

ZISA

ZIMBABWE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA
1987-1993

A Study of the Weltfriedensdienst (WFD)

Weltfriedensdienst e.V.
Hedemannstraße 14
10969 Berlin

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I. INTRODUCTION - Outline for a case study

The lengthy conflict due to South African apartheid rule was one of those bitterly antagonistic conflicts where a peaceful settlement seemed impossible. Nonetheless the miracle of a peaceful transition was achieved. Many factors contributed to this happy end. Among these was the little known covered contact between emissaries of the two sides, which helped to create mutual trust. One of these operations was carried out between the late 80s and the early 90s by the Zimbabwe Institute for Southern Africa (ZISA). This study has been planned to cast light on ZISA's contribution.

The overall aim of the study is to determine the relevance of the ZISA approach for peaceful resolution of other conflicts.

This requires an analysis of the ZISA process as a case study. Four main questions should be answered:

- How important was ZISA in the South African situation compared with other similar efforts?
- How did ZISA operate, what was its impact, characteristics and distinctive approach?
- If ZISA was important, the question follows, as to why it was successful?
- Finally, what are the lessons learned and the conditions for the replicability of ZISA's approach in conflicts where antagonism is as bitter as it had been under apartheid?

In 1987 the Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA) initiated a meeting in Dakar between the ANC and prominent South African "Afrikaners". As a follow up of this landmark meeting the „Zimbabwe Institute for Southern Africa"(ZISA) was established under the auspices of the Cold Comfort Farm Trust in Harare/Zimbabwe. ZISA's mission was to facilitate further meetings between various social and professional groups to explore the options for ending apartheid to achieve a peaceful transition to democracy in South Africa. Up to 1993 ZISA facilitated about 50 such meetings in Zimbabwe. This assisted in creating trust between the antagonistic sides and in preparing the ground for the negotiated settlement, which led to the non-racial democratic constitution agreed at the Kempton Park Conference Centre.

Among the many eminent South Africans who attended the ZISA meetings were: Former presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, former Minister Zola Skweyiya, Judge Albie Sachs, the Governor of the Reserve Bank, Mr. Tito Mboweni, Minister Derek Hanekom, former Minister Mosibudi Mangena, former MPs Frederik van Zyl Slabbert and Alex Boraine, the latter two the founding members of IDASA.

The ZISA staff included the journalists Moeletsi Mbeki, Ruth Weiss, late Mike Overmeyer and Peter Wellman, with Dr. Helmut Orbon as Director of the Institute. The work was funded by the European Union and the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The reason why very little is published or known about ZISA is due to the secrecy of its activities. ZISA was instructed by the Government of Zimbabwe to avoid any publicity of the meetings as the operation was not to be seen as undermining sanctions against South Africa at the time. Few records and documents were produced about the meetings.

The study is mainly based on interviews of key participants who at time were among the main actors of South Africa's political process and continue to be at the forefront of affairs today.

Ruth Weiss, who had been involved in ZISA's work and is an expert on the apartheid conflict, carried out the interviews. She has been assisted by Manfred Schumacher-Just, project coordinator of Weltfriedensdienst (WFD).

An advisory group has been set up to accompany the study. Members comprise: Daniela Koerppen, researcher Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, Uli Lauerhass, programme coordinator Weltfriedensdienst, Dr. Konrad Melchers, publisher, Dr. Helmut Orbon, gtz consultant, SADC Peace & Security, Democracy & Governance Programme and former ZISA coordinator; Manfred Schumacher-Just, WFD coordinator; Prof. Heribert Weiland, director Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg and the former Ambassador in South Africa, Harald Ganns.

The project is organised by Weltfriedensdienst e.V., a NGO based in Berlin (www.wfd.de), actively involved in development work and civil peace work for 50 years.

The study is funded through the Department of Civil Peace Service of the German Ministry of Cooperation and Development. (BMZ) The project was carried out between December 2009 and March 2010.

The report includes the collection of twelve consolidated interviews which resulted from the research in South Africa.

The work would have been impossible, if there weren't so many supporters who spend there time, shared ideas and contributed to the project.

We say thank your very much to everybody who supported our work and in particular took part in the interviews and made it an success by highlighting how ZISA had contributed to the process of ending Apartheid towards a new South Africa.

The report is an excellent base for further research on the role of dialogue for any resolution for peace.

Manfred Schumacher-Just
Project Coordinator

FROM TALKS-ABOUT-TALKS
TO NEGOTIATIONS

ANALYSIS OF CONTRIBUTION OF
ZIMBABWE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA
(ZISA) TO DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE SOUTH
AFRICAN REGIME AND LIBERATION MOVEMENTS
1987-1993

RUTH WEISS

March 2010

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FROM TALKS-ABOUT-TALKS TO NEGOTIATIONS

ANALYSIS OF CONTRIBUTION OF ZIMBABWE INSTITUTE ON SOUTHERN AFRICA (ZISA) TO DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE SOUTH AFRICAN REGIME AND LIBERATION MOVEMENTS 1987-1993

*It was accepted that...further contacts were necessary
Dakar Declaration, July 1987*

I. BACKGROUND

Causes of Conflict

South Africa celebrates its 100th birthday this year, having come into existence as a British Dominion, the Union of South Africa, on May 31st, 1910, eight years after the end of the Anglo-Boer war. The political bickering accompanying its birthpangs ensured instability from the start, as each of the four unified states – two British colonies, two Boer republics – were allowed to keep their own franchise system. This meant only the Cape had voting rights for all races based on property and other qualifications, with this concession watered down and eventually abolished in the decades that followed. South Africa's population comprised whites, Africans (blacks), Asians and people of mixed race (Coloureds).

In the run-up to the new dispensation, a racially mixed group led by the Cape Prime Minister William Schreiner travelled to London in 1909 to protest unsuccessfully against the lack of racial equality. The delegation's failure meant that political protest was built into the constitution, spilling in time into open conflict. Only the last sixteen years of the century-old state enjoyed a democratic system, with May 1994 witnessing the sight of South Africans of all races joyfully queuing for miles in the hot sun in front of ballot boxes.

This second birth did not come easily, succeeding as it did decades of unrest and strife, with generations of non-whites deprived of their birthrights and a major toll of dead and injured. Only in the '80s did the façade of white power crack, leading in 1990 to conceding the inevitability of dismantling the segregation system known as apartheid, prior to four years of negotiations and transition before transfer of power from the minority to the majority.

Fearing for their rights, leading Africans had founded the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912, two years after Union to protect black interests. A year later their worst fears were confirmed, when the Land Act of 1913, the first segregation law, deprived Africans of the right to own or rent land, apart from that communally owned in so-called reserves, which covered only some 7 ½ per cent of the total area: a recipe for disaster and conflict. Protest against the discrimination of non-whites continued, inevitably with mounting intensity.

The road towards the goal of democratic majority rule was long and hard. Racism and suppression of the black majority, always an inherent part of South African society, culminated in 1948 in the electoral triumph of the National Party (NP), the party of Afrikaners, the descendants of the Boer settlers, with their 'apartheid' ideology. Racial separation had always been the custom in South Africa, but after 1948 apartheid was institutionalised by means of specific legislation. This was intended to control the lives of black South Africans, dictating their place of domicile, work and movements, with inclusion of a programme of so-called "separate, parallel development", whereby physical "homelands" were created, to one of which each black South African was deemed to belong. The aim was to deprive Africans of South African citizenship. All opposition to the apartheid doctrine was brushed aside and brutally suppressed

On March 30th, 1960, the day on which the South African government banned the ANC and its 1959-formed splinter party Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), a defining moment occurred in the country's violent history outside Cape Town's Parliament. A young PAC leader, student Philip Kgosana had led a silent crowd of 30 000 from Langa township to face mounted police in Caledon Square. Kgosana wanted to see Justice Minister Erasmus on the burning issue of the pass laws, over which 69 people had died a week earlier at Sharpeville, near Vereeniging. The police persuaded Kgosana with the other leaders to return to Langa to wait for a response later that day. This came at 18.00 and was devastating: Saracens - armed vehicles - descended on the waiting crowd in the Cape Flats, killing around twenty and injuring many more. Kgosana and other PAC leaders were arrested.

