

6 January 1994

Dearest Janet

Just heard from Ellis in Santa Barbara. He intends holding what he calls a Hilda Bernstein 'retrospective' in March. So I thought I would let you know, in case the owner of your local gallery might still be interested in taking the show over after SB. However, I think it highly unlikely that I will be able to come to the US. The Guernica Gallery is losing money fast, and Ellis says they are closing down in July when their lease expires. He was wondering whether my publishers would help out in sponsoring a trip to the US, but I am sure that is out of the question. My book - I should be getting advance copies in a few days - is due for publication 13 February, and I know the publishers would only consider a trip to the US if they had sold the US rights, which they haven't done. In fact the whole story of this book is a ghastly saga as far as I am concerned, yet even after everything, I have a conviction that it is an important book and will prove fascinating reading, if only it can reach people. I think I am going to have very poor promotion - it's not a money-maker for the publishers, and after taking over the contract from another conglomerate who took it over from the people I first signed up with, I feel there is minimal interest in it as far as the publishers are concerned.

If your gallery does want to get in touch with Ellis, he will be away until 15 February, having rented out the gallery for January & Feb.

We are enduring one of the most depressing winters - climatically - that I can recall. Or perhaps it is always like this, but it just feels worse each year as you get older. It rains incessantly (floods all over Britain), it's cold, it's dark, it's just grey and depressing. A great longing to see the sun again, and Rusty & I are thinking very hard about going to SA for the elections. I feel strongly we should be there, but we are now living off a very limited capital, and the fares are very high. I can tell you that we are all enormously excited about 27 April, regardless of the horrendous problems that exist. It is something like a miracle - when were we ever on the winning side? When you think about it, it is quite an extraordinary story. I have just been reviewing a book of Nelson's speeches from 1990 to 1993 - they read much better than when he gives them - his delivery is not good - but it traces the tale of the negotiations from the time he was released. But in fact it all began four years before that, in 1986, when PW Botha was still president. Ministers began approach NM to barter terms for his release, which was all that they intended. They never meant to legalise the ANC & release him without conditions. It is fascinating, because it shows how a process, once begun, gathers its own momentum and then cannot be stopped from radical changes, apart from completely aborting the whole thing, which was never possible. I have also just read a new biography of Winnie, it throws quite a lot of light on her character, particularly because of her childhood.

Toni came back from 6 weeks of peace monitoring in the Eastern Cape, full of fascinating tales of what is happening, including meetings with farm workers to explain what voting is all about, with white farmers presiding.

I wonder if you finished your novel, and what it is about. I wish you good publishers in 1994.

I sent Mary a copy of an article that I wrote about my own book - I meant to send you a copy, but think I forgot. She sent me a note at Christmas, that she never wants to see a hospital again, and fewer medics would suit her well, so I must conclude that the arthritis has been rather bad.

Home affairs: Rusty has completed the building of the conservatory and the bashing down of walls, and as far as the living portion is concerned we now have a lovely house - upstairs the bathroom & bedrooms are horrible, but that doesn't matter so much. Wish you could see it, really, wish you could find

By air mail  
Paravion



Great  
Britain  
Postage  
Paid

EX JB



Aerogramme

Janet Stegvenson

783 Fifth Street

Hannond

OR 97121

USA

Name and address of sender

Hilda Bernstein  
57 Lock Crescent  
Kidlington  
Oxon OX5 1HF  
Phone 08675 3642

Postcode

An aerogramme should not contain any enclosure

To open slit here

To open slit here

the time and money to come for a visit (but not until May, June, then it is beautiful, even if the weather hasn't improved, just madly beautiful). Think on it, as they used to say, We haven't so many years left

We spent Christmas with, first, Toni, and then Frances. Keith went to Thailand to be with his love, and Patrick & his wife stayed home, recovering from a year of intense work & too much travelling around. Toni still has her house in Wales, although it has been rented to a rich American, but he was away & told her to use it in his absence (he lives in LA) It was stunningly beautiful, snowed & Christmas day was like an old-fashioned painting. Then we went on to Leeds, & stayed with Frances & John for a couple of days. The really wonderful thing was me not doing anything, not shopping, cooking, decorating, preparing. One of the few compensations of being old & having grown-up kids.

Much love to you Janet. Write some time - if the book is finished & you haven't started a new one.

Hilda

31 January 1994

Dearest Janet,

Thanks for writing about Mary's place. My grandson (Mark)'s friend Heidi, who lives in LA but was visiting here at Christmas and stayed a while, said she would phone Mary when she returned, but I hadn't heard from her. I've just written to Mary, and having another airletter left, decided I must write to you. (Mark always chooses American girlfriends, this one is a nice one.)

About you. First, I hope the new knee is installed and functioning. Next, please come with your friend, but don't come until May. Two reasons. We'll be away until at least the middle of May, and second reason, May is the most beautiful month. We're going to South Africa for the elections! Enormous excitement. The ANC asked Rusty if he would come to help with their run-up to the elections. We had talked and talked about going, I knew he had to be there, me too, to see what we had all worked for and dreamed about come to pass, but we couldn't make up our minds to part with our rapidly dwindling store of savings for fares, which are enormous. But when the ANC said they wanted Rusty to come, and hoped we would both come, and would pay a stipend while we were there, but couldn't pay the fares - well, we had to go. We will stay with friends. Rusty is going soon, in about 10 days. I will stay on until after my books are out - publication date 23 Feb, I have advance copies already, and to see if there are any radio, press, etc, interviews, which I hope for but may not come about. Then plan to go about the middle of March. We will stay for a couple of weeks after the elections.

So please, Janet, you and friend must come to Oxford (if you don't mind sleeping on a futon ~~a sofa~~ if your knee is OK, otherwise we'll try to fix a bed off the floor it would be wonderful to see you; have you ever been to Oxford? It's a city to see, and not very large, easy to walk around, and May is perfect. I've spent a year or two imagining that somehow I can spend the money to visit you and Mary and others in the USA. Now - unless they sell the American rights of my book and I get some more money ~~it~~ seems most unlikely. And my publisher keeps saying: you can't sell books about SA in the USA, they don't want them, and I don't think he has even tried. And I could drive you both around some parts you might want to see - we could go to Old House Farm, you will love it there (we sold it to a friend, and can always visit); or other parts you might want to see.

What I have just written to Mary, I will write to you: that it is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for us - never in a lifetime for most - to see something one has believed in so deeply and struggle for so long actually come into being; all those things we felt so passionate about - no nuclear bombs, no more war, justice, human rights, (and remember where we three met?) and that abstract thing - freedom - we were the ~~xxxxx~~ little people fighting against such powerful international forces; but this one thing, we won! A miracle to be on the winning side for once. So that despite the horrific problems that exist in SA, and will multiply after the elections when expectations confront reality, despite the confusion, the massive third-world poverty (7 million people living in urban shanty towns) the despairing unemployment among a whole generation of uneducated youth, the violence and criminality, despite all this, the elections are a moment of stunning triumph and of hope; and we did it! Not meaning me and Rusty, but we in the ANC, inside and outside, through all those years of rallies and demos and underground work, street corners and standing outside shops with boycott petitions, and fighting for sanctions against sports people and intellectuals as well as governments, and travelling around to anti-apartheid meetings all over the place (as I did for years); starting with absolute indifference outside SA, until there was not a country that could defend apartheid . . . well, I could go on for ever, but you understand. So I felt we had to be there, and now we will be. Nelson is a truly heroic figure, a great man, whose role has been central and essential. A fascinating process of what happens when something is started with limited aims (on de Klerk & the Nationalist Party's part) and develops a momentum of its own that cannot be aborted; but it would not have come about this way, that is, the extraordinary outcome of a ruling elite voluntarily ceding power without being confronted with superior military force, without outside mediation (as in Rhodesia, Palestine, etc) without someone of the massive integrity & personality of Nelson.

By air mail  
Paravion



Great  
Britain  
Postage  
Paid



Aerogramme



Janet Stevenson

783 5th Street

Hammond

OR 97121

USA

Name and address of sender

---

---

---

---

Postcode

An aerogramme should not contain any enclosure

To open slit here

To open slit here

Astonishing to think that 9<sup>th</sup> a way it was the 27 years in jail that preserved him physically, where there was a prison routine (extremely harsh during the first years but improving later) and a self-imposed exercise routine - in an interview I saw recently on TV he was asked how a man of 76 had the stamina to keep up even that one day's programme; he gave that wonderful smile and said that due to circumstances he had become accustomed to getting up at 4 every morning . . .

Two novels! how on earth did you do it, with all the other activities? I wonder what they are about. My own energies seem to have diminished a great deal. Hours when I used to work I now idle, and for the past year have done little, apart from one art show (an annual event in Oxfordshire where all artists display their work) I've done almost nothing other than things connected with our house-fixing and domesticity and reading a bit more. I don't really enjoy not doing, and hope after SA to start drawing and painting properly.

Much love

*Wilder*

(Son Keith is doing extremely well free-lancing photography in the world's trouble spots - just back from 2 weeks in hopeless, destroyed, ghastly Angola.)

I'm back in Oxford - (yes, came back to an English summer and put the central heating on after leaving sunny and warm Joh'burg Autumn) - and loads of letters to write and enormous piles of things to do, but I don't know where to start to try and describe to you what we experienced in SA. We still phone each other and marvel about it; the word everyone uses is 'unbelievable'. It did happen, but could it have happened? I'll try to describe election day, though I daresay, like everyone here in Britain you must have seen a lot of it on television.

Up to a week before there was enormous tension and anxiety. No one knew what Buthelezi would do, and everyone feared the worst. As long as he stayed out we knew there would be a great deal of bloodshed; that particularly in Natal, but also in the Transvaal townships where there were hostels with Inkatha men, there would be physical obstructions and violence, and enormous intimidation of those who wanted to vote. Only when Buthelezi finally faced the fact that the election was going to take place, that now even de Klerk would not agree to a postponement, and that he was going to be literally nobody, nothing, once that happened (his Kwa-Zulu police would be replaced, his funding cease) that he gave in. Lots more to be said about that, but I haven't the time.

Voting day was one of Joh'burg's most beautiful. An Autumn nip, but warm in the sun - hot later on; a deep blue cloudless sky. We started early touring the polling stations around the (mostly) white suburbs where I was staying. The queues were endless - round and round the blocks. We finally settled for one that seemed to have the shortest queue; even so we waited for three hours. To the surprise of the whites, who always believed that their suburbs were 'white', there were more blacks in the queues than whites - a revelation that in fact more blacks than whites live in their 'white' suburbs. I truly believe that it was the first time that all the black domestics, sweepers-out of shops, street cleaners, gardeners, became visible to them; and visible not as the 'boy' or 'girl' who slept in their backyard, but as citizens like them, with the right to vote like them. Whites have never queued with blacks, although in the last few years public transport has been desegregated, but in this posh white area people only travel by car.

A transformation took place. It was strangely quiet - electioneering was not permitted near the polling stations. The people stood together in the sun and shade filtering through the trees. Everyone seemed content to stand and wait as long as it was necessary. So they talked to each other. If someone brought sandwiches in one part of the queue, they were shared out. All the tension and anger of the past weeks had disappeared. There was a feeling of peace and serenity, even a quiet joy. To me it was a spiritual transformation. The whites (except for the lunatic fringe) had now accepted that there would be a black majority government, and it was as though a burden had been lifted from them - doubt, anger, guilt. They will not readily admit that, but they were released on that day, standing in those queues, sharing the wait to vote, from the unrecognised guilt they had lived with for decades. And for the blacks a new-found sense of selfhood, accepting the whites around them not with suspicion or resentment for the apartheid past, but with openness and friendliness. Everyone who went into the polling station came out smiling broadly. Bishop Tutu said he was on a cloud, it

was like falling in love. To me the only other time I have experienced such pure joy and wonder was immediately after giving birth; which is a better analogy, for we were indeed giving birth to a new time.

