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THIS WEEK:

- * Letter from the President: South Africa - the problem of being new!
- * Sudan: Speeches delivered by President Thabo Mbeki and the President of Sudan, Omar el-Bashir, at a State Banquet in Cape Town
- * Celebrating our Heritage: South Africans need to be able to read in their own languages

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

South Africa - the problem of being new!

South Africa confronts a problem which only time can solve, perhaps with a little help from its friends. The problem is that the new South Africa is new. It therefore faces the challenge to solve problems and respond to questions to which it has never been exposed.

One of the most fundamental and central of the questions that the new South Africa must answer is - what shall we do with our freedom, the liberty we enjoy, our emancipation from many centuries of oppression, repression, regimentation and state terror?

The attendant questions that the South Africans ask, perhaps not frontally and in express language, but certainly in their actions are:

- * how shall we use the immense opening we have gained, which enables us to liberate our minds, our souls, our bodies, and our instincts, from the historical memory embedded in our sub-conscious understanding, which instructs us to fear and respect the law and order and social regularities dictated by an unchallengeable Other;
- * what shall we, the emancipated people, define as our own distinct and democratic law and order;
- * should we, in any event, accept that the very notion of law and order and rules and regulations, wherever these may originate, including ourselves, is consistent with the reality of the freedom we now enjoy, which has given us the possibility, at last, to be free of restrictive rules and regulations!
- * should we not, through our actions, so define the meaning of liberty, at the same time repeating words and routine formulae the global democratic community would understand, to build a society in which all are free to pursue their individual interests as individuals and partisan collectives, with no obligation to recognise and respect the common national good!
- * does freedom not translate, in fact, into acceptance of the practice -

everyone for himself/herself, and the devil take the hindmost!

* should we thus not define freedom as meaning the right of all who can and so wish, to do as they will, informed, solely, by their particular interests!

The Mask of Anarchy

Near enough two centuries ago, the English poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, composed the famous poem, "The Mask of Anarchy", to denounce the massacre of working people at Peterloo, England, in 1819. In part he wrote:

I met Murder on the way -
He had a mask like Castlereagh -
Very smooth he looked, yet grim...

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Lord Eldon, an ermined gown;
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell.
And the little children, who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

Clothed with the Bible, as with light,
And the shadows of the night,
Like Sidmouth, next, Hypocrisy
On a crocodile rode by.

And many more Destructions played
In this ghastly masquerade,
All disguised, even to the eyes,
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, and spies.

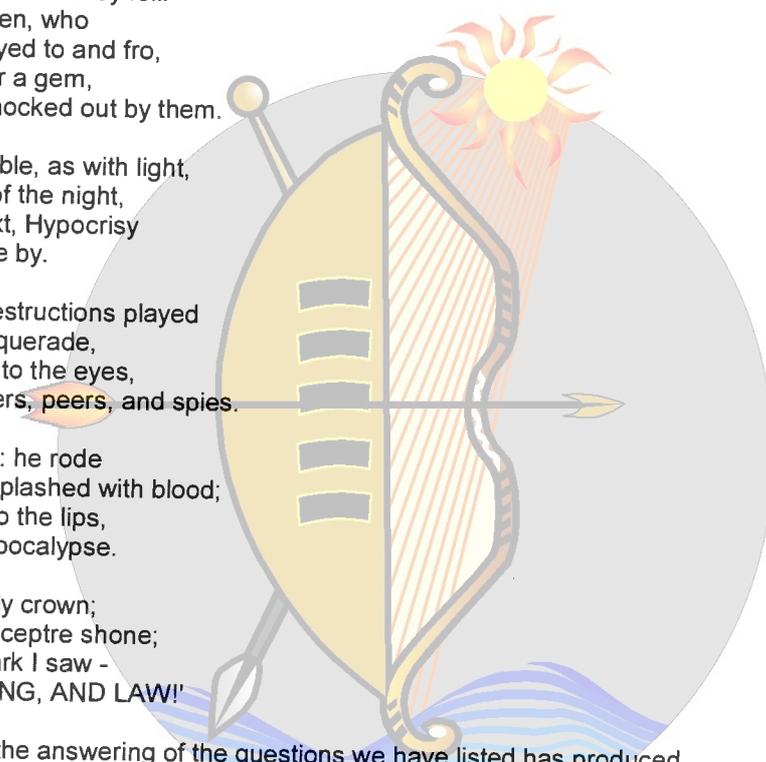
Last came Anarchy: he rode
On a white horse, splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

And he wore a kingly crown;
And in his grasp a sceptre shone;
On his brow this mark I saw -
'I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW!'