It signalled the apartheid regime's contemptuous ill-will towards its black citizens and its refusal to accept peaceful overtures. In the wake of Sharpeville and Langa, the parties turned to force to gain the rights of the black majority. On December 16th, 1961, the ANC announced the existence of a military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), while Poqo, a splinter PAC group, embarked on a terror campaign. Later PAC formed its Armed Peoples Liberation Army (APLA).

External ANC

The ANC had already decided in 1959 to establish an international presence by sending its then Vice-President Oliver Tambo abroad, Nelson Mandela's friend and former partner in their law practice. The decision was hurriedly executed, after the March 1960 Sharpeville massacre, beating the banning of the ANC and the PAC by a matter of days. The internal structures of the parties were largely destroyed during this decade. It was into this vacuum that the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) erupted in 1968.

In time, the ANC became the main international focus of resistance to the apartheid regime, with ANC President Tambo a widely respected figure. Influenced as the ANC was by Mahatma Gandhi, who had spent 20 years in South Africa, where he evolved his doctrine of Satyagraha – non-violent resistance - it had taken the step towards armed struggle only reluctantly. It opted for the use of sabotage not terror, so as to cause no loss of life. Armed struggle – "armed propaganda" as it was eventually named - never became an end in itself, but was always subject to political decision. The ultimate goal of the liberation movements was that of a negotiated transfer of power. Thus Oliver Tambo stressed in 1987 at an

international conference in Arusha that the organisation was not opposed to negotiation “for the sake of it”. The ANC would not choose war if “any alternative, non-violent path were available to it.” (1)

The ANC relied on four strategies to gain its end, according to the veteran ANC leader Mac Maharaj: political underground structures, mass mobilisation, international diplomacy and armed struggle, with the latter the most controversial. (2) From the mid-80s the issue of achieving the end through peaceful means, by opening dialogue to lead to a negotiated settlement, moved closer to central stage of ANC leadership consideration.

Armed struggle

Nonetheless, the armed struggle continued, though not without debate. Following the founding of MK, the debate never died down within the ANC, whether or not to escalate the use of force. Discussion on this point flared up again in the late 60s, when the then Africa-based leadership won the day against the London-based section. MK thereupon joined the failed 1967/8 infiltration of the Zambezi Valley by the anti-white-Rhodesian liberation movement, Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU), which ended in the defeat at Wankie. This led to criticism and restructuring of MK. Following the 1976 Soweto uprising and the exodus of thousands of youths, renewed efforts were made to rebuild internal structures

The flow of new MK recruits revived the debate concerning armed struggle, reaching a climax at the 1985 Kabwe’s Consultative Conference, when a decision was taken against attacks on “soft” - non-military - targets. During the 80s, infiltration into South Africa by freedom fighters increased. Some spectacular successes were achieved, such as the attack in June 1980 by the MK Solomon Mahlangu Detachment on the oil-from-coal installation SASOL, resulting in some R66m damage.

At the same time the mood in the black townships was rebellious, with unrest endemic since the 1976 uprising of the youth. In view of the developing situation, Oliver Tambo decided in the early 80s to establish an internal intelligence network and an ANC internal leadership through an operation named Vula, clandestinely despatching such top ANC personalities as Mac Maharaj and Ronald Kasrils into the country.

While Pretoria’s forces were kept on permanent alert and the country suffered from increasing threats to stability, the South African Defence Force (SADF) was not seriously challenged inside South Africa that is by the ANC. In his book *The Other Side of History*, Dr. Frederik van Zyl Slabbert quoted a SADF document which stated that during the 80s, only 4 per cent of military contact involved MK: the military action was elsewhere.

Frontline States (FS)

Following its independence in 1980, Zimbabwe's President joined the informal Frontline States (FS) group of Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, which had emerged in 1976 to cope with the ongoing Southern Rhodesian conflict. The FS established the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) to push regional development and lessen dependence on South Africa. This defeated Pretoria's attempt to control the region through its Constellation of Southern African States to be composed of South Africa, its so-called four independent Homelands and Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

The FS success, the subsequent Pretoria's failure of controlling the region as well as increased ANC insurgency, shifted the power from the political, police-centred elite of the 60s and 70s to the military and the National Intelligence Service (NIS), transforming the regime virtually into a civil-military junta. This embarked on a policy of "total strategy", i.e. destabilisation of its hinterland as the ANC's hosts, through economic sabotage, military strikes, use of proxy groups such as Unita in Angola, Renamo in Mozambique, Lesotho Liberation Army, dissident groups in Zimbabwe.

In the 70s, Pretoria had made incursion into Angola to stop the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola - Partido do Trabalho (MPLA) from taking over the government. MPLA sought help from the Soviet Union and received this in the shape of Cuban military and civil personnel. The SADF subsequently was militarily engaged both in Angola, which became independent in 1975 and neighbouring Namibia, which Pretoria occupied illegally. Cadres of the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO infiltrated into northern Namibia from Angola.

Pretoria's bad faith was illustrated by its continuing to assist Renamo after it had signed a peace accord with Mozambique's Frelimo government at Nkomati in 1984.

Internal Mass Unrest

Early 1980 Pretoria attempted unsuccessfully to 'reform' its parliamentary system by creating a tricameral system which included whites, Asians and Coloureds. Thanks to this move, new mass movement structures emerged internally, foremost the United Democratic Front (UDF) which fronted a wide range of anti-apartheid groups including trade union, Churches and others. President P.W. Botha's constitutional reforms crashed, failing as it did to address African rights. In January 1985 President Botha called on South Africans "to make South Africa ungovernable", which increased the fermenting unrest in black townships, which also had the unfortunate effect of mob action against suspected 'collaborators'.

Pretoria's response was harsh, with the declaration of a State of Emergency and brutal repression, resulting in the deaths of some 5 000 and detention of around 50 000 during the 80s. Calls for 'mass insurrection' became audible.

The scene seemed to be set for a race war.

II. MOVING TOWARDS DIALOGUE

Yet none other than Nelson Mandela, incarcerated as he was, took up the pen in the mid-80s to contact South Africa's President Pieter Willem Botha – P.W. as he was known – feeling that the time was right for dialogue. Similar thoughts were expressed by some elements within the external ANC such as Thabo Mbeki, while it was still abhorrent to others.

By the mid-80s Pretoria was under pressure, as Botha's presidency reached a dead-end and internal dissent and external pressure mounted. International disapproval of apartheid, expressed through sanctions and a boycott by major banks, badly affected the country's economy and currency. Moreover the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev on the international scene changed the balance of power, heralding the breakdown of the Soviet Union. Moscow backed efforts to end South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia and to stop the war in Angola, efforts which succeeded and signalled the end of the Cold War. South Africa became irrelevant for western powers, while the ANC's major backer began to withdraw its support.

In 1982, Nelson Mandela and four of his closest comrades had been taken from the other political prisoners from Robben Island to Pollsmoor prison, before Mandela was isolated from his comrades in 1985 and in 1988 removed to a cottage on the grounds of Victor Verster prison, where he was groomed for release in 1990.

In November 1985 the then Minister of Justice and Prisons, Kobie Coetsee, visited his famous prisoner in a Cape Town hospital - the beginning of Coetsee's, that is, the establishment's *toenadering* – getting close – to Mandela. No doubt Coetsee tried to separate Mandela from his comrades and co-opt him for his own purposes, an attempt Mandela resisted successfully. He pointed out that he would not negotiate with the government, urging Pretoria to do so with the ANC. Mandela publicly refused Botha's 1985 offer to release him in exchange for rejecting violence, stating that he would never give up the armed struggle for personal gain.

Subsequently the head of the NIS, Dr. Niel Barnard, who had already dared in 1983 to speak to President Botha of the need to talk to the ANC, became deeply involved with other NIS officials in secret government-Mandela meetings. Botha, irascible and dogmatic, was implacably opposed to talks with the ANC, unless they gave up armed struggle. Nonetheless, in the years of the run-up to Mandela's release, Barnard and his deputy Mike Louw had close to 50 meetings with the future president. He was one of the men present when Mandela was invited by President Botha for tea on July 5, 1989 – truly a mere social invitation, though the former had written the famous Mandela Document for the historic meeting, spelling out the need and conditions for talks between Pretoria and the ANC.