We were lucky to have only a three-hour wait. Some people in country areas queued for seven hours, then came back the next day to queue again. So many said the same thing: I've waited all my life for this. What do a few hours matter? Of course there was a lot of cheating and fixing. Voting papers arrived at white polling stations, but in country towns were often unavailable in the townships. The Natal result was fixed; everyone who knew the province - journalists from all over the place, monitors, observers, said the result was not possible. But that is another story, and not a simple one. Toni was working as a UN observer in a country area, and described the things that went on there. But overall it was a kind of compromise to accept a great deal of this, as the final outcome was never in any doubt.

Keith was also there for 2 months, trailing the Nelson Mandela bandwagon; after which he said that he could not live in SA, it would make him too uncomfortable. And Frances came for ten days, and voted joyfully, and sought out her past, the house where we lived, the schools she went to - to her delight the children in her secondary school playing in the yard, wearing the same uniform that she wore, were mixed, black and white. So it was only Patrick, bogged down with work, who was not there.

After that there was the inauguration, to which we were invited, and that was an exciting day as well - probably the one thing that convinced me that all this was really taking place was the sight of the chiefs of the armed forces, the top blokes loaded down with rows of medals on their impressive uniforms, smartly saluting their chief, Nelson, before shaking hands. It was a great day, even though we had to sit for hours in the baking sun.

The whole time in SA was the most wonderful time of my life. But we came back. I would like to live there for a couple of years; the people, the vitality, everything I see around me there is stimulating, and I would like to stay and draw and paint. But Rusty is reluctant, and it would mean selling our house, burning out boats, leaving our family. And life in Johannesburg with its rampant crime and need for high security, is not comfortable. Of course we were torn. Almost all our friends have returned. In many ways we are still strangers here. It's the unhealable rift - it's all in my book about exiles which had some really good reviews. No American edition yet; can't afford to dispense copies to all my friends, it's a hefty book, plus 500 pages, and costs a lot. Should be a paperback, but not for some time. There was quite a crisis over the book in SA when the head of a Death Squad threatened to sue me and the publishers. Long story. But proof of the old adage, any publicity is good publicity; eventually it increased the sales.

3/6/94

Hilda Bernstein  
57 Lock Crescent  
Kidlington  
Oxon OX5 1HF  
Phone 08675 2642

0865-37-3642

Dearest Janet,

Mulling over your March/April letter, and wondering when the knee is going to be mobile enough for your visit. Do you have any idea of when it will be? I do expect to stay put for a while, but maybe in September Rusty & I might take off for a short while - if we can afford it. We are living on inadequate pensions plus a small & diminishing saving account. It's all a question of how long we're going to live.

I've done a print-out (enclosed) for a brief description of election day. We've been so lucky to live to see this. I mourn deeply over friends who did not survive. What I have written is re inadequate, and I haven't even mentioned Nelson, the most extraordinary of humans, a most warm, concerned and really great individual.

I'm not adjusted to being back. The weather is vile and how I miss the sun! Joh'burg climate compensates for a great deal.

That's all for now. I must post this and get on with all the other letters.

Much love

*Hilda*

*Blair & Helen Castle  
Rayburns  
SE of Selby  
in Howards*

21 June 1994

Dearest Janet

I'm happy you are arriving in September. Rusty and I have made no arrangements for going on holiday - the South African venture disabled us financially as you may guess. But I had entertained a hope that we might do a trip to France and Italy in Autumn - years since we've been there - there has been no summer in England this year, and the grey, gloom and chill seems all the worse for the time in Joh'burg; I long for some sun. But I doubt whether we will do this, and in any case, not at the time you are coming.

The route to Oxford from Heathrow may sound complicated, but it actually is not really difficult. In my travels whilst doing the book the biggest handicap was carting my luggage around - I simply can't carry anything mildly heavy. But I believe that you will get assistance - the British tend to treat Americans like loveable but simple children.

At Heathrow you find out where you can get a bus to Reading. Reading is on the way to Oxford - one stop down, quite a big centre, and buses run there regularly from Heathrow. At Reading you phone me (0865-37-3642) and tell me the time of the train you are taking to Oxford, and if possible time of arrival at Oxford. I will meet you at the station. (I get quite excited simply typing this - meet you at the station!)

Our house is hardly offering luxury accommodation. The only decent bedroom is my studio/workroom; we put up guests on a double futon in the living room. If you will find this too uncomfortable - getting down to it, and sharing with Karen (I can't sleep with anyone else these days) (or nights) then we will make some alternative arrangement - R and I are flexible people, we can always move things around.

Rusty has expressed a favourable reaction to going to Karen's friends in the Border Country - cautious as always, not jumping up and down with enthusiasm and saying what a wonderful idea! - but that's not his style. Do we have to commit ourselves now - or can that wait until you come?

You will stay with us as short or long as you wish - do you know Oxford? A unique city, and maybe by September the enormous flood of tourists and student parties from all over Europe and Japan will have subsided a little. If only the weather is kind to us . . . tomorrow is midsummer here, from 22 June onwards the days start getting shorter again, and I've just turned on the heating.

We'll tell you all about SA, and you can relay it when you get back home. It's slipped out of the news here - was flavour of the month for an intense period, but the cliff-hanging is over.

Much love



By air mail  
Par avion



Great Britain  
Postage Paid



Aerogramme

Janet Stevenson

783 5th Street

Hammond

OR 97121

USA

Name and address of sender

Hilda Bernstein  
57 Lock Crescent  
Kidlington  
Oxon. OX5 1HF  
Phone 08675 3842

0865. 37. 3642

Postcode

An aerogramme should not contain any enclosure



To open see

July 24, 1994

Dearest Hilda:

I've held off writing until Karen firmed up an arrangement with her friends in Howick and a good thing, too. They moved out of the castle last week-end! So if anything we are planning can--by adjustment of any kind--fit in with your vacation plan, let me know. Here's Karen's idea of our travel plan. (~~which I realized last night is quite impossible to follow in the time we have between arrival and departure.~~)

Arrive Heathrow Sept. 6 at 10:30 A.M.

Take bus to Reading and train to Oxford

Stay a few days with you (and if two are too many for your "guest room", Karen may have an alternative hostess; or we may find a B/B.)

Go to visit her friends in Sherburne, which is in Dorset, near Yeovil, for a couple of days.

Go by train or bus to Cornwall (Land's End?)

Go by train to Manchester, and on to Glasgow.

Go by bus to Oban, thence by ferry to Mull

MY ONE UNALTERABLE OBJECTIVE IS TO VISIT FINGAL'S CAVE!

Back to a RR (or a bus depot) and up around the north of Scotland, and down to Inverness

~~STAY AT KATE STORER'S B/B ON THE RIVER. REMEMBER?~~

By train to Edinburgh, and thence to York,

Stay a while with her friends there

By train to London/Heathrow

Depart for home Oct. 4 at 1:30 P.M.

Obviously, this is impossible! But we can cut to fit when we get RR and bus time tables, and have an idea of whether you (or Karen's friends) want to go along for any part of this ride. Fingal's Cave is the only thing (beside seeing you) that I'm inflexible about. Karen seems determined to see Inverness, and if she's still in business, I want to see Kate Storer.

We have Britrail passes, which are good for 8 days of train travel, not necessarily consecutive, any time that month. Without time tables etc. we really can't plan very intelligently. But we don't have to until we get there. Then we'll need a slide rule.

I'll do as you direct: find a bus from Heathrow to Reading. (Is there a Gaol there?) Look up trains to Oxford, call and tell you which one we're taking and when it arrives. So you don't have to write back, but I wish you would--and tell me whether I have to bring clothes for hot weather. (What is your idea of hot?) And whether there is anything you want me to do on this side before we take off. (I will call Mary and see if she has any errands.)

Meanwhile: your letter about the elections has gone into a second edition here, and there are people lining up who want to buy the American edition if and when. One of them is our Congresswoman, Elizabeth Furse. She was part of the U.S. delegation to the inaugural. I'm sure I've told you about her: her mother was one of the founders of the Black Sash and she stood vigil with her as a child. They left S.A. while Elizabeth was a teen-ager. Went to England, where E. married (an Englishman, I think) and had two children. At some point she divorced and came to the U.S. Married a man who is active in Native American affairs. He and she own and run a small wine-grape growing business near Portland.

She has been active in many kinds of "good works", the last of which was as Director (founding) of the Oregon Peace Council. Not a likely base from which to step up to national office. But she's been a courageous and effective "freshman" representative. Now we have to get her re-elected, and it won't be all that easy.

I tell you all this because she says that once the election is over--no matter which way it comes out--she's going back to the Cape Province. She said that day in Pretoria, "I never thought I'd be able to come home and be proud of the fact that it was my home."

# Discovering Exiles

**'Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience,' wrote Edward Said. 'It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home; its essential sadness can never be surmounted.'**

**HILDA BERNSTEIN takes the title of her new book,**

**The Rift — The Exile Experience of South Africans, from Edward Said. Here she describes how she researched her book and gives us a portrait of the South African exile experience**

When James Madhlope Phillips died, I knew I had to write about exiles.

Like so many exiles he left South Africa alone, but unlike many others he sent for his family and rebuilt it in exile. He and his wife Maud managed to buy a terraced house in London. They took in lodgers, South Africans who like themselves had come into exile. Most of the ANC leaders who came to London found their first home with Maud and James: Duma Nokwe, J.B. Marks, Robbie Resha, and many others. Oliver Tambo, who led the ANC in exile for 30 years, lived there with his family, until they could find a place of their own.

James had a wonderful resonant bass voice. All of us in the liberation movement loved to hear him sing. He trained choirs in Wales, the United States, Holland and Germany to sing South African freedom songs. His voice was as deep and as powerful as Paul Robeson's. He was our Robeson.

James Phillips was, like all the exiles who left South Africa between the late 1950s and the 1990s, removed from history. The continuity of his and their lives had been broken; they had left their homes of their own country, but they did not become part of the history of their host countries. And if memory is the continuity principle for persons, then history is the continuity principle for nations. I wanted to reclaim the right of the exiles to a place in South African history, a right they themselves had earned by their rejection of and resistance to the laws of apartheid; and in the case of white exiles, their rejection of the social values of their class and race. 'Police files,' wrote Kundera, 'are our only claim to immortality.' I would interview exiles so that they could claim an immortality for themselves.

The exact number of our exiles was not known, but was estimated to be around 60,000 — it was impossible to assess with any accuracy. And often the distinction between an exile and an émigré was blurred. They had left by different routes, crossing borders; they had entered countries without passports or papers; or sometimes had left with exit permits, which denied them the right to return to their own country.

They were scattered throughout the world. Tanzania was perhaps the first and most generous of countries in giving home to exiles, and provided facilities for the ANC's mission in exile. Many lived in Dar es Salaam, while hundreds of exiles sheltered temporarily or permanently at Mazimbu where the ANC built a school for students who had fled South Africa after the 1976 uprising in Soweto. Later Lusaka in Zambia became the ANC head-



Hilda Bernstein

quarters with a considerable community of South Africans; a smaller community grew in Mozambique (from which they were ousted by the Nkomati Accord). The biggest concentrations of exiles were in Angola, at camps established by Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC.