In many instances, the answering of the questions we have listed has produced the ghastly masquerade of which Shelley wrote. This is a masquerade of canards paraded by people who disguise their purposes by wearing ermined gowns, by weeping crocodile tears, by pretending to be as holy as the Bible, and by giving themselves a cloak of majesty even to the point of clothing this in pretensions of divinity.

A ghastly masquerade of canards

The word 'canard' is not regularly used in our country's conversational English. We use it here in its dictionary meaning - 'a piece of news/a story that is false and is told to people deliberately in order to harm someone'.



The canards that constitute the ghastly masquerade of which Shelley wrote are told to advance particular, partisan interests. This practice derives from a definition of the possibilities created by the gift of freedom in terms of which freedom is interpreted as the freedom to falsify reality.

In practice, this constitutes an assertion that freedom means the liberty to peddle canards, claiming that this is a manifestation both of the excellent and unchallengeable exercise of the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of speech and the robust debate that constitutes the very essence of democracy!

The resort to the potent weapon of the canard is a consequence of a determination that freedom means the right and possibility for any individual or group to use all means and methods to advance their particular interests, regardless of what happens to the rest of the society to which they belong.

We will now cite some of the canards that have been visited on all of us by those in our society whose definition of the meaning of freedom allows them to consider treating the truth and ethical imperatives with contempt as a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of speech.

The threat of dictatorship?

During the 1999 General Election campaign especially, the canard was marketed with great vigour that our movement, the ANC, sought to win the elections gaining a parliamentary two-thirds majority because we wanted to change our Constitution to entrench ourselves as our country's permanent ruling party.

So fervently was this canard paraded that some in the international community, including and especially some in the British and US media, joined in its propagation, convinced that obviously it represented the truth. The readiness to believe this canard was driven by the entrenched and insulting stereotype of Africa and the Africans that we have no capacity to be democrats.

The canard was peddled by self-serving politicians and their acolytes who believe that they have a right to govern and have anointed themselves as the guardians of our democracy. To achieve their goals they were quite ready to pervert honest democratic debate by propagating pure canards, all for the supposed purpose of saving democracy from imminent danger!

Media freedom in danger?

Or take another more recent example, this being an attempt to legitimise canards by claiming that press freedom is under threat. A newspaper receives and keeps stolen property, namely, private medical records. It then proceeds to publish articles it claims are based on these records.

In this regard we must bear in mind a number of facts. Theft is a crime.

Receipt of stolen goods is a crime. Unauthorised ownership of private medical records is a crime. Publication of such records without the consent of the person concerned is a crime.

For these reasons, the police institute an investigation to respond to the crimes of theft and receipt of stolen property. The newspaper in question then publishes entirely false reports that some among its staff are about to be arrested, that our government has instructed the law-enforcement agencies to

find as much 'dirt' as they can about some of the journalists working for the newspaper, and that these agencies are now 'spying' on these journalists.

To justify criminal misconduct of all sorts and dissuade the law-enforcement agencies from doing their work mandated by the Constitution and the law, the newspaper cries out in a loud voice - the constitutionally guaranteed media freedom is under threat!

In this instance the freedom we have achieved is obviously interpreted as the freedom to do anything and everything the media chooses to do to advance its agenda, with no regard to our Constitution and our laws -including the right to peddle canards all in the interest of entrenching democracy in our country! And once again, this strange claim has its adherents among some in the international community, including and especially some in the British and US media.

An ANC gone astray?

Or take other canards that emanate from people who are supposedly members of our democratic movement. These range from the absurd assertion that the masses of our people are poorer now than they were during the apartheid period, that our movement, the ANC, does not allow open democratic debate in its ranks, that there is a 'centralisation of power' in the Government Presidency, resulting in the disempowerment of the ANC and its allies, and so on.

Once again these canards are approvingly amplified by some in the international community, including and especially some in the British and US media.

All these claims are patently false. Those who make them know very well that they have no facts of any kind to substantiate them because none exist. Why then do some who claim to be revolutionaries resort to a practice to which all revolutions, including our own, have always been firmly opposed - the practice of deliberately peddling canards to achieve particular objectives?