Efforts to achieve this were by then well on the way.

Dialogue phase

Following Coetsee's hospital visit, which had marked a new phase in the government – ANC conflict, both sides delicately stretched out feelers to test the possibility of direct contacts, the first moves away from repression and confrontation. As a result, parallel processes took place:

Continued contact between Pretoria and Mandela
Contact between Pretoria and Lusaka (the headoffice of the ANC);
other initiatives to enable meetings between prominent members of the white community and the liberation movements.

For both the ANC leaders and for Pretoria, as well as for South African civil society, it was a sensitive process to establish contact with the other side. While President Tambo was anxious to effect peace without bloodshed, he was aware that the external leadership might open itself to accusations of 'selling-out', so that any moves, even if taken after lengthy deliberations, were shrouded in secrecy. The government side too had to keep a wary eye on its constituencies, particularly its relentless right wing. Individuals who involved themselves in the process ran the risk of vilification.

Thus Denis Goldberg, the veteran ANC leader and Rivonia trialist in February 2010 recalled an internal ANC meeting of the 80s, at which Thabo Mbeki was attacked for his view that neither military action nor sanctions – the latter being constantly circumvented - would not bring down the NP government and that a less confrontational approach had to be considered. (3) ANC comrades ran the risk of being labelled sell-outs.

Prominent white participants at the talks who have recorded their experiences, also mention their doubts, fears and trepidations: fear of the wrath of Pretoria and of ostracism within their community.

Nonetheless, South Africa's civil society sought with increasing interest contact with "terrorists", realising that the situation had become untenable. Change was on the way. Churchill's words that "jaw-jaw was better than war-war", took on a South African flavour, as slowly the ANC began to consider negotiations versus mass mobilisation as a possible, if not yet the preferred option, while NP support within white society, even within Afrikanerdom, began to crack.

A process began of informal dialogue between prominent white South Africans and members of the liberation movements, which served to break down preconceived ideas and prejudice, with common ground explored and established between the parties. Within both the ANC – government contacts and ANC-individual talks, pre-conditions for a settlement as well as contentious issues concerning the economy and a new constitution could be spelt out and concepts for possible policies at the end of conflict formulated.

New dialogue skills were honed and also a new South African camaraderie developed between participants at talks. Stories were later told of mutually friendly, not to say boisterous evenings, of African delegates happily using Afrikaans, both at ANC – government as well as the ANC – civil society get-

together. Thus Justice Dikgang Moseneke said that it was during informal sessions such as sharing a meal that one got to know each other. (4) It was natural that in the course of friendly exchanges, participants at such meetings began to change their perceptions and stereotype views of their opponents. On their part, Africans sensed that a solution was within grasp and began to appreciate that this would bring its own rewards.

The greater ease between protagonists was conveyed to Pretoria, which helped to give officials the sense that negotiations were not only possible but could actually succeed. Pressure to move towards negotiation hardened as informal contacts increased.

Heralding Change

The year 1989 was the year of transition. Early that year the possibility of change seemed finally in the offing. In January a stroke disabled President Botha, thus offering an unexpected window of opportunity.

A new man, Frederik Willem De Klerk first took over as party leader in February, then in August as President. Under pressure by London and Washington – with unrest continuing unabated - he began to take steps towards easing the tense situation. He began by emasculating the military. In September he permitted the protest march led by Archbishop Tutu, in October the remaining Rivonia trial prisoners except Mandela were released (Govan Mbeki had previously been released on health grounds).

This ushered in a new era.

In December, 1989 the ANC issued its Harare Declaration which spelt out the conditions under which talks with Pretoria to achieve a negotiated settlement could be considered. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) accepted the Declaration, the final action of Oliver Tambo who suffered a stroke soon afterwards. It was left to his aide and confidante Thabo Mbeki to present the statement to the UN for approval.

The follow-up was dramatic. On February 2, 1990, De Klerk rose in Parliament to make his most famous speech, announcing the unbanning of the black political parties and the Communist Party, also of other illegal organizations and announcing the end of apartheid. In the House, in South Africa and abroad his words were heard in stunned amazement. After 42 years, one of the most unjust system of government in the post-World War II was ending.

A new situation needed a new approach. The ANC was by no means united in its reaction, with some leaders arguing that there was now no other way but to talk, while others felt De Klerk had shown that the enemy was weak and that victory lay in attack on the march to Pretoria.

The next step took place on February 9, for South Africa an unforgettable day: Nelson Mandela walked hand in hand with his wife Winnie out of Victor Verster Prison to freedom and jubilantly enthusiastic crowds. Mandela's conciliatory stance and preparedness to shake hands with his erstwhile jailers,

his gentleness and also his unwavering faith in his cause and his party, have made history. Once Mandela was free, the exiles able to return and political prisoners freed, direct official contact – more talks about talks - between the ANC and Pretoria could begin.

However, there was no instant getting-together after Mandela's walk to freedom. Both parties had to ensure their mandate from their constituencies. Thus the official contact wavered at first, with both sides jostling for the best possible starting position. The ANC needed to prove that it entered talks on its own terms and wished to establish MK as a successful military organisation. The NP was anxious to show that its decision to negotiate had not been forced by military action, but was the result of political deliberation.

The armed struggle continued to be a stumbling block to negotiations. Eventually the ANC leadership decided in December 1990, without consultation of MK cadres, to suspend the armed struggle, which did not meet the approval of all comrades. Indeed in the course of subsequent negotiations Mandela once threatened to return to armed struggle, incensed when he was that animosity and bloody conflict between the ANC and the Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which had broken out after 1990, was stirred up by white security elements and which claimed more deaths, some 10 000 between 1990 and 1994, than during any other time.

Still, everyone, i.e. the government and the anti-apartheid parties, realised that a multi-party conference had to be called, in order to begin structured negotiations. After September 1991 when a Peace Accord was signed between every party and organisation concerned, including the security forces, this became a reality, with 20 parties participating at a Preparatory Meeting. This led to the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa 1 and 2), charged with the job of drawing up terms for establishing a constitution-making body, ahead of free and fair elections. This had not happened easily, with De Klerk trying to impose a white veto by means of a power-sharing constitution with mechanisms to protect white privileges, while the ANC wanted a brief transition followed by elections under a democratic dispensation. An interim constitution was adopted in 1993 was replaced by the current constitution which came into effect in February 1997.

It was only after the protracted Codesa negotiations that MK was officially disbanded in 1994 and integrated into the SADF. By then the interim constitution and the successful election of May 1994 had established the ANC as the main governing party, with Mandela in the post of President.

III. PLAYERS IN PRE-NEGOTIATION TALKS

The 80s had been a difficult phase for both parties to the conflict, which increased in intensity and violence. Yet the need to end the violence and replace killing with talking, was ever present. As mentioned, various players became active during this decade, foreign governments as well as individuals and civil society organisations, in efforts to negotiate between the parties. The same aim was pursued by all these actors, namely initiating and intensifying contact between the opposing sides with a view to formal negotiations.

Meetings between prominent white South Africans and liberation movements were organized at a person-to-person level, apart from secret links forged from 1985 onwards between government officials and freedom movements in exile or the talks between government officials and Nelson Mandela.

Foreign government initiatives included the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG), who visited Mandela in prison in 1986 and proposed conditions to lead to a settlement. However, during their stay in South Africa, Pretoria launched an across-border military strike. This caused the EPG to abandon their effort, pointing out that the time for talking was not yet right for the ANC (5) and the leadership was relieved that the government's military action saved them from the embarrassment of rejecting the proposed EPG terms, which the group had brought to Oliver Tambo in Lusaka.