Outside these clusters lay the Diaspora. Thousands of exiles went to English-speaking countries; others were scattered throughout Europe, east and west, learning new languages and how to live in new and alien cultures. The Scandinavian countries were generous in offering asylum and scholarships. As part of the war to win hearts and minds the socialist countries of Eastern Europe offered education and

scholarships, as did the USA and West Germany. Many stayed in the countries of Southern Africa in which they began their journey into exile, or went on to study or to work in African countries — to Nigeria, Mozambique, Ghana, Ethiopia. There were exiles in Australia, New Zealand and a scattering in South America and on the Indian sub-continent.

The host country conditioned the exile experience. To obtain a cross-section of that experience would mean seeking exiles in many different countries. Time and money imposed its own restrictions. I began by targeting certain people in different countries. I ended by drift-net trawling, a wasteful method that meant discarding the larger part of the 'catch' in my case, about two-thirds of the 332 people I eventually interviewed. But the result of this was that I obtained extraordinary stories from people I had not known; just by listening to these people — particularly the women (but I will come back to the women) — I began to discover what it meant to be an exile from apartheid. And, ultimately, the meaning of exile.

The South African experience of exile was both universal and unique. It was universal in the disruption, the loss and loneliness, the alienation, the restlessness and the sense of lives fractured. It was unique in that we were not, like many others, exiles from war or famine or religious persecution, but exiles from apartheid. The politics of apartheid are the essential core of the South African exiles' experience, something they could not leave behind and from which they were never free. Thus in some cases the exiles' stories are more about the traumas before leaving the country than of exile itself. But these experiences are a component of exile, essential to explicating their lives. Émigrés leave voluntarily, but no one goes into exile by choice, only under the compulsion of situations that have become intolerable, that endanger both living and life.

And many exiles were totally severed from their families. They left alone, usually without telling anyone, even parents. And even if they joined with others who were crossing the border,

they were among strangers. The ANC instructed those who joined it, and particularly those in MK, not to try and communicate with their families back home. It was dangerous both for themselves and for the families, many of whom were continuously persecuted and blackmailed by the Security Police. This total severance bitterly exacerbated the fragmentation of their lives. Lulu Mabena movingly described her loss of contact with her family: 'The first time I tried to contact my family after I left was in 1977 when I was in Nigeria. I felt, now I can't take it any more.' She wrote. But they wrote back, 'It's better you don't write any more because of the harassment that we received from the police immediately after your letter arrived.' Then she never wrote again. 'Until 1983, when I felt I would break now. I was so far away, in Germany. I didn't know if my parents were still alive. I was just lost. I felt: So this is how it is when one is dead. They don't know anything about you. All they know is that you are no more.'

## 10

Some way had to be found to reassemble those fragmented lives, to compensate for the loss of home, family, community; and for many the ANC became the surrogate. 'The ANC is my family now,' some — perhaps defiantly — proclaimed. It became more than a political commitment; it was an emotional necessity. The new rituals that substituted for those they could no longer partake in — marriage, birth, death — were the commemoration of dates: January 8 (foundation of ANC, 1912), June 16 (Soweto uprising), June 26 (Freedom Day), August 8 (Women's Day), December 16 (Africa Day). Wherever they were, the exiles came together, chanted the slogans, sang the freedom songs, rose with clenched fists and full hearts to the harmony of Nkosi Sikelele. These were the rituals that held them together, no longer strangers in a strange land. We belong! It is you, our hosts, our sympathisers, who are the outsiders.

But many were dispersed outside the exile circles, alone or with a few others, across the cities and towns, even the remote rural areas, of the continents. They had set out on unmappped journeys, travelled with the uncertainty of unknown destinations; found a way to exist among the confused streets of anonymous cities; mastered difficult, often obscure languages; studied a variety of cultures; learned to modulate their voices to a European pitch, to adjust their eyes to the foreshortened landscapes, the diminished skies. And knew they were never again situated in the normal.

Babu, later to be the head of the primary school at Mazimbu, lived 'on a Godforsaken little place called Cross Lake' — an Indian reservation in the far north of Canada, where he taught among a demoralised and dispossessed community. Ossie Dennis spent thirteen years as the only South African in a small German town: 'I tried hard not

to integrate, because I knew that if I integrate it's going to be difficult to uproot and go back.' Even so, he started as a brick-layer and ended as a civil engineer. Hajoo Carim drove her sons to and from school through war-torn Beirut. Gloria Nkdiming, separated from her home and mother when she was fourteen, grew up studying on an island in Cuba. Terry Bell and his wife taught in New Zealand. A small colony ended in Århus, halfway up the coast of Jutland, where the Beck family — parents with eleven children — were taken by the Danish refugee organisation when they were threatened with deportation back to South Africa from Botswana. And it was from Århus that Godfrey Beck, before he died, persuaded the Danish parliament to adopt the first resolution boycotting South African goods.

The strangeness — sometimes almost unreality — of the exiles' experiences was often locked within themselves and difficult to release. After relating their story, some would say, 'I've never spoken about that before'. There were things too painful for them to express. There was also fear for the safety of those left behind, and even fear of what could happen to them in exile — the death squads reached to Europe, Grace Cele was kidnapped from Swaziland by South African commandos and taken on a gruesome, bizarre, nightmare journey in a van with a dead man; left suffering for months in a pointless and unexplained detention; then warned on her release never to tell anyone what had happened. She was so fearful for her children that she told no one, until when she was in exile in Canada she was persuaded that they would be safer if her story were told.

Two related interviews epitomised the drama and diversity of the exiles' lives. In Canada I interviewed Joyce Diphalu through her husband, Rola, because a stroke had robbed her of the power of speech. In Botswana she had been targeted by a South African police death squad who shot her in the neck but failed to kill her. In Britain I interviewed Dirk Coetzee, the head of that death squad who had crossed the border into Botswana that night to assassinate Joyce and Rola. Later Dirk had defected, and was now also an exile. The two stories of that night sit side by side.

The South African death squads and commandos operated with arrogant disregard for frontiers in Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana and in Zambia and Mozambique. There were 11,500 South Africans who had sought refuge in Lesotho, a tiny country of 1.3 million people. In one horrific night in December 1982 South African commandos surged through the sleeping streets of Maseru and assassinated 42 people, 30 South Africans and 12 Basotho. Ma-Mia, whose husband, daughter and son were murdered that night, recounts how she wished they had killed her too; but she survived to care for her dead daughter's child and other children as a matron in Mazibuni. Steve Bati who washed the bodies of murdered comrades on the mortuary slabs and prepared them for the funeral tells how for weeks after he could not eat meat. Bunie Sexwale lay in a ditch with her daughters, watching her house

being bombed and burned. Two weeks after I had interviewed Father Lapsley in Zimbabwe, he suffered horrific injuries from a letter bomb, losing both hands and an eye.

A raid in Botswana in 1986 killed 12, including a talented artist; the raiders shot over and over into a pile of his drawings to kill them too; and the raid also destroyed a flourishing experiment in arts organisation, the Medu Arts Ensemble, an association set up by the exiles embracing theatre, music, poetry, the graphic arts, and through its activities joined the exiles with Botswana citizens. After the raid the exiles had to move on, scattered into other countries.

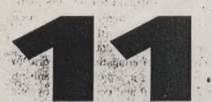
Zambia, too, was an unsafe haven, but the exile experience in places like Lusaka was totally different from that further north in Africa or in Europe and America. For all the difficulties of life in Lusaka the South Africans were a large community still within the ambience of Southern Africa. While some married Zambians, there was never any attempt to adjust to the life and culture of another country. In these border lands, the Front Line states, the exiles were not so much strangers in a strange country, but part of a cohesive community in which their own customs and traditions were firmly maintained, and held together by their organised opposition to apartheid.

Further north, the strangeness began to grow. In many ways it was harder for black South Africans to adjust to living in black countries — Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Ghana — than it was for them in Europe. In Europe they knew, and were so often reminded, that they did not belong, and did not try to assimilate. Being in a black majority country, on the other hand, deceived them into thinking that they shared a common culture or outlook. They found this was not so. The experience of some South African students in Nigeria was a particularly bitter one.

Mazibuni, the site of the ANC school in Tanzania, was another enclosed community. I began my interviews in Mazibuni, where everyone was an exile. Many of the Soweto generation, for whom the school had been started ten years earlier, had returned as adults with degrees in philosophy, economics, international affairs after further education in Europe; while what Mazibuni really needed were typists, administrators, skilled organisers, social workers and counsellors. There were problems at Mazibuni where the ANC could not cope: a national liberation organisation is not equipped to deal with the psychological traumas suffered by young people torn from their families, to handle teenage pregnancies, to give children separated from their parents the love, attention and comfort that so many of them needed. And too many of those in charge were themselves burdened with the prejudices and the limitations of their own lives under apartheid. Exile was a cruel experience for many of these; and the toll from malaria, especially among children, was tragically high. Yet many others survived the problems, obtained good educations and have now returned to contribute to rebuilding the country that sent them into exile. Mazibuni with all its buildings and facilities and

Dakawa with its small industries have been given to Tanzania.

The Umkhonto camps in Angola, site of the largest concentration of exiles, were being dismantled by the time I wished to visit them. I interviewed exiles who had been in the camps; but this was a particular, specific experience of exile that must be the subject for a separate study.



Many exiles had a remarkable memory for details of day, date, time, place; but not all were able to describe the small illuminating details that brought an experience to life. In this there was a marked difference between men and women. The men would tend to speak of their travels, their changes of countries, by simply cataloguing where they had been, how long they stayed. They were the products of the macho traditions of a chauvinist society, culturally indoctrinated not to flinch, to show pain, to cry. They would tell nothing of their emotions. To do so might seem a betrayal not only of their own manhood, but also disloyalty to their organisation. They wanted to retain in exile everything that they had been, everything that they had believed in. Threatened by the loss of identity and faced with insecurity, social customs became traditions to which, in their longing for what they had left, they must obstinately cling.

There were of course others who, insulated by their contact with different societies, moved on. Peter Milning spoke of what he has learned. 'I'm very much conscious that there should be equality. It should start in the house. We cannot talk about it at the level of politics when in the house women are still made to be subservient to men. But I never thought like that when I was in South Africa, and I left when I was more than thirty years old. Never, ever. I thought of women as being good to sleep with, to entertain you ...' And because he has changed, he knows that much as he wants to go home it will be difficult. 'I cannot live in a township where by six o'clock I must be in bed because there are no lights, I can't read; that I have to drink bottles of spirits as entertainment. I cannot bear people beating up women on the streets. It's a daunting task for me to be able to integrate myself, because I've outgrown those things now.'

There were other differences in the manner of telling. Many of the whites, coming from a privileged section of society that had access to higher education and the availability of books, were introspective, psycho-analysing, delving into the personal contradictions and doubts that governed their decisions. For many blacks the telling was less introspective, a more straightforward historical story; the events themselves without the analysis of motives.

The women, who did not have to cling to a status they never possessed, who were deprived of the whole of their family support system, dealt with the emotions, spoke of the pains of

parting, the loss of children, the discomfort they endured, the difficulties of adjusting their domestic lives in unfamiliar circumstances. Many young women — still schoolgirls — who, like the young men, left without telling their families — were sexually ignorant. When they became pregnant, isolated from the extended family and with no means to study or work and bring up a child in exile, they sent their babies back home to be cared for by the grandparents. Mothers who had left without their children believed they would be returning soon. 'Everyone thinks the same when they leave,' said Eleanor Khanlyev, 'that they will come back! She went over the border just for a short while, until things had settled down, I leaving her small son with her sister and her mother. He was an adult before they met again.'

In the tradition of African families, the children were loved and cared for. But the sorrows of that separation were never overcome. The mothers live forever with the pains of parting, the regrets, the children with the feeling that — whatever the reason — they were abandoned.