For these, the freedom we have achieved means the freedom to falsify reality, claiming that this is their democratic right, with the objective to realise their openly stated goal of taking over the leadership of our movement. And thus does freedom introduce us to a practice to which we are not accustomed - a strange struggle among supposed comrades for power - power one over the other!

Many years ago, our late President, OR Tambo, warned against the danger posed by the struggle among the powerless for power over one another. The potential danger we face today, which we must defeat, is a struggle among revolutionaries for power over one another. No genuine revolutionary can accept the perverse notion that the freedom we won at great cost means the freedom to engage in a power struggle among revolutionaries!

The angry masses?

To proceed beyond the realm of canards, there are yet others in our society, who define the meaning of freedom as freedom to break the law and engage in acts of anarchy to advance their goals.

These are people who, in pursuit of one goal or another, burn down private homes, kill and assault workers, destroy public property, loot shops, insult people in vile language, and engage in other acts of thuggish behaviour to achieve their goals. Strangely, some who apportion to themselves the role of

watchdogs, which are ever on guard to protect the freedom and democracy we now enjoy, consistently seek to justify these acts of thuggery by describing them as a legitimate expression of 'the anger of the masses'!

Almost two centuries ago, Shelley strongly denounced the murder of workers by the then British ruling class, which claimed to be acting in the interest of 'God, and King, and Law!'

He argued that however well the act of murder of the workers might seek to disguise itself, hiding behind masks and ermined gowns and the darkness of night, carrying a Bible in its hands, weeping crocodile tears, it could not but have as its partners, fraud, hypocrisy, anarchy and destruction.

Le Canard enchainé

I do not know if we have the poets to compose their own version of Shelley's Mask of Anarchy, to unmask the ghastly masquerade of fraud, hypocrisy, anarchy and destruction, which seek to legitimise themselves by claiming to be the sentinels who are standing on guard to protect our freedom and democracy!

There is a famous French satirical newspaper, founded in 1915, Le Canard enchainé - "the chained duck" - and accordingly carries two ducks on its masthead. But as we have seen the word canard also means - 'a piece of news/a story that is false and is told to people deliberately in order to harm someone'. These are the canards we must chain, by speaking truth to falsehood, in defence of our freedom and democracy, and leave the ducks to walk freely.

Thabo Mbeki

SUDAN AND SOUTH AFRICA

To peace, progress and partnership

EDITOR'S NOTE: Below we reproduce two short speeches delivered by our President, Thabo Mbeki, and the President of Sudan, Omar el-Bashir, at the State Banquet held in Cape Town at Tuynhuys on 6 November, in honour of the visiting President el-Bashir. ANC Today publishes these speeches because of the interest of our members and readers in the resolution of the conflict in Darfur, and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Government of Sudan in January 2005. The CPA ended the decades-long conflict between Northern and Southern Sudan.

President Thabo Mbeki's speech

Your Excellency, we are truly delighted that you found time to visit our country, accompanied by your wife, Mme Widad Babkir, and an important delegation. On behalf of the government and people of South Africa I would like to extend the warmest welcome to you and your delegation.

I also wish, through you, Your Excellency, to convey our greetings to the government and people of Sudan.

We are very happy to be with in South Africa because among other things, your visit has enabled us to strengthen our bilateral relations, especially the Joint

Bilateral Commission, which as Your Excellency knows, we launched in May 2006.

We will further consolidate our bilateral relations by signing a number of agreements tomorrow, these being:

- * The Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Economic Co-operation;
- * Agreement for the Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments;
- * Agreement on Co-operation in the Fields of Arts and Culture;
- * Statement of Intent on Social Development;
- * Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Co-operation;
- * Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operation on Immigration, Population and Election Matters; and
- * Bilateral Trade Co-operation Agreement.

These agreements, Your Excellency, demonstrate that our partnership is indeed growing stronger and most importantly, embraces people to people relations.

As you are aware, Your Excellency, South Africa continues to give such assistance as it can so that the sister people of the Republic of Sudan achieve the progress which all your people desire.

Among other things, we continue with the implementation of the Capacity and Institution Building Project which involves the Government of Southern Sudan, our Department of Foreign Affairs and other structures of our government, and the University of South Africa. To date, fourteen training programmes have been implemented and over 700 individuals have been trained in various elements of state administration.

In this regard, we are indeed very pleased that an agreement has been reached to conclude all the matters that led the SPLM [Sudan People's Liberation Movement] to suspend the participation of its members in the central government of Sudan. I would like to assure you, Mr President, of our full support for this decision, as well as our readiness to do everything necessary and possible to assist in this regard.