The latter and his crown prince Thabo Mbeki had their own agenda: the ANC leaders were appalled by the way peace was imposed by the British on Zimbabwe and the UN on Namibia. They wanted themselves to determine the path to dialogue and beyond. As the violence and brutality of the conflict increased, the ANC Lusaka headquarters became the Mecca of anxious mediators, of whom Prof. Hendrik W. van der Merwe who died in 2001, was one of the first, another a Cape Town human rights lawyer, Richard Rosenthal. Other interested parties such as the UK's Chatham Houses were among those sponsoring meetings during 1989.

Thabo Mbeki, who was to become South Africa's second black President under the new dispensation, was then in charge of the ANC's Department of Information and Publicity (DIP). He became an advocate for replacing killing with talking. In 1985 he helped to organise the first meeting with important white visitors to Zambia, a group of businessmen led by Anglo American's Gavin Relly. The group had talks at Mafuwe with a strong ANC contingent.

This paved the way for others, including a contingent of politicians, mainly Progressive Federal Party (PFP) visitors in October 1987 led by the former PFP leader, Dr. Frederik van Zyl Slabbert. A group of Stellenbosch students also travelled to Lusaka despite open government disapproval. A group of academics from the same university visited Lusaka in 1988 for the first time.

Thabo Mbeki became the known face of various talks between the ANC and civil society. He was in great demand during those years, jetting from one set of near-clandestine meeting to another, to Harare, Geneva, Constance, Leverkusen, Berlin, Paris, London and even to New York in 1986, when he met Piet de Lange, the head of the *Afrikaner Broederbond (AB)*, the secret Afrikaner society which had pulled the political strings since the NP 1948 election victory.

Mbeki, son of Govan Mbeki, the second most senior ANC leaders, had been educated outside South Africa and was one of the best known international ANC figures. Educated in South Africa, the UK and Moscow, he had received military training in the Soviet Union, had worked in the 70s first in Botswana and Zambia, before becoming Chief ANC representative in Swaziland and Nigeria. Close to Oliver Tambo, he was responsible in the 80s for several specialist areas such as the committees on cultural boycott and disinvestment, apart from DIP. Observers of

the South African exile scene saw him at the time as a good speaker and outstanding intellectual, charming and diplomatic, who figured prominently in the all contacts with white South Africans. As South Africa's president later (1999-2008), he attracted a good deal of criticism for his policies on Aids and Zimbabwe.

One series of talks-about-talks between government or individuals close to government and the ANC, was the subject of the British film "Endgame", which featured twelve meetings over three years held secretly at a venue in Britain. The Mells talks were indeed driven by the Pretoria regime, as a way to test the waters and also to clarify thorny issues, thus helping to pave the way towards President De Klerk's moves in 1989/90.

Criticism of the film was made by ANC insiders such as Frene Ginwala, who felt that too much credit was claimed for the Mells talks, pointing out important omissions and errors in reporting: an inevitable result of a film, which by its nature highlights dramatic events. The main, but not the only participants in Britain were Mbeki and philosophy Professor Willie Esterhuyse, a prominent Afrikaner intellectual, whose efforts had the blessing of Pretoria and the head of its secret service. The meetings had been organised by Michael Young, head of the publicity department of Consolidated Gold Fields (CGF), ironically the company founded by arch imperialist Cecil Rhodes. CGF head, Randolph Agnew, agreed to finance the meetings which took place in Mells Park, the company's country Somerset retreat. The elegant setting of a former gentleman's country seat, where Mbeki and Esterhuyse sat over a bottle of malt whisky, was far removed from the blood, sweat and tears of South Africa's township. Dr. Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, poured scorn over the claim that these talks were as important as claimed by Mbeki supporters. (6)

Be that as it may, Professor Esterhuyse was honoured by the democratic South African government for "*his outstanding role in opening and maintaining dialogue between the ANC and the apartheid government, which contributed both to the removal of obstacles to negotiations to end apartheid and create a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist South Africa,*" according to the citation.

During 1989 as the pace of contact accelerated, with many meetings in different countries and often between different participants on both sides, it was difficult to assess which were the most important. However, one series of meetings which took place over three years, was not publicised, neither at the time, when this was policy, nor subsequently, when journalists, academics and participants began to talk of their experiences.

The venue was Harare, Zimbabwe and these talks flowed out of an earlier meeting between the ANC and a group led by Dr. Frederik van Zyl Slabbert in Senegal in July 1987. This gathering at Dakar was bathed in the glare of publicity inside South Africa (the outside world took little note of it) and was subsequently mentioned in different memoirs and books. However, little became known of the Harare meetings which followed Dakar, neither at the time nor subsequently. This report is an attempt to fill in this gap.

It must not be thought that the ANC entered dialogue without preparation. As the former GDR Ambassador Hans-Georg Schleicher outlined (7), analytical and

conceptual papers were prepared in exile (London, Lusaka, Maputo), thanks to the intellectual resources available. The 1955 Freedom Charter principles remained the basic guidelines, but these were amended and/or modified in time.

It is impossible to date or list all the meetings between 1985 and 1990. The following are those that participants considered the most significant:

Meetings between white South Africans and the ANC, 1985-1990

- 1985** July The ANC leadership met a businessmen group led by Gavin Relly of Anglo American Corporation at Mafuwe, Zambia
- Oct. Dr. Frederik van Zyl Slabbert led a group of politicians and others to Zambia; 1986 Institute for Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA) was formed
- 1986** Thabo Mbeki met Professor Pieter de Lange, head of the secret Afrikaner Broederbond in New York
- 1987** July An ANC delegation of 17 met a 61-head IDASA delegation in **Dakar**, Senegal; Oct. Zimbabwe Institute on Southern Africa (ZISA) established in Harare
- Oct. **ZISA began its operation of facilitating meetings in Harare between Liberation Movements and white South Africans**
- 1988** Mells Park talks begin between ANC and Prof. W.Esterhuysen
- 1989** Jan Constitutional Seminar in Harare attended by 32 white academics and 19 ANC members facilitated by ZISA
- Sept. Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma met 2 National Intelligence Service agents in Switzerland
- Oct. IDASA meeting with the ANC at Leverkusen, Germany: Soviet Experts were present at this gathering
- Nov. IDASA meeting with the ANC in Paris

IV. INSTITUTE FOR A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA (IDASA)

The Harare meetings which took place during the turbulent years between 1987 and 1990 were the result of an initiative by the Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA), the think tank founded by Dr. Frederik van Zyl Slabbert and the Rev. Dr. Alex Boraine in 1987. As mentioned, Dr. Slabbert had visited Lusaka in October 1987, that is, shortly after the Gavin Relly trip and had got on well with both Tambo and Mbeki. Tambo's close associate Frene Ginwala said that Tambo told Slabbert to "talk to Afrikaners" (8). This may be so. In 1986 both Slabbert and Boraine had resigned from parliament and the PFP, with Slabbert stating that he considered parliament to have become irrelevant. IDASA was the result.

The honorary president of IDASA was the remarkable Afrikaner theologian, Dr. Christiaan Beyers Naudé, a member of a staunch Calvinist family, whose father was a leading member of the secret Broederbond and who had been Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church. Dr. Naudé had come to the conclusion that apartheid was an unjust system not compatible with Christian principles. In the 60s he had founded the Christian Institute and had also breached the rules of the Broederbond

by making it public, which had made him a pariah within his own society and led to long years of banning and house arrest. He became an inspiration for many young people, especially Afrikaners who by the 80s had begun to reject apartheid. Naude was one of the delegates at Dakar.

IDASA continued to function post-1994 and is still an active NGO, with offices in Pretoria and Cape Town.

Dakar meeting

Dr. van Zyl Slabbert, determined to engage the ANC, was a lone voice in the wilderness in the 80s, derided by many and loathed by the Afrikaner right.

Slabbert raised funds (partly from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation partly from George Soros, was also assisted by Danielle Mitterand, wife of the then French President) to organise a meeting from July 9-12, 1987 in Senegal, between an IDASA delegation of 61 white - mainly Afrikaner - South Africans and a smaller ANC delegation of seventeen, led by Thabo Mbeki. It was to prove a landmark in white-ANC relations.