Exile forced the women to discard their accustomed roles, to assume the responsibility of making their own lives — something so many of them had not done when they were at home. They had to remake themselves, become independent, take decisions that once they had left to others. The men were more likely to be the political activists, training in Angola or posted to distant places, leaving wives charged with the total economic and emotional care of bringing up their families. The women emerge with an underlying strength that enables them to cling and survive. Men who already had families when they left, could leave — as so many of them did — without telling their wives; and they would not even mention that they had left a wife and children unless I asked them. When they left, they closed the door behind them and went out into their new lives unencumbered. The women, even those without children, were severed from a family support system that had been the essential core of their lives. They were the guardians of continuity that gave coherence to the incoherence of lives in exile.

The children are the unconsidered victims of their parents' exile, even those brought into exile as babies, even those born in exile. Left or taken, the children bear burdens of resentment that are difficult to resolve. In the Western world they struggled with the split between home and society; outside the home the need to integrate, to be the same as, accepted by, their peer group in school in the country where they now lived; and returning to that other country, left physically but always there in their parents' talk, friends, social customs. Some black children showed a stronger sense of their own identity, because, defined by skin colour, they knew they did not belong and did not seek to integrate. Only when they return to South Africa — if they return — will they discover how different they have become from those at home, and how impossibly it is ever again to slot completely into the society their parents left.

**I**n home sickness you must keep moving — it is the only disease that does not require rest," wrote H. de Vries Steyn. And a feature of many of the exiles' lives was the extent to which they kept moving from country to country. There were always, of course, legitimate reasons — the chance of furthering their education, the need to accept a job somewhere else; or sometimes the inability to obtain work or residents' permits. But underlying it was the feeling of not belonging, wherever they were. They became contemporary nomads.

Mac Carim, who worked in 33 different countries for Pepsi Cola, said "We've never been able to settle. We're always temporary wherever we go." Alphons Mangeri left Alexandra Township for Scotland; then, in pursuit of furthering his education and accepting new jobs, lived and worked in London, Brighton, Nigeria, Mozambique, Tanzania, Es'kia Mphahlele, denied of the right to teach in his own country, taught in Nigeria for 4 years; went to Paris and worked there for 2 years; became restless, and went to Nairobi to teach. Left there for Zambia; another 4 years in Denver, USA; then to Philadelphia, and finally, determined to return to South Africa, sought a way back through the "homeland" of Tloswa before he could obtain the right to return as a South African and be granted citizenship in his own country. He himself felt he had gained much from his time in exile, but it cost him his children, four sons and a daughter, who grew up outside South Africa. The sons will not return. The daughter has not decided.

Eve and Tony Hall, when they arrived at their last stop in Zimbabwe before coming back after a quarter of a century in exile, reckoned: total house moves, 23 times in 26 years; total moves from one country to another, 12 or 15 times in 26 years — complete reverses. Their nomadic life took them to countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe... "But the thing is," Eve said, "that you know that in all these countries that you've been in, you might have taken them on board, but they're not taking you on board. You're getting involved; you're getting emotionally attached. But you don't belong. You're outsiders, no matter how much you give, no matter how much you love, no matter how many friends you have, you don't belong and you're even a little ashamed to have a slightly provocative feeling. Because you don't own it at all."

Many exiles, black and white, made their homes in European countries. Here, middle-class whites moved more easily than black South Africans, particularly in Britain, Canada and America where the language erected no barriers, and where they could not be class-defined by their accent. A "colonial" accent was acceptable. But some white exiles strove to conceal both their accent and their South African identity: the problems of explaining that you are white but do not support apartheid were complicated.

Acceptability, however, did not lessen the loss of home. Nothing could replace the end of inheritance, the loss of their lives, the pain of separation from families, the discontinuity. Living was within the stasis of an eter-

nal present, among people with whom they had no shared experience of the past, and with whom they did not wish to share the future. The past was elsewhere; the future would be elsewhere. "You are engaged with an elsewhere that cannot be reached; isn't it the defining characteristic of exile?" (Breytenbach)

**E**xiles in Britain became the motivating force that set in motion an exceptional anti-apartheid movement; it spread to other countries, and played a vital role in educating the world to the meaning of apartheid, in organising sports, cultural and consumer boycotts and sanctions, and ultimately in isolating South Africa and bringing pressure for change from outside as well as from within.

The story is quite remarkable. The British Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) grew from the activities of a small group of students who had come to Britain to study. When Oliver Tambo was sent out by the ANC in anticipation of its banning to establish a base outside the country, he was unknown, unregarded, unrecruited. He and a handful of exiles battled against total indifference to the meaning of apartheid. At the time of the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 (67 killed, 187 injured) the British Prime Minister, Macmillan, warned colleagues to avoid lending support to the view that the recent disturbances were the inevitable result of the racial policies of the government; and when a motion was tabled in the UN Security Council condemning the massacre, Britain abstained. It was the dedication and spirit of the exiles that gave tremendous momentum to the AAM and the International Defence and Aid Fund and that linked the growing resistance within South Africa to an increased enlightenment and activity outside.



The exiles adapted to the long dark days, the cold and the stiff formalities of Sweden; shared in and learned from the generous educational and welfare advantages of Denmark; adjusted to the divisiveness of the Netherlands, to the German evasive suspicion of strangers, to the rigid protocol of the Germans; mastered the obscure languages of eastern Europe; observed, but did not approve of, the cult of individualism and rampant consumerism of north America. And in all these and other countries learned a bitter lesson — that racialism is endemic in all societies, although it is only in South Africa that it is embodied in laws, and has developed its most extreme and exploitive form. So the black exiles, impelled by the vector of their implacable opposition to racialism, had to confront it once again — and in exile. "I now recall," said Nancy Mouthodi, "there's nowhere in the world you feel at home except in your own country... the colour of one's skin. It's worse. You are always a stranger and you are always stupid." Katleho Moloi, in

Canada, felt all Africans were regarded as being from a backward, uncultured continent. After speaking at a meeting, a woman came and praised her speech, adding, "And good grammar, too". Katleho speaks six languages. Even African-Americans tended to regard African exiles as backward. Nigerians looked down on South Africans for not having overthrown apartheid.

But for all races and both genders, apartheid exercised a potent power on their experience of exile and in most cases continued to determine their lives. And this was true not only of those for whom the anti-apartheid struggle was a full-time or part-time activity. It was as though a fierce spotlight focused on everything South African, reducing the authority of anything not related to it. "South Africa came with me and will be with me for the rest of my life," said Esau de Plessis in Leyden. And Bishop Huddleston — not born in South Africa, but nevertheless exiled from there: "Though I left South Africa long ago, South Africa never left me. Never left me, no, not for a moment."

In the mind exile is always temporary, you will always return however many years have passed. But eventually, however much they resisted, the exiles put down roots. You have to live somewhere, find work, communicate; your children have to go to school, have friends. You have to construct a new, a separate, but a present life. In learning to adapt, inevitably you must become, at least in part, attached to the society in which you live, whatever your intentions and desires. "It wasn't meant to be exile," said Hugh Masekela.

**I** learned a great deal from interviewing so many people. I learned about the importance of ritual, something which had no meaning to me in the past. The deepest part, the most profound sorrow, I felt by those who were unable to take part in the rituals of birth, marriage and death in the families that they had left behind. Speaking of the death of her mother, an exile in Canada says, "You see they had a chance to mourn and then get on with their lives. But I did not and it is an open sore with me." Father Cas has written a requiem mass for a relative of the family of Stan Mabilela became a ceremony of remembrance for all those who had died while they were in exile. "Stan's wife Dixie said, 'I'd like to remember my mother, because I wasn't there when she died. And Stan, both his mother and his father, he wasn't able to be there when they died... and so it went on, and you thought how painful that is. Somebody as close as your own mother, in African society — in my funeral — but your mother, and you can't be there because of that system. That's too painful even to imagine.'"

I learned that once you have become an exile, no matter how well you adjust to your host country, no matter how successful your new life has become, you are never again situated in the normal — not in exile nor in return. "To be away from your natural environment is to be deprived of ever again functioning completely and fitting in instinctively," writes Breytenbach. "No other surroundings can replace the shared

and unquestioned and thereby indigenous feeling of belonging made up of smells, sounds, gestures and natural mimicry... Henceforth you are at home nowhere, and by that token everywhere." It is not that they do not recognise the advantages derived from their experiences (education, growth in political perspectives and understanding, cultural enrichment); and say that they now consider themselves citizens of the world and at home anywhere. But that is a kind of shout of defiance that never conceals their underlying loss, never compensates for the uprooting from that one country, above all, to which they still irrefutably belong.

I always knew — but learned again and again — how we each take with us the baggage from our past wherever we go: the moral attitudes, the social customs, the type of upbringing and the wounds and scars of bodily assault that psyche under apartheid inflicted on the living of all, black and white. It took a long while for some exiles to shed this heavy baggage. Some never did.

**I** began interviewing exiles in 1989. Eight months before the De Klerk declaration of 2 February 1990 radically altered the situation. Going home was still a distant prospect, a dream deferred. By the time I finished I was talking to exiles confronted with the realisation of what return meant to them and their families — not so much the dreamed of reunion with those they had left behind as the pain and destruction of families that would be divided once more; the loss of new friends, the splitting of communities, for the returnees would again be scattered across vast areas; and learning how to live again in a society that, despite the removal of racial barriers, in certain areas of life was fundamentally the same in its racist structures as when they had left. "You can't just pack a suitcase," said Edith Yengwa, whose husband died in exile.

But they also knew that the country they would be returning to would never be the same as the one they had left, and that they themselves were not the same people. There had been three decades of resistance and struggle from which their exile had excluded them. They had made a new history for themselves at the expense of losing that which should have been theirs.

For three decades apartheid South Africa sent into jail, to exile and often to death its most gifted, resolute and creative citizens. The loss, incalculable, was not only of individuals but to the whole nation, in every field; and continues to be a loss to the generation of today which, in politics, in education, in the arts and sciences must build on a history that has thirty years of torn and missing pages.

But it was not all lost, despite the families once again divided between those who return and those who stay. The returnees take back with them an extraordinary range of skills that they could never have obtained in apartheid South Africa. They have mastered many languages, driven themselves up the educational scale, acquired a multiplicity of skills and experiences. They have tasted many cultures, and living in different societies, they can test their own — as it is, as they would like it to be — against those others. They have

joined their country, at the southern-most tip of the African continent, to the world.

In turn, they leave a legacy in the countries that hosted them in their long exile. They alerted an important section of people — often the young, through schools and universities — to a basic and over-riding evil: racism; through the revelations of what apartheid meant in South Africa, alerted them to the sly

and often disregarded existence of it in their own countries. They leave behind on streets and squares and buildings in countries north and south, the name of Mandela, who broke through the silent incarceration of a cell on windswept Robben Island to become the world's most famous political prisoner; and thus to symbolise the struggle for human rights everywhere and to inspire others.

And they leave behind something of the fire of their anger, the passion of their commitment, the hope and optimism and joy of their idealism. Going into exile changed their lives, but their lives in exile influenced others; as did James Phillips, whose memory remains in the choirs in Wales, in Holland and Germany that will continue to sing the freedom songs he taught them.