I would like to take advantage of this happy occasion once more to confirm that we consider Sudan as a vitally important African country that has the potential to occupy the front ranks in the continuing struggle to achieve the African Renaissance, which includes the unity of our Continent.

We are very honoured that we can count on Sudan as a strategic partner. We are therefore determined to work with you, Mr President, further to strengthen our bilateral relations, within the context of a focused programme of cooperation covering many areas.

We will also strengthen our cooperation and consultation with regard to multilateral issues, such as the development, the renewal and the unity of our Continent, Palestine and the Middle East, the conclusion of the Doha Development Round, the reform of the UN, and so on.

Your Excellency, we are, like you and the rest of our Continent, deeply interested in the speedy resolution of the conflict in Darfur. We agree fully with the Government of Sudan that:

- * the Abuja Peace Agreement provides the framework for the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Darfur;

- * all the armed factions in Darfur should participate in the AU-UN peace talks hosted by Brother Leader Moumar Khadafi and the Libyan Jamahiriya;
- * the international community should take firm action against anybody who wilfully absent themselves from these negotiations, choosing to engage in violent actions against the innocent people of Darfur;
- * the AU-UN hybrid force should be deployed without further delay, and all outstanding issues in this regard should be solved as a matter of urgency on the basis of existing United Nations decisions and by agreement between the AU, the UN and the Government of Sudan; and,
- * all necessary steps should be taken to ensure the security of the civilian population and the internally displaced people in Darfur, as well as create the conditions for humanitarian assistance to reach the sections of the population in need.

I would like to assure Your Excellency that we remain seized of the question of further strengthening our contribution to the peace forces deployed in Darfur, to add to the military and police contingents we have sent to Darfur as part of AMIS [AU Mission in Sudan], in keeping with the needs of the AU-UN hybrid force, bearing in mind the fact of our deployments in the DRC and Burundi.

We thank you and your government, Your Excellency, for your partnership in one of NEPAD's important projects, the Eastern Africa Submarine Cable System (EASSy), the 9,900km-long submarine cable between Durban and Port Sudan, which will radically reduce telecommunications costs in Africa. We trust that this cable will indeed become operational by the end of 2008.

Indeed, Your Excellency, despite the many challenges that we face as individual countries, we have the duty to ensure that the African Union and its programmes succeed. At the same time, we are confident that our efforts will, in time, bring development and prosperity to our people.

Once more, Your Excellency, I am pleased to extend to you, your wife, Madame Widad Babkir, and the rest of your important delegation, a warm welcome to our country and our thanks that you have honoured us with your visit.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, please rise and join me in a toast to the good health and prosperity of His Excellency, President Omer Hassan Ahmed el-Bashir and to peace, solidarity and friendship between the peoples of the Republics of Sudan and South Africa.

To friendship!

President Omar el-Bashir's speech

It gives me great pleasure and profound happiness to be with you today in this beautiful city - Cape Town --at this historic juncture of our bilateral relations and the developments in the region at large. This is the first-official visit which has been long awaited to give impetus for our bilateral relations and to probe ways and means of promoting them to the level that we aspire in peace, stability and development.

Your successive visits to Sudan - Mr. President - manifest your concern on the course of relations in which we are currently engaged to draw up a map for joint action on the way forward towards peace, stability and development, and to consolidate bilateral cooperation in all fields, targeting the establishment of strategic partnership that stems from the actions plans formulated by NEPAD for

implementation by the African Union.

We came to South Africa amid important developments, as our country is experiencing the crisis of Darfur, though we managed to achieve considerable success towards resolving the crisis, with the support of South Africa, and other African countries who expressed readiness to realise the Hybrid Operation as stipulated by the Security Council Resolution No.1769.

I take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to South Africa for its effective participation in the peace keeping operation in Darfur and its envisaged participation in the Hybrid Operation. We are pretty confident that the presence of South Africa forces, and will no doubt qualify the operation for success despite the complexities of the situation.

In this regard we are looking forward, as well, to the success of Darfur peace negotiations taking place in Libya, by concluding agreement with all the fighting factions based on justice and fair division of power and wealth and to put in the mechanism that shall ensure a comprehensive peace agreement in the Sudan and the region at large.

As for the CPA, we would like to assure you that there will be no return to war, what so ever the differences between the CPA partners. We are committed to the full implementation of the Agreement in letter and spirit, utilising the same mechanisms embodied in the CPA and to work together in genuine partnership for resolving the remaining issues and for attaining unity of the Sudan.