The white side was a mix of academics, journalists, professional and businessmen such as Hermann Giliomee, professor of political science at the University of Cape Town (UCT), the editor of *Vrye Weekblad*, the theologian Braam Viljoen, brother of General Constand Viljoen (who came out of retirement from the military to enter politics after 1990), the writers Andre Brink and Breyten Breytenbach, Gerhard Erasmus, Professor of Law at Stellenbosch University, also Dr. Beyers Naudé. The ANC side included several of its most important leaders apart from Thabo Mbeki such as Chris Hani, Pallo Jordan, Mac Maharaj, Barbara Masekela, Alfred Nzo, Steve Thwete, Kader Asmal. (9)

Basically Dakar was concerned with four areas:

- Strategies for effecting fundamental change in South Africa;
- The building of national unity;
- Perspectives of government structures of a free South Africa;
- The economy of a liberated South Africa.

Written papers were presented by four IDASA delegates, while four ANC members made verbal presentations, which were unrecorded. The whites listened closely as the ANC leaders expounded their goals and strategies. In particular they were concerned with the armed struggle and the proliferation of violence. (10) It was important to note that delegates agreed that the armed struggle had brought them together, as one outsider present, Dr. Klaus Frhr. von der Ropp, noted in his report for the Friedrich Naumann Foundation

However, all aims were overshadowed by the psychological impact. Not only was the mood cordial, as Slabbert described, but for both sides the personal contact was overwhelming. Whites entered the meeting with fear and suspicion and mistrust were not instantly dispersed. Certainly these were softened, as personal contact replaced preconceived ideas and stereotyped images of bloodthirsty blacks on the one hand and brutal Boers on the other. Barbara Masekela felt she had made new

friends (11) and she was not alone in this feeling. Mbeki said that having spent time together, "I think an understanding had developed. It has been a very important experience for all of us. None of us has had an experience like this before". (12) Von der Ropp, who reported more on the contents of the presentations, remarked that at the official opening of the gathering, the delegations were strictly segregated, but at the final session, they were mixed.

Apart from the talks in Dakar, the ANC leaders and the whites took two field trips, one to Ghana, where ANC speakers defended the right of whites as South Africans, which reinforced a sense among whites that the ANC was truly prepared to accept an inclusive democracy. The delegates agreed to continue with such meetings and issued the Dakar Declaration to this effect.

For both sides Dakar proved a breakthrough. Having arrived full of trepidation, the whites had been overwhelmed by the readiness of most ANC leaders to accept them. They were impressed by Mbeki's urbane manner, friendly overtures and in general by the level of discussion. Though the group was subjected to criticism, hostility and abuse on their return, the publicity surrounding the Dakar meeting made an enormous impact within South Africa and had an effect on the general public. The delegates themselves were never the same again, as one comment had it. (13)

Participants on both sides were aware of the interest of the South African security services in the meeting and that either someone was reporting directly to Pretoria's National Intelligence Service or the NIS would obtain information indirectly. (In his interview in February 2010, Mac Maharaj said he attended the meeting deliberately, to make the secret service think he was ill and disabled, as he was then about to embark on the dangerous Operation Vula).

The white group experienced abuse and rejection on their return home. Individuals felt the impact, as Slabbert mentioned in his *The Other Side of History*: Theuns Eloff resigned from a conservative Dutch Reformed Church as a clergyman and headed the Consultative Business Movement; Trudie de Ridder was disowned by her family and fired from her government job; Grethe Fox, who promoted non-racial art, was ostracised by the establishment.

As the Dakar days changed perceptions, both sides accepted that talks were important and were determined to continue such contact.

Afrikaners

It was thus Afrikaners, the descendants of Boers (immigrants in earlier centuries mainly from Holland, also Germany and France), who in 1987 were the first group from South Africa's civil society to hold informal talks with the "enemy", before Pretoria approved such contacts or considered talking officially to the ANC. True, the under-wraps talks with Mandela were being conducted during these years, but this did not impact on P.W.Botha's policy towards the ANC nor was it known within the country. Everyone meeting the ANC was threatened with the loss of passport or worse.

The English-speaking group, their focus more on economic than political control, was not as deeply involved in the various initiatives. Understandable, for apartheid was the Afrikaner ideology, the Afrikaner party formed the government, so that only Afrikaners could end what they had begun.

Apartheid was not conceived as an evil doctrine, even if it was to lead to unjust government, brutal oppression and increasing human rights violation. Afrikaners were fundamental Calvinists, who had come to believe that God had placed them at the end of a continent for a purpose: they were to guard his backward children, the dark-skinned people. Slavery had reinforced their conviction of the black inferiority.

Boers had resented the arrival of the British with their newfangled liberal ideas and at the end of slaveholding; they trekked with their servants, families, guns and the Bible out of the Cape Colony. Ahead lay unknown territory with hostile people, behind the hated British. Boers furnished the first Prime Ministers of the Union of South Africa, while the English-speaking compatriots turned their attention to the economy. And it was the Boers who first realised the threat to white power posed by the ascendancy of the despised blacks. Apartheid was designed to ensure the survival of Afrikaners as a white-skinned people within a sea of blacks, while attempting to provide fairly for the latter in “their own areas”.

It was an impossible dream, held for too long. The races were long entwined with each other in economic terms. Apartheid had to fail and it did, the failure grimly covered up by its politicians, thus hurting Africans severely without creating the peaceful co-existence hoped for. It had to be Afrikaners themselves, who had to realize the false fabric of the society they tried to create and to end their defense of the indefensible.

Dr. van Zyl Slabbert was neither the first nor the only Afrikaner who rejected apartheid, but he was the first to make the move towards dialogue with Africans with the aim of overcoming the difference and creating a just society.

Afrikaners wanted desperately to be accepted by Africa, as Mbeki realised when he came to know them. Afrikaners had no other home to go to, as Professor Bernard Lategan said, repeating an often stated claim. (14) They had no ties with Europe and were the first people to call themselves “Afrikaner”. Though they denied blacks the same title for too long, insisting on such labels as “Bantu”, they were overcome with emotion when Mbeki announced at the first ANC-whites gathering in Dakar that “I am an Afrikaner”. (15)

The awareness that change was inevitable, had already been formulated by the *Afrikaner Broederbond*, a secret society born in 1918 to protect Afrikaner interest and was instrumental in forging NP policies. All NP Prime Ministers and many Cabinet Ministers as well as prominent Afrikaners in the Church and civil service were secretly ‘brothers’. The unity of Afrikanerdom had already fragmented within the NP, with *verligtes* - progressives – on one side, *verkrampes* – conservatives – on the other. This fragmentation was increased when in 1981 a new Conservative Party to the right of the NP emerged and was supported by a third of the Afrikaner electorate.

Already in 1986 the *Broederbond* circulated a policy paper on Basic Policy conditions for the continuing survival of the Afrikaner, stating that all parties had to be involved in writing a new constitution. By inference this included the ANC. The paper also stated that blacks should be admitted to the highest government levels, with a black able to become president. In 1989 this was reinforced with a further paper stating guidelines for political dialogue.

It was thus no coincidence that Afrikaner academics from Stellenbosch University were in the vanguard of the move of Afrikaners towards the ANC. It arose out of unease with apartheid and the awareness that change was inevitable. (16) Stellenbosch had been a bastion of Afrikaner nationalism. Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, architect of classic apartheid, had been professor of Sociology, all NP Prime Ministers and many NP Ministers had been educated there. The university had been part of the apartheid system and support for the National Party was strong. Nonetheless, as whites grew restive and opposition to the NP developed, Stellenbosch was also affected, with a small but determined group of academics beginning to work for an end to apartheid. A number of students were even prepared to join the “End Conscription Campaign (EEC)”, which would have been considered pure heresy only a few years before.

The Stellenbosch dissidents were assisted in their endeavours through the pioneer work of IDASA. Professor Johann Kinghorn who began organising tours for fellow academics and students to Soweto and made contact with the South African Council of Churches, a strong anti-apartheid voice, also with Dr. Beyers Naudé and IDASA, the latter contact leading to meetings with liberation movements.

