They challenge management in the person of Mrs Ise Blom, the "citraholic capitalist" and "kind of Namibian Thatcher" who insists on paying off the national debt to RSA. Hedda, a white South African-born student from the University holiday-jobbing at Swarange, and Jonas, an old worker from Ovamboland, set out to help Ise Blom sort out her priorities. They also confront Nango who is compromised since he is part of management yet has roots in the worker movement.

Blom is further compromised by the arrival of the villain, van der Scrum from the RSA. He appears to have come to buy fertile land but is essentially a destabilizer. He promotes continued economic dependence of Namibia on South Africa.

Blom: You really are the old frontier type nê?

VDS: Ya. The frontier flows in the blood.

Chorus: Blood River in the blood stream.

Van der Scrum's bottom line ("You know orange is nogal my favourite colour. . . It makes me think of the Orange River, the Orange Express, the Oranje Vrystaat, the tail of the Boeing, the orange band in our flag") is to destroy the machine if necessary.

The final scene takes place around William of Orange and features a trial (NOPU vs van der Scrum) in which the South African is found guilty of collusion with white black men inside Namibia and expelled across the Orange. However his final "We'll trek back" hangs in the frontier air. The Namibians agree to try to solve their differences and in a final act, the machine is rechristened !Namseb (Hendrik Witbooi's Nama name).

Skeleton

Skeleton is set in an Independent 1998 Namibia. As the country struggles with its W.D.I. (Watered Down Independence) skeletons abound from a violent pre-colonial and colonial past and the water levels drop. The Skeleton Coast has to be swept off the city streets. The new currency, the Kalkrand (a small Namibian village) is struggling against the Mark. The Usakos Kos Co, (Usakos is another village) a small co-op growing cucumbers and cabbages in the desert, is confronted by the small but powerful RSR (The Republic of Skeleton Republic) under its flag – "a white rhino horn crossed with a white powder horn on a white background". The RSR, "another Walvis Bay", led by the notorious van der Mentele, a biltongboer who hunts rhino horn, is tapping the water supply in the underground streams to use for nefarious purposes such as the green rugby field (Test matches against the WBTF – Walvis Bay Territorial Force).

The storyline concerns the dream journey of Unis from UNO who has come to Namibia to check on her skeleton staff. She encounters Nampa, the Namibian who floats between Europe and the Usakos Kos Co, and his daughter Dorsa, who works at Nambrew. Their beer

making at October Fest time is also affected by the sinking water table. They all meet at the Ipumbu-Strijdom Airport. (The possible future and the past name of the Airport. Ipumbu, the rebel Ovambo chief, fell foul of the South Africans in the early decades of the century). They agree to meet at the Independence Cafe the following day.

Unis, taking the bus down Jan Jonker Road into Windhoek, falls down excavations ("altyd a gat in die straat") into pre-colonial Eikhams (Windhoek), meaning the place of steaming water. There she encounters both neglect of the water supply in the great cattle raid days and the bones of Herero slaves. Back in the present, she meets up with Klaus ferreting around the excavation site. Enticing her with his private supply of well water (Unis is for ever thirsty, her bones drying up in such a land) they tour Klaus' Antique Shop brimming with colonial memorabilia such as the jawbone of von Trotha's horse (Von Trotha was the German commander involved in the near genocide of the Herero during the 1904-6 war).

At the Independence Cafe in Kaiser-Mandume Street (another hybrid of Ovambo protest and German past) Unis meets a friend of Nampa, Sonderwater from Water Affairs. She accompanies him down Dragon's Breath, the under-water system, to ascertain why the levels are dropping. In the Namibian underground they encounter a colonial ghost, a colonial addict, Meths (**M**issionary, **E**xplorer, **T**rader, **H**unter, **S**oldier) who inhabits a house of elephant bones and who will not let them pass until they guess his name. Unis and Sonderwater, spurted out atop a "moerse windpomp", encounter van der Mentele, are expelled from the RSR and end up at the Usakos Co-Op.

In the final scene the community, attempting to grapple with the water problem and the RSR's monopoly (endings are the difficult bit) realize their potential as water and dance the dance of Ezekiel in which bone is united with bone and flesh with flesh. Hopefully as Ernst Block asserts, "The true genesis is not at the beginning but at the end".