We have gained the experience that direct negotiations is the best way of resolving conflicts, rather than opening windows for foreign intervention that, with its hidden and open agenda, would complicate the situation rather than resolving the problem.

Africa had long been subjected to the agonies of colonialism, racial discrimination and foreign interference in its domestic affairs, and that disabled its endeavours for achieving security and economic development.

The advent of national majority rule in South Africa, terminated colonialism and internal interference in the affairs of the country. Africa is now looking forward for the South African role in liberating the continent from poverty, political and economic dependence through its leading role in the African Union. The Sudan is always willing to put its enormous economic, political and strategic potentials for building the Africa continent.

At the top of our agenda during this visit, is the promotion and consolidation of bilateral relations in political, economic and investment fields, in our march to achieve a balanced partnership between our two countries. We note with concern that the flow of trade between Sudan and South Africa is slow, and that there is need for a push to make it match the strategic partnership to which we both aspire, by engaging ourselves in strategic projects in fields such as food security, infrastructure and information technology.

It is opportune in this visit to sign a number of agreements which have been agreed upon by the two sides in the fields of economic cooperation, trade and investment and two agreements on military and health cooperation. We welcome the convening of the Joint Bilateral Commission in Khartoum as soon as possible, to consider priority agreements and to ensure the execution of our programmes.

The Sudan appreciates very much the effort exerted by South Africa in its capacity as chairperson of the African Committee for the Reconstruction and Development of Southern Sudan. Yet what has been achieved so far is much short of our expectation, because of the non-commitment of the International Community to the cause of Reconstruction and Development in the South.

We trust that your leadership will spare no effort to mobilise and sensitise the donors to fulfil the commitments they made in Oslo. It is always to be remembered that peace and development are two faces of the same coin and that many cases of failure in peace operations are caused by the failure of the International Community to honour their commitments. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasise the need to prioritise projects in the Reconstruction and Development of the South that would encourage unity of the country and integration of Southern Sudan nationality and regionally.

God bless our efforts in the path for faith and truth.

CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE

Readers' Views - Elitha van der Sandt

South Africans need to be able to read in their own languages

In considering African languages in literature, a question that immediately comes to mind is: "Is the book sector seen as a strategically important one?" If so, it will be easier to promote African languages and literature.

I attempt to sketch a strategic backdrop in which African languages in literature can thrive.

It is absolutely imperative, for social cohesion, national identity and preserving our heritage, that we see greater indigenous publishing. The issue of indigenous language publishing is quite an emotive one, but it is important to note that the solution is not as straightforward as it may sometimes seem. Many of us have for some time now worked to lay the foundation from which we can have a rich African book sector in South Africa. I believe this is the most sustainable way to ensure that indigenous languages take its rightful place.

I'm sure that there will be many ways suggested in which we can have African languages in literature, but we need to be certain that whatever we do ensures long-term sustainability. An easy way is for government to have millions of local language books printed and distributed throughout the country, in schools and communities. This certainly would have the effect of stimulating reading, both as an activity but also in us seeing more of ourselves around us, thus adding to our self-pride. At some stage this exercise would have to become sustainable, where without government intervention, it will be a natural way of publishing in South Africa. Now herein lies the challenge. How do we ensure indigenous publishing (both in terms of language and content) is an ongoing, commercially viable and sustainable cultural activity?

The book publishing sector in any country is large and complex, comprising of many partners making up the value chain. Each sub-sector has its own challenges, and necessitates coordination and a holistic, integrated strategy, such as the Draft National Book Policy submitted to the government in 2005. In South Africa,

the colonial and apartheid past exacerbated these complexities. The aim of such an integrated policy would be to increase access, at multiple levels, where all our citizens can actively participate as owners, creators, producers, managers and consumers of the book publishing industry. This brings us to one of the major shifts that need to take place: the transformation of the book sector. The book sector is an inclusive term used for activities along the book value chain that includes paper, print, publishing, bookselling, libraries and reading promotion.

With regard to transformation, we can define 'access' at three levels:

Ownership - to diversify ownership within the book sector. For indigenous publishing a strong requirement is the development of small and independent local businesses, emphasising more black businesses in the sector. Here, creating an enabling environment to assist black people to participate in the sector to diversify ownership and control is important through specific application of broad-based black economic empowerment.