Men such as Professor Bernard Lategan, head of Stellenbosch’s Biblical Studies Department, urged face to face talks with the ANC from the early 80s onwards, accepting that inclusive democracy had to replace the exclusive apartheid system. A new value system had to replace the old, thus a course in Lategan’s department was evolved, the ideology of which was based on philosophy and religious studies, with policy based on political science and sociology.

V. ZIMBABWE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA (ZISA)

Van Zyl Slabbert did not return with the group from Dakar, which arrived at Johannesburg’s Jan Smuts airport in the morning of July 21st. A group of rightwing extremists, members of the Afrikaanse Weerstandsbeweging (AWB - Afrikaner Resistance Movement) under their belligerent leader Eugene Terre’Blanche had gathered as a hostile reception committee, set on violence. As the police could not guarantee their safety, the group travelled to Cape Town.

Despite such antagonism, van Zyl Slabbert together with Thabo Mbeki met President Robert Mugabe and requested permission to hold future meetings in Zimbabwe. Discussion and meetings between South Africans of different races was impossible in South Africa. Zimbabwe, as a near neighbour and newly independent country was the ideal venue for such gatherings.

Relations between Mugabe’s ZANU-PF and the ANC were reserved in the early years after independence 1980. The ANC had worked closely with Joshua Nkomo’s ZAPU, mainly supported by the minority Ndebele group, descendants of

a Zulu breakaway group, with both parties among those regarded by Moscow as “authentic liberation movements”, while ZANU, based on the Shona majority, was excluded from this definition. (This had also led to closer relations between ZANU and PAC, the latter also being excluded from the “authentic” label.)

Following the Unity Accord in 1987 between Mugabe and Nkomo, the frosty relations between ZANU-PF and the ANC thawed. A good deal of underground work in South Africa was organised by exiles in Zimbabwe. Subsequently the ANC-led government, particularly during the Mbeki-era, supported Mugabe as a liberator of his people.

South African investments in and exports to Zimbabwe were the highest in the region. Moreover, as white civil servants remained in their post after independence, relations with some of these and Pretoria continued. South Africa targeted Zimbabwe in the course of its destabilisation programme after 1980, determined to stop incursion from the neighbouring country. The assassination in 1981 of the ANC representative Joe Gqabi was only one of several actions against the ANC inside Zimbabwe, which after independence had become one of the Frontline States and as such supported sanctions against South Africa.

Given these circumstances and his role in the FS group, President Mugabe could not officially bless the IDASA initiative, but unofficially a civil trust close to the government, Cold Comfort Farm Trust (CCFT), of which Mugabe was Hon Chairman), was allowed to provide the umbrella for a new body, the Zimbabwe Institute on Southern Africa (ZISA), the subject of this paper.

ZISA

The President’s close associate Didymus Mutasa was entrusted with the establishment of ZISA. Mutasa, then the first Parliamentary Speaker post-independence, (today Minister of State for Presidential Affairs and Secretary for ZANU-PF Administration and responsible for the so-called land reform) was on the Board of Trustees of CCFT. Mutasa had been the chairman at Cold Comfort Farm (CCF) in the 60s, after the Anglican clergyman Guy Clutton Brock had founded this as a multi-racial agricultural cooperative on a plot some ten kms. outside Salisbury (Harare). CCF, which stood for reconciliation and peace, was expropriated by the Smith regime in 1972, when Mutasa and others were detained and Clutton Brock deported. Mutasa revived CCF after independence with donor funds, hence its trust status.

Dr. Orbon said of ZISA that “politically we were answerable to the Chair of the Cold Comfort Farm Trust, the then Senior Minister for Political Affairs in the Government of Zimbabwe, Hon D.N.E Mutasa. We understand that the programme was requested / recommended by the ANC in cooperation with IDASA as a follow up to the encounter in Dakar, Senegal. Over the next few years we facilitated more than 50 meetings in Harare. Most of the meetings were between the ANC and eminent persons from the white community in South Africa.”(17) Meetings were also organised with PAC and Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO). An initiative of the Zimbabwe government to form a Patriotic Front of all liberation movements did not succeed, though a meeting of representatives from all these organisations was held.

ZISA was thus a child born out of the joint will of the two parties in conflict, the whites as represented by the Afrikaner political and intellectual elite and the ANC. It was conceived as a facility, not as a mediator and a facility it remained.

The project gained the support of various donors. Between 1987 and 1993, Dr. Orbon (as stated in his final 1993 report) mobilised at the time DM 2.5 million, mainly from the Swiss government, also from the EU, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Sida (Sweden) and CIM for personal cost. The German Development Ministry (BMZ) did not get directly involved funding such a political sensitive process, which was not on the agenda of the more technically/project oriented approach of the Ministry. Support of direct dialogue or negotiations with the liberation movements was not in focus. Nevertheless, indirectly through the political foundations as well as NGOs the German government supported training and political dialogue activities of the liberation movements. Beside that, the German government of the day was not anxious to lock horns with Pretoria, an important trading partner. The scenario for change as envisaged by Bonn at the time would be the result of a negotiation process with the “moderate” Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Kwazulu Premier, perceived as a political important figure of the future. Nevertheless, the German Embassy in Harare was aware of the dialogue programme and showed sympathy for the work of ZISA. (18)

Mutasa arranged the extension of a farm building to house ZISA and its staff. CCFT Manager Mark Collier also worked from this building and took over control of ZISA’s finances.

Dr. Helmut Orbon, until then representative of the German Development Service (DED), was proposed to act as ZISA’s director, an offer Dr. Orbon accepted. Several non-Zimbabweans, including the South African journalists Moeletsi Mbeki, Ruth Weiss, Mike Overmeyr and Peter Welman were appointed to the staff to protect Zimbabwe’s status as signatory to boycott and sanctions against South Africa. Sadly, both last-named have since passed away.

The difference between ZISA’s operation and meetings organised by other groups was the fact that ZISA arose out of the joint interests of the conflicting sides. ZISA had therefore to be objective and refrain from any direct input, a rule which was strictly adhered to.

Aims of the study on ZISA

The purpose of the study and of interviews conducted with participants at sundry talks is not to write an historic record, but to establish the role of ZISA in the dialogue phase and to consider the purpose of dialogue in the mediation of conflict.

The following questions therefore arose in the course of proposing the study:

1. Could dialogue contribute to conflict resolution and to what extent: Under what circumstances does dialogue make a difference, what was needed to make it possible?
2. Could dialogue be introduced at any stage of conflict resolution or only under special circumstances only, that is, when the conflict has reached a certain stage?

3. Did the location (Zimbabwe) or the venue (Cold Comfort as a non-racial place) have any bearing on the relevance for dialogue?
4. Did the meetings in any way change the agenda of transition from apartheid to democracy?
5. Did dialogue create additional problems for the leadership?
6. What are the lessons learnt for other processes of conflict mediation?
7. Was it worthwhile to urge for and conduct dialogue?

ZISA's tasks

Dr. Orbon was given no specific brief, but the following tasks became clear:

1. Facilitating meetings

Due to South Africa's pariah status and also because of the sensitivity of the contacts and to safeguard participants, ZISA avoided all publicity. Moreover, ZISA's role was not to initiate meetings or set their agenda and at no time did it do so. It saw itself - and acted only - as a facilitator to assist the parties in conflict to move towards a resolution of their differences. This meant, assisting them in getting together for dialogue.

ZISA responded to requests from groups or individuals inside or outside South Africa, who desired to talk to "the other side". If a request came for a meeting with the liberation movements, ZISA took advice from the local representative(s) as to the movement's view of the request. (19)

ZISA thus acted both as a go-between, as well as the organiser of travel arrangements, venues and assisting with - and where applicable funding - travel, local transport and/or accommodation. Many, but by no means all requests originated with IDASA. Thus the Stellenbosch academics requests were addressed directly to ZISA.

By acting as facilitator only, ZISA fulfilled a major condition noted in all successful mediation, namely involving the parties in conflict, without imposing ideas from outside.

The aims of the meetings were varied, ranging from getting to know the other side on a person to person level so as to understand the other's viewpoint, to exploring common ground to discussing preconditions for formal talks and outlining policies following a settlement. However, such considerations lay outside ZISA's mandate.