Hilda Bernstein is the author of *The World That Was Ours. The Story of the Rivonia Trial (first published in 1967 by Heinemann and in a new edition in 1989 by SA Writers) available at good bookstores or from the Mayibuye Centre, UWC.*

Her new book, *The Rift — The Experience of South Africans (Jonathan Cape) is published in March 1994.*

A few years ago Albie Sachs popularised a few sentences taken from Njabulo Ndebele's *Sot Plaatje Memorial Lecture of 1984: 'Revolutionaries ... are not always busy fighting. They are also busy loving, jilting each other, being envious of each other. Ndebele's thinking continues to feed the debates around cultural policy with ideas first formulated ten years ago. The inherent authority of that thinking became apparent to me for the first time at the Jubilee Conference of the English Academy of South Africa in 1986, when Ndebele's keynote address, 'The English Language and Social Change in South Africa', sustained and enriched the debate in every discussion group in which I took part. His collected essays, *Rediscovery of the Ordinary*, confirm the impression the individual essays had already made on me: he is one of the most potent thinkers in the arena of cultural politics in South Africa.*

He has also played a leading role in many of the cultural bodies that have been formed over recent years. Writer's organisations and cultural initiatives are inherently fragile, given the very sensitive ego of artists. His history of 'The Writers' Movement in South Africa', included in this volume, testifies to the many initiatives in the past being abandoned or broken up over matters of principle or in the clash of incompatible personalities. Ndebele has been re-elected president of COSAW every year since its foundation in 1987 and it is his quiet authority and incisive thinking that has contributed towards saving this initiative from going the way of its predecessors. Universities vie for his services; so do the National Arts Initiative and the newly elected Board of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. It comes as no surprise that F.W. de Klerk refused to have him as the chairperson of the latter.

The recent attack on Ndebele by Mewa Ramgobin of the ANC on the TV program *Agora* needs to be placed in a specific cultural-political context. A re-reading of Ndebele's essays suggests that there are deep-lying differences in the ranks of what seems to be a homogeneous cultural movement. The dispute over full or observer status for the ANC's Department of Arts and Culture at the National Arts Initiative is both a dispute over control of an organ of civil society which deliberately styled itself as non-sectarian, and a dispute over control of the field of arts and communication. The ANC claims to be the representative of the majority of the inhabitants of this country and maintains that its cultural policy has as its main objective 'the cultural liberation of the disenchanted people of South Africa' (*Weekly Mail*, May 28, 1993); the National Arts Initiative is apparent-

## Cultural Politics

# Njabulo Ndebele

**PETER HORN takes a look at Njabulo Ndebele's contribution to current cultural policy debates through an examination of his collected essays**

ly the attempt to organise artists, a tiny fraction of that total population, even if it is 'the largest and most representative gathering of arts practitioners' ever in this country.

There is, of course, a misconception of democracy involved in the formation of a mass-democratic cultural structure which attempt to organise 'cultural workers'. In this sense the criticism of Muzile Matshoba that the National

observer status in the ANC's Culture and Development Conference? The implications of this debate are of serious concern to all who are interested in culture in a future democratic South Africa. In a letter to the *Weekly Mail* (May 7, 1993) Mike van Graan articulated the fear of many artists 'that the ANC is threatened by independence in the arts and, in fact, seeks to control and manipulate the arts in ways not too dissimilar to our past rulers'. It seems to me that to equate the ANC with the NP is disingenuous.

**Rediscovery of the Ordinary. Essays on South African Literature and Culture**  
by Njabulo Ndebele

COSAW Publishing, 1992,  
160pp., R23,30,  
1 874879 07 9

Arts Initiative set up a structure for 'cultural practitioners' before consulting with culturally disadvantaged communities carries some weight, although most of the progressive cultural groups has as much contact to grass-roots structures as the ANC's Department of Arts and Culture. But Matshoba's accusation that the National Arts Initiative was 'promoting a culture of exclusivism [!] lies in the face of the purely ritual consultation undertaken by the ANC's Department of Arts and Culture' (*Weekly Mail*, May 28, 1993).

Why is it so important for the ANC to gain control of this initiative? And why has the National Arts Initiative so steadfastly insisted on mere observer status for the ANC in this venture and deliberately chosen



There is, however, an aspect to the situation which has not yet been noted in the debate. Even if the ANC wanted to — and there is no reason to believe that it wants to — it could not extricate itself from the expectations of grass-roots politics. The ANC is at the moment caught in a situation where its grass-roots supporters are as much a hindrance as a necessary support for its politics. To understand that a party in power, or striving to come to power, is subject to certain pressures to behave in certain ways is taking a pragmatic view of what politics and politicians are about.

I understand that all those who are in power have an interest in making sure that nobody else speaks with the authority of power; but at the same time they have an interest in those who have an independent authority speaking in favour of those in power. Religious leaders, academics and writers thus find themselves viewed with suspicion if they criticise the current government



Njabulo Ndebele

or governing party or the government in waiting, but welcomed if they support it. The powerful try to square the circle by creating a class of intellectuals who, while seeming to speak independently, in reality speak for the party, and thus reinforce, from a position which appears to be 'outside', that which the party advocates from 'inside' the focus of power. Despite the claim that 'the future government should enshrine the principle of artistic freedom' (*Serote, Weekly Mail*, May, 1993), there seems to be unease amongst artists supporting the ANC that ventures like the Culture and Development Conference were an attempt to assert ANC control, and an attempt to commit art workers to an active role in the service of an election. Matshoba's statement 'that, with apartheid still firmly in place, it is still too premature to dissociate the arts and culture from the liberation struggle' (*Weekly Mail*, May 28, 1993) seems to point in this direction, effectively denying that arts and culture could contribute to the continued liberation struggle without being controlled by the Department of Arts and Culture.

Intellectuals have always supported various causes, but what makes them suspicious in the eyes of the powerful and the party adherents is their ability to think independently and to criticise the current party line. The artist, writes Ndebele, 'although desiring action, often with as much passion as the propagandist, can never be entirely free from the rules of irony. Irony is the literary manifestation of contradiction' (p. 67) and 'the truth of literature is to be found in its power to allow readers to formulate insights independently' (p. 142). Because of that ability to think critically and to make others think critically, artists are constantly denounced as 'vacillating' and 'uncertain', 'traitors' and 'not seriously committed' to the 'struggle'. The politician, desiring action, desiring to seize state power, has to suppress or deny the existing contradiction in his own actions and statements. And yet the suppression of such contradictions makes our thinking and planning shallow and ineffective. 'If we want to struggle towards a genuinely democratic future, then we must

Janet



6 August 1994

Janet love -

I loved your schedule - a miracle, of course, if you actually carry it all out. But you never know! Bear in mind that this is really a very small country, and getting around isn't difficult. And as you say you are flexible, I daresay you will do more than you expected.

If only the lovely warm weather we are having maintains itself until September! Last summer was so dreary I didn't get out of ~~heat~~ shirts and sweaters the whole time. This July - and up to now - has been wonderful; at least here, more or less South-east. Scotland's a different and unpredictable story.

As far as coming to Oxford is concerned, it all sounds fine. I want you to stay with us, and if it is comfortable enough you will stay as long as you wish; and if you find it isn't, there are alternatives. You shouldn't find the Heathrow - Reading - Oxford trip too difficult, only probably a bit time-consuming and you will both be jet-lagged. Buses to Reading are probably waiting outside Heathrow, and will take you to Reading station. (Don't think you pass the jail - it is still there - but Reading is a developer's mess); At Reading you ask the booking clerk about the next train to Oxford ( you will have changed some money, I take it, at Heathrow, and you will clasp a couple of 20 cent (British) coins in your hand when you go to the phone box. One~~s~~ should be enough, but two just in case.) At Oxford station you will have to cross the bridge to the other side, and exit through a fairly spacious concourse (all recently rebuilt) where I will be waiting for you.

I was going to write that us going to Scotland with you was problematic. Mark, my oldest grandson, is marrying a Los Angeles lass on September 14th, and wants us to come to his wedding (he's a darling.) We haven't decided to go - it's a question of money, but Mark is totting up his free air miles ( don't know if you have the same thing) and may be able to supply tickets. Ironical that you will be here if we do go, because I would not have travelled so far to the West Coast without calling in on Oregon. But we probably won't go.

Clothes? You never know in England. It shouldn't be cold in September (altho' Scotland is always much colder than down south). I wear slacks (or a long skirt, but usually slacks) with t-shirts, sweat-shirts or whatever. You need a warm sweat-shirt or woolly to slip on over whatever you're wearing. Casual clothes; maybe a summer dress for that unexpected heat-wave. Yesterday it was 22 in Glasgow (same as LA) and 25 in London - we call that hot. In September the weather can be pleasant, warm, comfortable, but it would be freakish if it was heat-wave hot. Shirts, skirts or slacks and pullovers - that serves for about everything, I think.

So glas you're coming.

Love

Hilda

By air mail  
Par avion



Be properly



Great Britain  
Postage  
Paid



Aerogramme

Janet Stevenson

783 Fifth Street

Hammond

OR 97121

USA

Name and address of sender

Hilda Bernstein  
57 Lock Crescent  
Kidlington  
Oxon OX5 1HF  
Phone 0865 3842

0865 37-3642

Postcode

*Enclosure inside: Please not confs*

An aerogramme should not contain any enclosure

To open slit here



To open slit here

5 December 1994

Dearest Janet,

I had prepared this card to send to you, and one for Mary, when I received your second letter. I just sat on it for a few days, pondering, but somehow could not come up with any response to your suggestion of a 'prod.' I was just troubled to think of Mary, so active, spirited and energetic living like a sort of vegetable. So all I could do was to write her a letter, and to say that I didn't expect a reply - she never was a letter-writer anyway - and that I would write again. My ~~Oxxfax~~ South African friend in Oxford - I had known her for fifty years - who died this year, before you viidited - was also a heavy smoker, and I am convinced that this was a primary cause of her illness and subsequently of her death. I realised it was impossible to get ger to stop - her two sons tried often enough - and she, like Mary, said it was one of the few pleasures left to her. I can't see Mary regaining her health enough for the hip op unless she can stop, and can't see her stopping. Incidentally, I saw a specialist a few days ago, and I am now on a waiting list for hip replacement - but the waiting list is so long, the waiting time is one year! This, unfortunately, is the fruit of long Tory rule, it is systematcially destroying the health service, which is now completely two-tiered - private and public. Private patients don't wait, but they pay for it. The others wait interminably, - the same specialists work for both levels, so it isn't a case of getting better medical care, only swifter and more comfortable. I know my kids, and Rusty, are going to stazrt nagging me to go private, but it is hideously expensive, and I don't want to take either the last of our savings, which we live on to supplement our inqdeuate pensions, nor their money. Like you said, old age is not for sissies. *you know what I mean*

I took Rusty to see the sculpture in that Woodstock garden, but the day we wet, the place was ~~gx~~ closed. You were not inconveniencing us by your visit.

We read all about your 'lousy politics' with sinking hearts, for the awful repercussions on what we still value in this world. We have our share of them here, continuously, but they don't wield such enormous influence as the USA. I try to turn away from what is happening everywhere, but it obtrudes - the only solution wold be to banish newspapers, the radio and television, which we cant do.

I haven't read Possession; I read the reviews, and decided it was not for me, particularly as I read very few novels these days. I might, if I find it in the library.

I'm trying to do new drawings. If I didn't write letters and bake bread I could get a lot more done. Stick at your nevel. But if you can't get publishers . . . ? I've written to Mary about a fascinating book sent to me from a friend of Mark's in LA. I ewould tell you all about it to, but I've run out of steam and the P.O. says this is the last day for posting for cards to arrive before Christmas.

I'll write again, notwithstanding the drawing.

*Much love*

*Hilda*

*Love to Karen*

Dearest Mary

I have been out of touch with you (and Janet, and all my American friends) for what seems like a very long time. And I keep thinking about you, your fragile state of health, and wondering how you are; if you are mobile, if your health has improved - and everything. So please do send a little note, and if your hands are playing up, get Ben or someone to write it for you.