Images

Perhaps this is where this article should end. Satire and symbols are self-evident. Briefly however I wish to review the reviews and reflect on some of these images. Interestingly none of the theatre critics of the two pieces focused on the Namibia/SA connection. Critics of **Orange** discussed the white African theme (Hedda) and structural events such as the chorus. A South African University Drama academic in a private letter also raised the issue of the chorus as a technique sustaining "tensions between individuals and a collective spirit" and the white African theme while alluding to the issue of "colonial stealth". Fanie Olivier (**Cue** 6 July 1988) felt the strength of the play was "not to be found in either the story or the ideology but in the structure of the presentation". **Skeleton** critics also responded to stylistic-structural elements. The **Star** critic, Andrea Vinassa (12 April 1989) commented positively. The "combination of satire, cabaret, popsci-fi film device, . . . effects a sort of political 'Back to the future'". In discussions with some students, liberation slogan euphoria did not countenance the possibility of such a RSA influenced scenario.

Orange was performed in the months before 435 became

a political reality. In this scenario at least, the destabilizer and cohort are identified and expelled, if only temporarily. Yet if the RSA, as frontline states assert, is capable of destabilization of independent states that have never been colonies, what of Namibia where conscripted manpower and army remnants exist in a former settler colony? Ironically SWAPO has itself contributed to the SA spy paranoia in asserting that dissidents held in camps were part of a sophisticated and tried front line infiltration.

Skeleton was written and first performed in April to the ironic accompaniment of SADF/Plan engagement along the border. In this play the RSA presence is extended into a state within a state – a white homeland in a compromised land. The idea is not as far fetched as it seems. Prominent Rehoboth politicians dream of an independent Rehoboth Republic with a corridor to Walvis Bay (some 300 kilometres away). Walvis Bay itself is the entrenched enclave landlocking Namibia as effectively as if it were an inland state. Richard Moorsom argues:

“Walvis Bay will continue to play an important part in South Africa’s strategy towards Namibia and neighbouring states to the east and north. Economically, Walvis Bay can be used as a powerful lever to coerce a Namibian government to maintain ‘friendly relations’ with South Africa, or in other words to remain subservient to the regime’s economic and military aims in the southern African subcontinent. It can also be used to deny to the black nations of central Africa an alternative to their present trade dependence on South African ports. Militarily, the massive build-up of South African armed might within the enclave represents a serious threat not only to the self-determination process in Namibia but also to the victims of South Africa’s repeated acts of military aggression beyond Namibia’s borders, particularly in southern Angola.”

(**Walvis Bay, Namibia’s Port**, 1984:70)

The brand of independence is the borderland as opposed

to the homeland model as Namibia joins those frontline states where customs are vulnerable to squeezes and where vocal protest is underscored by silent import. In such a situation words and deeds separate and as William Faulkner’s *Addie* of **As I Lay Dying** suggests, soon they are “too far apart for the same person to straddle from one to the other” (1983:138).

The solution to Namibian independence does not lie in Namibia but in the solution to the greater southern African problem. In 1915, General Smuts was involved in the conquest of German South West Africa. In a letter to J.X. Merriman, Smuts spoke of a greater South African political entity from the Kunene to the Zambezi, including the High Commission territories and southern Mozambique which was to be exchanged with Mozambiquan acquisition of territory in east Africa. The greater plan never materialized and instead of South Africans securing Bechuanaland, Swaziland, Southern Rhodesia, Basutoland, southern Mozambique and South West Africa, they secured only tentatively the latter state. South Africa’s wooden spoonist position on the Empire Log – Played 6, Lost 5, Won 1 – perhaps partly explains its emotional involvement in its only fifth province colony. While Smuts’ advocacy of a greater south Africa, with what he called natural borders, was a latter-day colonial anachronism, ironically there is a kind of sense in regarding Southern Africa as a unit. Nor can Kwacha come to one part while in another it is still night. I am reminded of Ezekiel Mphahlele’s **Chirundu** where the prison warden supervising detainees (possible South African spies), continually lauds the new dawn. I do not think that Namibia can be free until South Africa is.

The red, purple and blue circles of the **Tiger’s Bones** telescope might be removable fungus on the lens. But until the paradigm shift within South Africa itself, the orange, white and blue bands seen in the independent Namibian lens exist as an approaching meteorite.□

Editor’s Note: The next issue of REALITY will be a double issue dealing with matters relating to land and urbanisation in South Africa. It will combine the January and March issues for 1990 and we hope to get it to subscribers during February.

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