Between 1987 and 1993, ZISA organised some 50 meetings involving almost one thousand individuals - major conferences, seminars, workshops, individual face-to-face encounters - for numerous participants, whose names sound like a roll-call of who-is-who in South Africa today. The main backers of the project from the ANC side were Thabo Mbeki and the ANC Secretary General Alfred Nzo. However, ZISA also hosted meetings with members of other groups including Black Consciousness and PAC.

Dr. Orbon was in the forefront of ZISA activities, responding instantly to requests for meetings, organising travel and venues with the help of secretarial staff, by rendering all backroom assistance. IDASA was not alone in its desire to further dialogue, with many individuals and organisations eager to establish contact with what they perceived to be the future government. Approaches were usually hesitant, always carefully phrased and more often than not made personally. Dr. Orbon at no time took the decision whether or not to accede to the requests; he passed them on to the liberation movements. ZISA compiled no lists of participants or meetings.

2. Issuing background material on South Africa

ZISA also disseminated useful background information, analysis and news on South Africa for the major decision- and opinion-makers in the southern African region, i.e. to Heads of State, politicians, civil servants and other VIPs. A mailing list was not drawn up for this purpose, it evolved over time. The Frontline States, i.e. the countries close to South Africa affected directly by events in that country, whose heads of state met regularly to monitor developments, were in need of accurate information, which ZISA supplied.

Mbeki, Overmeyer and Weiss carried out this mandate after Welman dropped out. They perused daily all publications carrying South African news and analysis and thanks to their own background knowledge were able to prepare background papers on subjects such as the Afrikaner right, homeland structures and leaders, history of the ANC and other parties. In addition they prepared fact sheets and newsletters. The publications were useful in building up archives on South Africa, a job carried out with the help of two Zimbabwe staff. (20)

After Dakar

The memorable Dakar meeting, itself the result of the visit of the Anglo-American Corporation's trip to Zambia in 1985 spawned six other IDASA meetings with the ANC in such venues as Harare, New York, Leverkusen, Berlin, the last taking place in Paris in November 1989. Dr. Slabbert in *The Other Side of History* mentions Leverkusen in particular, a conference held in October 1989 funded by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, where white South Africans met not only ANC communists but 'real live' ones from Russia. Slabbert made friends with one of these, Slava Tetioken, then Secretary General of the Afro Asian Solidarity Commission. (21)

In Harare, meetings began almost instantly after the establishment of ZISA.

One meeting which took place in 1987 was a get-together of both ANC and PAC from in and outside South Africa as well as with white South Africans.

The procedure, as described by Justice Dikgang Moseneke, was typical of ZISA's operation as a facilitator. Moseneke, then an attorney working in South Africa, whose allegiance was to the PAC, was invited by ZISA from Harare as an individual, as were other participants. His name had been supplied to ZISA by the external PAC, just as names such as Valli Moosa (later a member of Mandela's cabinet, today a prominent businessman) or Cyril Ramaphosa (a leading United

Democratic Front, later an important ANC leader and leading negotiator in Codesa, today a successful businessman) had been provided by the external ANC. As both the ANC and PAC were banned inside South Africa, the participants from inside South Africa called themselves SA patriots striving for peace. In Harare they met white South Africans, an event that was unthinkable inside that country. (22)

Zimbabwe's government hoped to mediate between ANC, PAC and Black Consciousness, enabling these three groups to forge a Patriotic Front for coming negotiations, much as Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU and Mugabe's ZANU had formed a Patriotic Front ahead of Lancaster House in 1979. This did not come about, but Mosenke felt it had been useful to meet comrades from other groups.

The ZISA meetings included some six encounters on economic policies, attended by among others from the ANC side by Trevor Manuel, Tito Mboweni, Vela Pillay, Alec Erwin, Derek Hanekom and Prof. Sampie Terblanche, all of whom played a major role in the New South Africa.

Various Meetings were also organised between the Economics Department of the ANC and companies such as Anglo American and PG Bison.

There were sundry direct encounters of individuals for example on security issues, which were facilitated by Cold Comfort but organised and implemented directly by the ANC office in Harare, involving Max Mlonjeni, Stan Mabizela and Kingsley Mamabolo on the ANC side. (23)

Women's Conference

A Women's Conference, opened by the late Sally Mugabe, wife of the Zimbabwe President, was a tripartite event, attended by a ZANU-PF Women's League delegation together with some 55 white women and 50 members of the ANC Women's League. Among the latter were Adelaide Tambo, the wife of ANC President, Gertrude Shope, head of the Women's League, Ruth Mompati, Nelson Mandela's one-time secretary, later South Africa's ambassador to Switzerland, Ray Simons, the well-known trade unionist, Barbara Masekele who later was in charge of Mandela's presidential office and Dr. Frene Ginwala, whose long service for the ANC had begun in 1960 and who was to become the first Speaker of the House under a democratic constitution after 1994.

The last-named co-opted Ruth Weiss into the ANC delegation. She thus experienced the impact the conference on the white, mainly Afrikaner women. She found one woman weeping in the Ladies Room, sobbing in reply to Weiss' question, that she couldn't believe that she hadn't known black women such as those at the conference existed. "We've missed so much", she said. Other women were confounded that these sedate women were involved in the armed struggle. The meeting opened the eyes of the Afrikaner women to the fabric of propaganda, which had been woven for them over the decades, demonizing the ANC in particular and black South Africans in general.

One of the white women was Mrs. Jeanette Groenewald, an educationist who had taught at the University of the Western Cape (wife of Stellenbosch Professor Johann Groenewald), had formed an IDASA Women's Group in Stellenbosch. For

her, contact with African women was nothing new. She was also no new convert to opposition to apartheid. Anyone who had witnessed discrimination against and harassment of Coloured students, as she had, clearly understood the dynamics of the politics of the day, as she said in a casual conversation in Stellenbosch on February 17, 2010.

The year 1989 was destined to be the year of transition between conflict and official contact negotiations between warring sides, i.e. the liberation parties and Pretoria. ZISA played a part in the hectic rounds of diplomacy which took place, hosting an increasing number of meetings. One of the most important meetings was a Constitutional Lawyers Conference on the role of law in a society in transition, held in Harare from 31.1. – 4.2.1989

Lawyers meeting on constitutional issues

Professor Gerhard Erasmus, a law professor from Stellenbosch who specialized in constitutional law, was present at Dakar and immediately proposed a constitutional seminar to Dr. Slabbert, who agreed to it.

Erasmus felt it was important to discuss constitutional issues in this fluid transitional situation. As he said, it was not possible to teach constitutional law in the abstract, when so much was changing constitutionally within the region: Zimbabwe became independent in 1980; Namibia was on the verge of independence in 1989. Issues such as a Bill of Rights or Minority Rights were no mere theoretical issues. (24)

Namibian-born Dr. Erasmus was on the drafting committee of legal experts who drew up the Namibian and South African constitutions. (25) Erasmus, a dynamic motor-cycling academic who likes to see practical results, was encouraged by Dr. Slabbert to go ahead with the project. He travelled to various preparatory meetings, both in the UK and in Zambia. He was assisted by two or three others, who occasionally accompanied him on these trips. Professor Dr. Gerhardus F. Lubbe, currently Dean of the Stellenbosch Law Faculty, accompanied him to Harare on a 10-day visit, which also included a day-trip to Lusaka. Dr. Lubbe remembered the experience of being whisked off by plane from Harare to Lusaka without documentation, returning the same way after the meeting with the ANC at the Pamodzi Hotel.

The constitutional seminar, an informal gathering of 32 whites, mainly from the Afrikaner community and 19 ANC leaders as well as members of SWAPO and several Zimbabwe academics, eventually took place in late January to February 1989, around the time the stroke that felled President Botha and opened up channels for dialogue between the liberation movements and whites.