Rusty and I went to Ethiopia in June, and stayed for three weeks. Patrick (whose business is at last beginning to break even, or even make a little headway) paid for the air tickets; and Keith, who has done very well with his photography this past year, and has won three quite important prizes as a photo-journalist, gave us a generous bunch of notes as spending money. (Keith's photo, taken in Rwanda, was chosen from 30,000 as the cover of the World Press Photo Yearbook, and for the poster advertising their exhibition in many different countries.)

It was a wonderful trip. I certainly put my hip replacement to some heavy going, and it stood up very well. I still have an uneven walk, but not very much, and don't need a stick. While in Ethiopia I did need the stick, but then it was walking on rough roads and climbing up and down steps. So as far as the replacement goes, I am very satisfied with it, and glad that I had it done, although it is not a pleasant operation (is any?) and I became very impatient to be 100% fit again. But it was well worth it.

We stayed with Eve and Tony Hall in Addis, then went on a tour (by small internal planes) to three places: Bahar Dar, Gondar and Lalabala. I saw what I most wanted to see - the rock churches of Lalabala, certainly a wonder of the world, and the incredible ~~xxx~~ Simien mountain range - we flew over it for ages and ages - the most amazing and awe-inspiring landscape I have ever seen; huge cataclysmic upheavals that tore the land apart and formed the Rift Valley also formed these great, strange ranges and deep gorges. There are scattered settlements (the 'high-land people') wherever there is a little flat land on the tops of the mountains, and even on knife-edge peaks - where they get water from I don't know. It was so beautiful. It was more than worth the discomfort of travelling in this terribly poor, terribly under-developed country. It is really poor, poor, poor, far more than anything I have seen, except perhaps in country settlements in Tanzania; Addis, for instance - their capital city, and home of the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) is really a vast shanty-town, dotted about with western-type buildings, Hilton hotels, banks, airline offices, and plenty of new hostels being built. But mainly shanties, shops that are African -type bazaars, just sheds, hessian, corrugated iron. Beggars on the street - but that's in every big city in Africa - and elsewhere - these days; but lovely people, beautiful, friendly, gentle, non-aggressive, totally different from West Africans and Egyptians. It is such a fascinating country, its history, culture, mythologies, geography. We went back to Addis, then down south to Lake Tana, one of a string of lakes in the Rift Valley, with Eve and Tony for a weekend. Left Addis just as the rainy season was starting - it was cool and cloudy - and arrived back at Heathrow to a heatwave.

Eve is working on a project which is funded by the ILO and various NGO's (hope you know what all these acronyms and initials mean); among women who are wood-fuel carriers. 15,000 women go to the woods twice a week to cut wood for fuel, and bring it back to Addis on their backs - huge loads - many walk bent double for miles and miles. Also they are stripping the woods - we drove past areas where what were once forested places are just the stumps of trees, skeletons. So the project is two-fold: to provide alternative ways of making a living - weaving with sisal or wool, handicrafts of various kinds, and also to save the trees. The women themselves suffer terribly from the huge physical loads, from harassment and thieves. We visited Eve's projects, and I sketched some of the women.

Great Britain  
Postage  
Paid



Royal Mail

International

Aerogramme

Mary Clarke

1557 Oriole Lane

Los Angeles 46

California 90069

USA

Name and address of sender

Hilda Bernstein  
57 Lock Crescent  
Kidlington  
Oxon OX5 1HF  
Phone 06675 3642

28 July 1975

Postcode

An aerogramme should not contain any enclosure



To open slit here

To open slit here

I am trying to do little paintings of the markets we visited. Rusty is writing his memoirs on the word processor - I prefer my familiar typewriter in any case, if you can put up with the typing mistakes. We are having a global-warming summer, the warmest for many, many years. I don't get through what I want to do - I keep telling myself that I'm 80, but I don't really believe it, except that I don't have the energy that I used to.

Maybe I've ~~presented~~ presented an unreal picture of Ethiopia - here is a little of the other side: The flies are unbearable - climbing up and down to see the churches in Lalabela, with a young man on each side of me holding my arms, I had no hands to brush away the flies - they are a national pestilence. In the countryside we saw men ploughing (the beginning of the rainy season is ploughing time) in land that looked to us just a great stretch of stones (picturesque mountains all round and this rocky, hostile soil); and children in tiny settlements wearing the worn-out rags of sacks, and with obvious infections of their eyes, sores and other things. But I was a tourist, not an Aid worker, so accepted the stark poverty and admired the beautiful women and the scenery.

Much love to you and Ben

Hilda

29 August 1995

Dear Janet

I seem to have all but given up writing letters. It's an organisational problem: the computer (which I don't use now) & my typewriter sit in a nice little dark corner; and Rusty has been working - every day, seven days a week, for ages - on his memoirs, so the corner is occupied all morning. By the time afternoon arrives I no longer feel like writing letters or anything else. He's writing political memoirs, not a personal autobio. It has been borne on us, from many sources, that we are among the few surviving members of a particular political group, and sociologists and historians and students doing their Ph.D. descend on us at regular intervals. Mostly they speak to Rusty because I have a fault in the memory part of my brain, and throughout my life have no memory of most things, only patches here and there, or things that one has re-told or discussed. From the people who were at the head of the CP of SA during a critical period, R is about the only one remaining. Ruth First, Joe Slovo, M Harmel, Moses Kotane, JB Marks, Duma Nokwe . . . it's a roll-call of the dead. So we are all urging him on to put down what he remembers. So I've stoppd writing letters.

But I do want to hear from you - how are you? Are you still so busy and active, how has the knee been? What about the novels - have they found a publisher, and anyway, what does your life seem like these days? And in addition, have you been in touch with Mary, and if so, please send a report. I did write some time ago, but haven't heard from her, not even a little dictated card, and have this unpleasant memory of her invalidated and really in very poor shape.

As for me - I'm still not 100% back to normal, <sup>but really pleased I had it done, of course.</sup> that is I have a hobbly gait, the muscles have not yet returned to full strength; and for this I have only myself to blame, for I haven't exercised enough. And still don't. I had a charming young physiotherapist, but saw her infrequently and she & the specialist were too relaxed about my progress - saying I was 'doing brilliantly' when it all seemed to me unbearably slow. However . . . Despite all that, R & I went to Ethiopia in June, although at that stage I depended heavily upon my stick. Our friends, Eve & Tony Hall (long-time from Joh'burg) were in Addis, visited us at Christmas time, said why don't you come? because I've always had this romantic love-affair with Ethiopia, since spending 2 days in Addis with that Indian viper Romesh Chandra on one of our World Peace things, & since reading about the stone churches of Lalabela. So I decided I was going to go - it had to be June, the rainy season begins at the end of June, & Eve & Tony won't be there next year. R said no, we don't have the money. I said I'm going anyway - we'll never have the money, and if not now, when? I'm 80! I told Patrick that he must pay for my fair (with money lent to him & never returned, but that's another story) & in the end, R decided he could not let this little old woman hobble around the airports & Ethiopia by herself, so P paid for us both, Keith gave us spending money. It was wonderful, but very tough going. It's a really poor country, enticing tourists to its wonderful history and its mind-blowing scenery and beautiful people, but totally un-ready for Western tourists, altho good for back-packers. We got to see the rock churches me climbing down and up huge steep steps with the aid of two strong young guides. We stayed with Eve & T in Addis, toured three places by small interan~~o~~ planes, & returned to Addis - wonderful company. Eve is working on a project with rural women - The Woodfuel Carriers Project. 15,000 women are woodfuel carriers - they walk miles into the woods & strip the trees, carrying back enormous, fearsome loads on their backs to Addis to ~~seek~~ as fuel. Eve's project (funded by tye ILO & carious NGO's, Sedes, Dutch, etc) is to train the women in alternative ways of earning a living- handicrafts, weaving baskets, etc with sisal, pottery, that sort of thing. It has a twofold purpose: to save the forests (we travelled once through miles of countryside in which there was nothing except the deformed skeletons of trees - thalidomie trees, I called them, with two or three tiny distorted little branches.) and also to save the health of the women who walk miles with huge loads on their backs, & arrive in Addis to weave among the totally chaotic and anarchic traffic. Such a lot more to tell about Ethiopia if I only had space and time alike. I loved the country,

had a writing memorial meeting in the S.A. Embassy -  
It's been Embassy now - we need to stand outside on the rain  
with Antie quitted position, now we go to receptions  
↑ needs - the old (writ) staff allow photo

By air mail  
Paravion



Great Britain  
Postage  
Paid 1



Aerogramme

Janet Stevenson

783 5th Street

Hammond

Oregon 97121

USA

Name and address of sender

Hilda Bernstein  
57 Lock Crescent  
Kidlington  
Oxon OX5 1HF  
Phone 44676 3642

Postcode

\*An aerogramme should not contain any enclosure

To open slit here

To open slit here

I saw the Lalabela churches hewn out of rock that I had dreamed about for 30 years, we flew over the Semien mountain ranges - a wonder of the world - the amazing Rift Valley; and I loved the beautiful, gentle, friendly people who seem to be having a period of stability after the horrors of the latter-day Mengistu regime. Don't know how long ~~ix~~ it will last - it's a very tribal country. Did you go to Greece, Crete, ~~xxxx~~ and all in May? I should have written to you long ago. Tell me about it. /Just before I forget, I ~~was~~ was going through a huge draw full of old drawings, and found those of Atlanta. Do you want them? I just have so many drawings of people done over the years, and don't know what to do with them all~~xx~~. Re-reading your crits of Nelson's bmo - largely I agree. His public speeches are also in this stiff style, except when something makes him really angry and he speaks off the cuff. ALL those blokes locked away ~~for~~ for half a lifetime, while aware of the changes, did not absorb new attitudes towards women (except for Sisulu). Would like you to read 'Tomorrow is Another Country' by Alistair Sparks - inside story of the whole negotiation drama - shall I send it to you? Much, much love Hilda

Still a little space to fill - had a really successful joint art exhibition, end of May beginning of June, with 4 other artists. Now doing market street scenes of Edinburgh & John's burg markets. Not writing!

Sept. 6, 1995

Dearest Hilda:

How wierd to get a letter from you when I had just decided to write you and say how much I enjoyed your wonderful letter to Mary about Ethiopia. and what I think her state of health is. I spoke with her some weeks ago--on some pretext--because I was beginning to worry about her. She sounded very cheerful, but admitted having "fallen" and having been "stitched up at home bcause I don't get around very well " Also that she isn't going to have the hip operation because she isn't in shape for it, but that with acupuncture, she is comparatievly free of pain. If she can find a shoemaker who can compen-sate for one leg being an inch and a half short, she'll be able to "get around more." She told me about your trip and the letter and offered to send me a copy--which she eventually did.

From that conversation I get the impression that Ben has a significant problem with his memory, but Mary no longer depends on him for much. She has the ever faithful Elena and a practical nurse, and a wonderful sister, June Sale, who lives close by and drops in almost every day.

What haunts me is how bored she must be--although it would be worse if she weren't. If TV newa and her failing health were enough to keep her going. I've asked Norma Barzman (the friend with whom I went to Greece, etc.) to look in on her and give me a report. If it contains anything different from this view, I'll write again.

Maybe I take this gloomy view because I'm on the verge of being bored. It's the first time in many years I haven't had an imposed agenda. Having finished the book (sent it to my agents and haven't heard Word One) and having recovered from the trip (I was waylaid by a bug in Turkey that took forever to oust) as well as a visit by Ted, his wife and my new (and only) grand daughter. (Exhilarating but exhausting.) I got so into the habit of cooking that I seem unable to stop. I keep baking etc. and freexing the results because there is no one to eat them up.