Employment - to include black people in management, creation, production and other key decision making positions across the industries. Diversity at all levels of employment, with sound skills development plans to see adequate skills transfer taking place.

Product - where all sectors of the South African society has access to diverse, affordable content, reflecting our diverse cultures and languages.

Diversity includes content in terms of language, culture, gender, range of perspectives and opinion. Access also includes the distribution channels and library sectors in the value chain.

Another important shift that needs to take place is government commitment to book development. This is a condition not only for having more output but also different kinds of output from what was previously produced, as well as changes in the technical and institutional arrangements by which books are produced.

There has been no real, sustained commitment from government to book development since 1994. There have been projects implemented, but very few that have had significant impact. Increased concentration of ownership, fewer black publishers than in 1994, signify that we were not very successful. One of the reasons may be that we assumed that the book publishing sector would somehow change to meet the needs of a new democratic society. In fact, the spending power of government (through its textbook spending) had very little impact on the diversity of the sector and could actually have hindered the development of a diverse, viable sector.

The sector also does not have priority status, although priority is afforded to film, music and crafts, both in terms of support and funding. The assumption then can be that it is a strategically less important sector, which in turn would lead to success of a lesser extent with regard to African languages .

The same intervention is required from government, as with some other economic sectors, as market forces on their own won't bring about change. We can see this through a number of international examples:

India's first Prime Minister after independence made the book a priority and established a National Book Trust in 1957. Today India is one of the largest

book producers in the world and successfully publishes in at least 18 local languages.

Canada's book sector was mainly served through foreign businesses. In 1979, the Canadian government put a Book Industry Development Plan in place to increase indigenous publishing. This dramatically increased Canadian owned businesses in the book sector. Here, foreign ownership (through policy) is not allowed unless through application to the government, and then not more than 25% of a publishing house may be foreign-owned.

In Brazil, foreign ownership is limited to 30%. In South Africa there is no limit.

Then, there are a number of challenges faced by the sector, but as a whole the following barriers exist:

Lack of transformation: Some strides have been made, but fundamental change is required.

Lack of understanding of the sector: The sector has a dual purpose, being cultural and economic in nature. If a balance between the two is not found, the diversity and viability of the sector is threatened. Often the economic nature of the sector is underestimated or the cultural importance thereof is ignored by stakeholders on opposite ends.

The level of investment is very low: In Canada we see \$38 million invested in book development, \$31 million in Australia, approximately R2 million in South Africa. Book development is a state funded activity, with some further donor funding for specific projects.

Excluding industry: There seems to be an assumption that interventions can happen outside of industry. Interventions should be based on a partnership among all the stakeholders, including government. Unless of course state publishing is envisaged.

Perception of a quick fix solution: It is precisely because of quick fix solutions that there has not been significant progress in indigenous publishing. Sustained, long-term solutions need to be implemented through a National Book Policy.

These are just a glance of what is required to create an enabling environment without which indigenous publishing cannot thrive. Once these building blocks exist, or even while this is being created, a number of specific projects can be implemented to ensure sustainable indigenous publishing. Projects include reading promotion based on sound data, indigenous language publishing projects, writer development and incentives, etc. A good model to follow here is the development of Afrikaans through the creation of a publishing industry for Afrikaans books and popularising Afrikaans among Afrikaners during the apartheid period. This needs to be complemented by book development strategies as implemented in India, the Philippines and Canada. It also requires work with the African Publishers Network (APNET) to ensure indigenous publishing and trade in books within our continent to contribute to the vision of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Renaissance, as we cannot develop on our own.

Reading promotion is the cornerstone of all interventions and a partnership

between print media and the book sector is required for this. More South Africans read newspapers and magazines than books, therefore African language newspapers and magazines should be a first entry point to promote and encourage African language reading. Studies show that people naturally progress to books once some reading habit has occurred. A national reading promotion strategy should be developed (much the same as "Proudly South African" and "South Africa - Alive with possibilities") to re-ignite the African Pride. The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) and the South African Book Development Council can partner on this.

I sincerely hope that this issue will get the attention it deserves. As a Coloured person, who has lost much of the Khoisan identity and culture, I now have to re-educate my children and myself on our ancestors, their culture and language. Let this not happen to any of our ethnic groups.

** Elitha van der Sandt is the CEO of the South African Book Development Council. She writes in her personal capacity. This article is part of a series from readers on the subject of African languages and literature. More articles and comments will be published in future editions.

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