I finally forced myself to read Frances Spaulding's biographt of Stevie Smith--a book I got for Christmas and couldn't face. Very dense and depressing. But there is a riveting scene that reminds me of my last visit to Bernal: Hetty chatting him up and Eileen insisting that he was hearing and understanding every word although it was obvious (to me, at least) that he wasn't. Did you ever hear one of Stevie's readings of her poetry, and if so, what was it like?

Perhaps part of the cause of my foul mood is my battle with a new computer and word processing program. I finished the book and then took the



plunge. Before I was even treading water Ted and Janice turned up with a gift (sic!) of software destined to put me on the "information-superhighway." Other people (no smarter than I) manage to achieve wonderful results such as ascertaining the current temperature in Seattle via Glasgow University's Geography Page. I however can't even "log in" to the U.N. Women's Conference in Peking (how do we spell the new pronunciation?)—something I really want to see and/or read everything about.

Which reminds me of something that is probably only an idea in the mind of God, but which keeps me from getting more bored. When I got home from Turkey, I was complaining to a friend who is a travel agent that the pace of guided tours is too fast for comfort. She said "how would you like to plan one? Or even a series of tours? at a pace you find more agreeable?" The result is a pilot tour, to be called the "What's Your Hurry Tour" of the U.K. One week in Cornwall and another in York. I have the perfect guides in tow. If we can cull enough financially-flush tourists who want every other day "free S" for resting, shopping, washing up, or meditating, we'll be there next spring—or fall. With luck I should be able to manage time at the start or the finish to make a plan for us to meet.

I don't want to end this without admitting that before the virus felled me, I found the trip almost everything I hoped. (Too concentrated, but very rich.) There are two scenes that stand out most vividly: one a lunch with Jules Dassin (an old Hollywood blacklisted, who married Melina Mercouri). He took us to lunch at a restaurant that looked out at the Parthenon, and got to explaining that he was "devoting his life to "finishing Melina's work." We asked what that was. "Bringing the Elgin marbles back to Greece." I asked whether he thought he would succeed; he said, "If the Labour Party wins the next election, we have been promised..."

The other is Santorini--Atlantis, as I believe. An impossibly dramatic and beautiful relic—grape vines growing in basket-shapes on the windblown plains on the top of what's left of the land (after the eruption). I bought a bottle of wine made from those grapes because the brand name is "Atlantis", soaked the label off and sent it to the new granddaughter, whose middle name it is (as it is mine.) And by the way, YES, I do want the drawing of the Atlantis for whom we are both named.

But don't let mailing them be a chore. I'll come. And don't send the Alstair Sparks book. Too heavy. If I can't (or Karen can't) get it here, I'll borrow it when I see you.

Love to you and the writer of memoirs. (There's a book I do want to have!) Now let's see if I can print this. The first try failed.

be a typo in a note I had written her about my up-coming joint replacement. (This time a shoulder, and it's no big deal.) After we got that straightened out, I asked how she was, and she said, "Well, if I can just learn to walk again, I'll be fine."

Apparently, she has had some sort of reinforcement inserted in one of her disintegrated hips and enough done to the other so that if her muscles hadn't "just gone" from being bed-ridden so long, she'd be mobile again. She's doing daily exercises, having some sort of physical therapy, and seems to think she's going to build the muscles back.

It was my impression that she would never walk again no matter what. So I'm skeptical about this prognosis. But there's no doubt about the change in Mary's morale. Now that she has enough oxygen to keep her brain awake, she's full of the old fire. Plus a new quite uncharacteristic tolerance of the foibles of others. She lectured me in precisely the terms I used to use on her when she was in a snit about someone's failure to "do right."

Even if the physical "recovery" is an illusion, it's a psychological miracle. If you have been grieving as I have, I thought you should know you can stop.

I've been wondering as I read a book of Nadine Gordimer's called *Jump* whether you've read it. Short stories and sketches--I started to write "fables", but that's not right. Any-

August 14

Dearest Hilda:

I just had the most amazing conversation with Mary. Have to tell you about it--although I'm not sure it's not an illusion.

She called me to ask what I meant by what turned out to be a typo in a note I had written her about my up-coming joint replacement. (This time a shoulder, and it's no big deal.) After we got that straightened out, I asked how she was, and she said,

way, I'd like to know how it grabs you. So if you haven't read it, cast about and see if you can get it from a library.

Later:

'I spend a lot of my "sleeping hours" listening to BBC these days. We get World Service on our public radio from midnight to three or four in the morning. I frequently wake up in the wee hours and can't get back to sleep from fretting about this or that, and I've found that listening to news broadcasts is marvelously soporific. Once in a while I half-hear something, but mostly it's like a lullaby. HOWEVER now that I've discovered at what hour (3:45 A.M. Saturday!) Alistair's Cook's Letter from Ameica" comes on, I really try to be conscious for that 15 minutes. It's quite astonishing to see what he makes of what I think has just happened.

On the whole, I get the impression that your political scene is about as disheartening as ours is; that Mr. Clinton's disgraceful posturing on Cuba is matched by Mr. Major's posturing on Ireland; that the Balkan fascists are scaring everybody (except the Iranian fanatics) to death; and that most of the rest of the world is spiralling into chaos. No wonder I can't seem to write another book. What's to say?

However, one piece of mildly good news: at last (after what will be 12 years of trying) I'm to have a paperback edition of *Departure*. I read it for the first time in about that long, to see if there were things I wanted to change, and find that I like it better than I did when it was new. Or are my standards just beginning to sag?

Enough of this complaining. I started this to tell you a happy story. Sorry to have slid into complaining.

Love to you both,

## David Beresford in Impendle examines a KwaZulu killing that shows up South Africa's crises. Below he looks at the case of a controversial senior legal officer and talks to a Buthelezi adviser

**D**EEP in the countryside of KwaZulu-Natal, in an area known as Impendle, a small bungalow and two huts on a hillside command a glorious view overlooking the Umkhomazi River. A crippled chief, David Molefe, used to live there with his family. There is nothing much left of him now.

A human bone nestles in the ashes of a thatched roof. A hide shield lies abandoned on the ground, evoking memories of the Zulu warrior tradition. But pock-marks of automatic gunfire on the walls testify to the way an elderly and helpless man died.

Chief Molefe's death earned only a brief mention in the South African media and then mostly in the context of another atrocity in the Impendle area — the slaughter and mutilation of four policemen a fortnight ago by a group of men identified with Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party. Chief Molefe was killed a week later.

Sketchy newspaper reports quoted the IFP as saying that he was one of their leaders and that police had disarmed him shortly before his murder by confiscating two licensed shotguns from his home.

Villagers in the area tell a different story. They say the guns were unlicensed and found in the possession of two young Inkatha men caught by police in the vicinity of Chief Molefe's *kraal*. They attempted to explain away the weapons by claiming they were supplied "by Ulundi" — the administrative capital of the province — for the chief's protection. When police confronted the chief, however, he flatly disowned them. The youths were taken into custody.

The chief, who had been ill for four years and tried to stay out of politics, was not Zulu but Sotho — one of a few "foreign" tribesmen. Chief Molefe, claim those close to him, was murdered for failing to show loyalty to Inkatha against the police and because he was not a Zulu: a small exercise in "ethnic cleansing".

The charge of ethnic cleansing is sensational and there

has been limited evidence of it in KwaZulu-Natal. But Zulu nationalism is fast on the rise in this region and the associated threat of confrontation between Inkatha and central government is escalating.

The slide towards renewed crisis is made more alarming by the apparent paralysis of central government. It stems from factors including the restrictive legislative and constitutional inheritance from the country's negotiated settlement; ANC lack of experience and expertise in government; and a shortage of finance.

An example of the first of these limitations is provided in KwaZulu-Natal by the saga of the "Untouchables". An investigative task unit of more than 40 police and civil rights lawyers set up by central government, the Untouchables are desperately trying to crack what is suspected to be

### They say Molefe was murdered for failing to show loyalty to Inkatha

a large conspiracy behind the continued political violence.

The full extent of the conspiracy is not known outside the ranks of the task unit. It is believed to have had its genesis in the mid-1980s when the South African security forces went to the aid of a beleaguered Chief Buthelezi, creating a paramilitary network run by senior IFP figures.

The investigation has reached an advanced stage: two senior police officers and a former political aide to Chief Buthelezi have been arrested. But it has become bogged down in rows with the regional attorney-general, Tim McNally, who has been accused of covering up for the police and Inkatha.

The obstacle posed by the attorney-general appears insurmountable because, in the dying days of apartheid, the administration of President F. W. de Klerk introduced legislation giving the attorney-generals — who previously had been subordinate to the minister of justice — an independent role comparable to

that of judges of the supreme court.

Limitations on government imposed by lack of finances, have also been demonstrated by the conspiracy investigation. The Transvaal attorney-general, Jan d'Oliveira, disclosed a breakthrough last week, saying he was in a position to arrest high officials. But he was unable to pursue

the case: his staff was so depleted by the rundown of the civil service that he did not have the capacity to launch the prosecution.

Mr D'Oliveira's frustration was underlined by appeals from President Nelson Mandela to nurses at state hospitals to abandon a crippling strike. Government just did not have the money to im-

prove what he conceded were their lamentable salaries.

Ripped off by consultants brought in from the private sector to beef up the administrative know-how of under-qualified blacks in public service; staggering under the financial burdens imposed by the integration of a plethora of homeland civil services and guerrilla armies; faced by

growing demands for black "upliftment" through social service spending; fending off a wave of constitutional court applications seeking to limit government authority, Mr Mandela's plight is of responsibility without power.

The price being paid for it is represented in that burned-out bungalow overlooking the Umkhomazi River.

Dearest Janet

The solution to the stairs was bringing a bed down into the Conservatory, and a commode (supplied by the Dept. of Social Services). It was quite wonderful to wake up to garden & canal after life in a hospital ward, but I really didn't like Rusty trotting up & down with the contents of the commode, so learned to take the stairs with one crutch after the same DSS had installed a good strong banister, & I moved back up. Getting up & down I regard as exercise. Don't know what a knee replacement is like - maybe it's worse - but a hip job is terrible - at least I think so never having had such surgery before. I'm coasting along, reading & not doing anything much, but find nights are difficult never having been able to sleep on my back - a net change position... I didn't want for the operation - it is the way the National Health Service works now under the Tories - I was put on a waiting list of ONE YEAR! - so Doni & Keith said I must go private (£5000) & I felt 'bad about' taking their money. But finally my GP managed to get me a place in a hospital in Milton Keynes (wired place - tell you about it one day) where I found myself in a ward with a lot of old ladies called Edna, Edith, Clara, Bessie, Doris or HILDA! Well, we were all born around 1915, but I felt I belonged to another generation. It's probably a 'class' thing - being middle class, reading books, listening to music. But of their domestic appliances they were helpless, but all day not even reading a magazine. I also discovered a whole culture embodied in the word 'TEA' - tell you about that one day.

So - congratulations on Harper Atlantic - are they living somewhere where you can visit? How is Joseph, by the way?

Keith gave Rusty the Nelson bio for Christmas. I found the first part absolutely fascinating - the childhood - the extraordinary way in which the character of the man - conciliation rather than confrontation - showed itself from the earliest days. I thought my account of the trial was better than his, but the Robben Island stuff & negotiations were rivetting. We had a memorial meeting for Joe - Rusty was asked to speak - at the South African Embassy - all the old staff (nationalists) still there treating us with deference & courtesy. Doni said "I never thought I'd live to see the day when my Dad sang 'Die Stem Van Suid Afrika' (the old anthem) in the SA Embassy. It is all so extraordinary - a state funeral for this reviled Communist who they tried to kill. We know Joe was dying, although he seemed well at the inauguration in April. But I thought more about the three daughters - did you read their stories in my book? Sharon, with her bitterness. Then I thought that heroes must be fundamentally selfish people, so fixated on their goal that all else becomes secondary. But he was not the least bit a 'dedicated' type - a warm and loving man who enjoyed the best things in life. Gillian wrote a moving account of the funeral for the 'Independent' - I'll try & remember to photo-copy it for you when I'm more mobile. Joe kept me in the party "too long after" I wanted to get out - he said "You are opting out of our struggle" But in 1997 he did admit that Ruth & I had been right & he wrong about the USSR - another story.

Just read Doni's amazing auto biography 'Under My Skin' - get it - a wonderful evocation of a childhood in Rhodesia, fascinating mother/daughter stuff & also about being in the Communist Party - excellent!

well. that's my after noon's labour. Back to the armchair (raised in height by the same DSS so I don't have to get down too far, & can get up) and idleness. In June I'm going to Ethiopia - or I may, Revoly doesn't agree (can't afford it) that's still another story. In May it's Oxfordshire Art Weeks & I'm now a member of the Oxford Artists Society.

How is Mary? I fear for her. She has been so generous to me. I'll send her a note soon.

Much love  
Hilda

To open slit here

To open slit here

An aërogramme should not contain any enclosure

Postcode OX5 1HF.  
Kiddington  
57 Red Crescent  
H Burnston

Name and address of sender

Janet Stevenson  
483 5th Avenue  
Hammond  
Oregon 97181  
U.S.A.

Aërogramme



By air mail  
Par avion

October 5 1995

Dearest Janet

I've taken the morning off (from painting) to write some letters and attend to items tucked away in a file marked ATTENTION, which means they're out of sight and can be conveniently forgotten about for weeks. Ethiopa gave me the kickstart I needed to remove my painters' block and now I'm full of ideas about things I want to try and do. Unfortunately, the days have become so short. In a dozen ses: wintry short - it gets dark early, the day seems ended; energy-short, with the day's end, I peter out (not like once when I worked day, evening & night); time-short - so much to do. I'm hooked on the painting, but have something I very much want to write, something quite different. I don't want to discuss it with anyone here, but wish I could talk!

At that stage my typewriter ribbon gave out, & it's taken days to get a replacement. Nobody here stocks the kind I need. R is busy on thre word processor all the time. So this is some days later. End of above sentence: wish I could talk to you about it.

Answering things in your letter: Woman's conf in Beijing: had many reports both in some papers and also from people who were there. Despite all difficulties - the absurdity of holding it in China in the first place - all very enthusiastic about the results, feeling that issues were raised that cannot now be put on one side. I don't know. We have very sour articles these days about what they call 'feminism', just about all of which I disagree with; it seems a concerted attempt to push it all away. Look, they say, you've got women on boards of directors, and this and that, what more do you want? Yet the large majority of the male population here ('enlightened' males are there all right, middleclass, and few) are incredibly crude, backward, ugly, in their gender attitudes, the upper classes brought up in public (which means private) schools to believe in their innate superiority to everything and everybody, the white collar/blue collar men (as frequently shown in police/equal opportunity/ similar cases that reach the courts) ignorant, violent, bloody-minded. Of course, their own security as male bosses/providers/heads of family has been ddeeply undermined in the past few years by radical changes in our economic system which has displaced the male as foundation of family finances, taken away all security in jobs, sent more women than men into the labour field; and, of course, by the demands of feminism, which they can only look at by out and out rejection. You know all this, of course, but I daresay something similar has been happening in the US, except that from here, it all looks more extreme over where you are. Many of the issues which were confronted for the first time in Beijing were questions of wife-beating, rape, etc, which have not been raised before in countries outside the Western/developed nations. Just to bring them out in the open from remote provinces of India, to hear women from African countries challenging for the first time the male hegemony that dominates totally in so many of these countries, to see bright young black women articulating the thoughts they were never permitted to have - this was part of the triumph there.

The only time I heard Stevie Smith was on the radio. Haven't read the Spaulding Bio. Have too many books to read, not enough years left to read them, & new ones flooding down on me the whole time.

Re your battle with new technology. I'm ignoring it all. I don't want to be on the internet, the superhighway or anything else. My small domestic life is as much as I can cope with at age 80, while there are still so many ideas of what I would like to paint/write trembling around my head.

I love your taking-your-time-about-it tour idea, and hold thumbs it will come about. How wonderful to have the chance to meet again. I only need the cash for the fare to come over and pay you and Mary a relaxed, no-purpose other than friendship visit. But we are rally strapped for money, our little reserves diminishing rapidly, and R very reluctant to call on the kids for anything.

Talking of them, did I tell you or Mary that Keith had a most successful year, won three major photographic prizes, lots of money and more equipment than he needs, was Nikon's photo-journalist of the year, and had his photo of fleeing Rwanda refugees chosen from 30,000 entries from all over the world to appear as poster and book cover picture for the annual World Photo Exhibition. Now he's trying to settle down in his large house in Brighton with his Julie, maybe finding actually living together all the time a little unsettling. Toni is now editing a film made in Mozambique, Angola and South Africa, a follow-up on the children who were victims of war about whom she made a film some years ago. She did manage to track down many of the children in the first film, 'Our Chain of Tears' for the new film: Chain of Hope. The others are OK, tho Frances' personal relationships not too good, but that's too long a story to write about, & despite all that her two lively boys are great & she's absorbed with much activity apart from a demanding job.

I really loved the photo you sent - I've stuck it up in my kitchen where I can look at it from time to time - why tuck it away?

You only wrote tantalising small bits about Turkey - another place, plus Greece, I've never been to and want to see - oh god! and there's the whole of South America untouched by my stumbling ancient feet! If I had ~~xxx~~ real money, I'd give up my fumbling creative attempts and set off on a permanent travel expedition, travelling business class on planes.

The Labour Party here has become so right-wing in its views that it has a good chance of winning the next election. The question is, what difference will it make? The way I look at it: they might not make the changes we want, but at least they won't do all the terrible things the Tories have been up to. Politics here is repetitive and becomes awfully boring, but I suppose it would be after South Africa . . . and what is going on there is another long, both saddening and also cheering story. At - (another break - stopped to throw stale bread to the swans, and forgot what I was going to say). Do you know that the SA parliament has the highest proportion of women members in the world, except for the Seychelles? To give you a little idea of what is happening, I'm sending this cutting from yesterday's paper. The passages I have marked are a fair report of some of the problems. We see it here at the SA Embassy - they are still loaded with staff from the previous regime, and struggling with inexperience, hostility and lack of money. But some things are very positive, particularly the new Constitutional Court.

I nearly forgot! I'm going to try your bread recipe, and in return send you a recipe for Italian bread, Focaccia, which has wonderful toppings. But haven't time to type it out now - next time, or soon.

Much love

Hilda

Can't you persuade Mary to write on  
a history of WISP?



December 1 1995

Dearest Janet

1) Mary. Getting information through you isn't entirely the best way, I suppose, but the trouble is I do not have another source. I'm sure that your time is fully occupied, and these extra chores eat into it. Trouble is, I feel so far away and out of touch. (You're also not on the spot). I will send her a note, but do not expect any but a two-line greeting in reply.

2) Take Back the Night. I'm still trying to find someone who can supply me with any material. Frances, in Leeds, has nothing and is out of touch. Her extramural activity is largely confined to her Women's Choir (they learn folk and ethnic songs, many South Africa of course, and perform at local community functions: occasional festivals and things like Labour Party conferences.) (She loves it). The problem here is that there is no longer any coherent women's movement. There are some organisations devoted to single objectives, such as getting more women into parliament. (I am a passive member of one, The Fawcett Society, that works for objectives like equal pay, education, getting women into parliament, top jobs, etc. All I do is send an annual subscription and read their hand-outs.) There are individual 'feminists', sort of gurus from the past and a few present, but really this are in a bad way. It's all fragmented and scattered. I have a couple of sources still to try.

You asked me some time ago if I had read A.S. Byatt's Possession and what I thought of it. I have a copy still shrink-wrapped from the book club I belong to, but have so much to read, I haven't opened it. I did read a novella, Angels and Insects, and very much admired both her writing and also the tremendous erudition. And yet, before I finished, I was getting bored with it and began skipping. I read mostly non-fiction and biographies (please try to get Doris Lessing's Under My Skin, it's a joy to read) (Another recent read, worth trying to get, is Brian Keenan's An Evil Cradling. He was one of the Beirut hostages, held for more than 4 years, and his book is a compelling read, partly because of his own quirky personality, and also his description and understanding of the young Arabs who were in charge of him.) Not enough time for reading. I'm beginning to write something, after swearing that I would never, never, write anything again; trying to paint; and simply keeping up with the daily papers, the London Review of Books, Granta, is more than I can manage. I'm a slow reader. And have to start reading stuff to get some information about what I'm trying to write, which is basically about a portion of my sister's life (she spent 11½ years in the Soviet Union - unwillingly, very anti the system, because she was caught by a series of traumatic events, and the war.)

Re the hip. Well, it functions well enough, I'm pretty mobile and as free of pain as any woman of my age with arthritic bones, knees etc, which is to say that the muscles ache sometimes, but nothing like the pain before the operation. But I still walk with a bit of a hobble, and reckon by now I should be much nimbler; and realise that if I had only gone swimming every day, or something equivalent, I'd be functioning better now. But I didn't. I thought it would all be much quicker. I walked more than three miles the other day, the longest yet, but going to the Royal Academy to see their vast, glorious Africa Exhibition killed me after one hour (probably would have been the same even if I never had hip trouble. It's the standing around, the too-much of everything, mental and physical. But oh, what wonderful stuff to see!)

I admire you having even a fringe-life on the Internet. I've cut all that entirely out of my life. What is CHIAPAS95, anyway?

I'm painting little water-colours of market scenes, and trying to paint in oils. The main thing is LTS - Life's too short, and I start flagging earlier and earlier in the evenings.

By air mail  
Par avion



Aerogramme

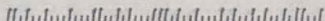
Janet Stevenson

783 5th Street

Hammond

OR 97121-9744

USA



Name and address of sender

Hilda Bernstein  
57 Lock Crescent  
Kidlington  
Oxon OX5 1HF  
Tel 08675 3642

Postcode

An aerogramme should not contain any enclosure



Rusty is in South Africa - left 2 days ago, invited to attend a conference that is about the beginnings of the armed struggle, the politics of it, etc. I was so pleased. He so rarely gets any kind of recognition, which is partly due to his withdrawing personality; we are, and particularly he is, old survivors of a period in which practically all the other participants are now dead. The other survivors are the men who spent all those years in jail. The ones who were participants, both remaining inside and in exile, are really all dead. Lovely time to go to SA, particularly Cape Town, where the conference is taking place at the University of the Western Cape. Mid-summer, full flowers, sea, sun, mountains - and here, drear, drear dark days, ending shortly after they have begun. I want to go to SA to try and interview some of the women in parliament, particularly the speaker, Frene Ginwala, but also others. Do you know that SA has the highest number of women in parliament of any country in the world, apart from the Seychelles (and I don't know why they feature so high.) 25 per cent. But, because of cash shortage, I thought I had better try to set things up before just going, particularly at this time of the year, when parliament may not be sitting.

Much love

Hilda

**Collection Number: A3299**

**Collection Name: Hilda and Rusty BERNSTEIN Papers, 1931-2006**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* **Historical Papers Research Archive**

*Collection Funder:* **Bernstein family**

*Location:* **Johannesburg**

**©2015**

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of the *Hilda and Rusty Bernstein Papers*, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.