ZISA was the main facilitator, with the backing of the Zimbabwe University's law faculty and some of the funding provided by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The meeting, opened by Zimbabwe Justice Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa, was considered important by the participants in the light of the crisis in South Africa, which extended to the constitutional system. Professor Lubbe, who meticulously had kept a file on the conference, confirmed that debate was lively and at a high level. (26)

The final communiqué called for a negotiated end to apartheid and stated inter alia the need for a new constitution, a bill of rights and an independent judiciary. Consensus was reached on the need for all South Africans to enjoy full, equal political, economic, social and cultural rights. (27)

The event brought together eminent academics from various South African universities, apart from Stellenbosch. While the majority were legal experts, there were also professors from disciplines such as political science. Among the participants were Dr. Lourens (Laurie) Ackermann, a former judge of the Supreme Court, who had retired in 1987 to take the chair of the new law department of Human Rights at Stellenbosch established by Harry Oppenheimer. Other well-known lawyers included Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, Marinus Wiechers, Edwin Cameron, today and a Judge on the Constitutional Court. (28)

On the ANC side, the lawyer Albie Sachs attended a meeting for the first time since his discharge from hospital, where he had recovered from a bomb attack, which left him badly handicapped. Participants were impressed by his personality and conciliatory attitude. Other ANC delegates were Nathaniel Masemola, Thabo Mbeki, Professor Jack Simons, Skweyiya, and Steve Thwete. (29) Dr. Lubbe remembered in particular Skweyiya favourably.

The conference came briefly into the public domain through an article in Zimbabwe's *Sunday Mail* of February 5, 1989, which quoted Mbeki as saying that the ANC had drawn up its constitutional guidelines. He acknowledged that an increasing number of South Africans were realising the importance of talking to one another. "But there is no representative of the regime here, so one can't say we have got closer to talking to the regime." (30)

Professor Erasmus was quoted as saying that the meeting afforded participants to be exposed to one another and discuss political and constitutional matters. Twenty years later, he said that he did not think that there was such a thing as a "Harare idea" or concept. While all issues under discussion were important, these were thrashed out at various levels not only at the Harare meeting, but also on other occasions, not least in the sessions of the experts writing South Africa's constitution. Every meeting contributed to better understanding of each other.

While Professor Erasmus warned not to over-estimate the effect of Harare, he thought it important that it could take place at all, after all this was during P.W. Botha's time who disapproved of all such gatherings. The meetings contributed towards better relationships and understanding. Erasmus felt that it was immensely useful that a facility such as CCFT and ZISA was available, enabling meetings such as the Constitutional Seminar to take place in southern Africa. (31) This is understandable given the large number of academics with their load of teaching, researching and writing commitments: it was less complex to fly to Harare than, say, London. Erasmus felt that it was very important that the facility existed to enable many meetings to be held near South Africa.

André Zaaiman

An important ZISA partner was André Zaaiman, responsible for IDASA's student programme. Interviewed in Cape Town on February 24, 2010, Zaaiman said that his brief actually came from the ANC in Lusaka: he had been told to work among the Afrikaner community and that was what he did.

Zaaiman had a conservative Afrikaner background in what was then the Orange Free State province, but already in childhood and youth had begun to question the system of the society in which he was brought up. After his years in the army as an officer, he continued to question himself. He travelled abroad and during that time, came to the conclusion that he had only one option: to join the ANC. He thereupon called at the London office to do just that. He was fortunate he said in getting to the right people: Tambo, Mbeki, Zuma.

He was fortunate to find a job with IDASA. Working with Afrikaner youth, he made friends with student leaders and organized trips for them to Zimbabwe to see a successful black country: to Mozambique to experience a poor country battling with development issues and Namibia, a country only recently independent.

Zaaiman found Helmut Orbon and the ZISA facility immensely useful. Dialogue, he maintained, was an ANC idea and "we ran with it". The aim was to make every South African household aware of the existence of the ANC, an interesting assignment, considering that it was still illegal to mention either a banned organisation or the name of banned persons, a legal taboo, which had been broken since the mid-80s, when the editor in chief of the Cape Times first wrote about Oliver Tambo to the consternation of the authorities.

Zaaiman was eventually banned from all Afrikaans-speaking universities, but this did not dampen his enthusiasm or deter him from continuing his efforts. (32)

ZISA post-1990

President De Klerk's historic speech in February 1990 virtually ended ZISA's initial mandate. It was now possible to meet inside South Africa and several ZISA-organized meetings took place inside the country. Moreover, it was recognised that up-to-date information on events inside South Africa was more vital than ever, as the two sides began official talks-about-talks against a background of open and bloody hostility between the ANC and IFP. Mike Overmeyr was therefore located in the Cape, from where he provided regular factsheets and news items.

The programme was flexible and adjusted to the new situation. It was decided to enable South Africans to experience life in an independent black country, to enable them to take their rightful place in South Africa's modern society. (32) A "Placement" programme was evolved with South African partners, such as universities, as Dr. Orbon explained in his annual 1991 report. When it became evident that 1993 would introduce further moves towards a new dispensation, the programme had run its natural course.

VI. PROCEDURE IN 2009/10 TO CONDUCT AN ANALYSIS of ZISA

In July 2009 the Berlin-based Weltfriedensdienst (WFD – World Peace Service), a non-government organization, decided to conduct an inquiry into ZISA with the twin aims of establishing firstly the extent of ZISA's contribution to the South African negotiations and secondly, whether the ZISA methodology could be useful in other conflict situations.

It was decided to conduct a series of interviews with former participants of meetings organised by ZISA. Some 10-12 interviews were planned and a questionnaire proposed.

The purpose was not to establish a historic record but to define the role and purpose of dialogue in the mediation of conflicts, i.e. attempt to answer some of the questions posed on page 17 above. The request for funding the proposal was granted by the ZFD-Programme of BMZ in October, coming into effect from December to end March 2010.

A planning workshop took place December, 14th, 2009 in Berlin. The inquiry had to overcome several stumbling blocks:

The time granted by the BMZ was restrictive and allowed for little leeway to trace and contact the individuals involved in the 1987-1990 dialogue. The WFD-Coordinator (Manfred Schumacher-Just) started to take up contact with would-be interviewees from beginning of January 2010, before leaving on January 31st for South Africa together with the interviewer (Ruth Weiss). Schumacher-Just had planned a two-week stay in Johannesburg, with a further two weeks in Cape Town and a brief sojourn in Durban.

Due to the secrecy surrounding ZISA, no official reports were prepared by ZISA. By the same token, ZISA had no copies of the agenda of meetings or lists of participants. Moreover, the current conditions inside Zimbabwe are such, that contact with Minister Mutasa was impossible. Cold Comfort Farm itself was stripped of its former status and exists as a privately held farm. Nonetheless the coordinator planned to visit Zimbabwe in April during which time he hoped to search for the archives.

An additional problem was the situation within the ANC. Even prior to the public knowledge of the Mbeki-Zuma rift, the party and its allied organisations (Cosatu, the SA Communist Party) had been torn apart by it. Factions had been formed, the composition of which was not discernible by outsiders. Following the turbulent 2008 party conference which ousted Mbeki and the subsequent emergence of the new COPE party, many ANC or COPE members were cautious about discussing past events, including the delicate pre-1990 dialogue. Barbara Masekela's remark, that she had sent Dr. Orbon's e-mail to Luthuli House (ANC headquarters) 'for guidance' but had received no reply, indicates the problem. (33)

As some of the interviewees were very important persons such as ex-President Thabo Mbeki, Deputy-Minister Derek Hanekom and ex-Idasa Director Alex Boraine, these and other short-term interviews were impossible to arrange. Moreover, the contact addresses of other would-be interviewees were difficult to ascertain at short notice.

In view of the lapse of time (20 years since Mandela's release from prison), a number of participants were no longer living such as Oliver Tambo and Alfred Nzo or were too ill such as Dr. van Zyl Slabbert to be interviewed, others' whereabouts could not easily be established.

In Johannesburg, further contact had to be made by the co-ordinator with prospective interviewees. This proved difficult, as everyone close to government was involved with the 20th anniversary of the De Klerk speech and Mandela's release.

As a result of all these factors, the emphasis of the interviews was on the white side, with five interviewees being University of Stellenbosch professors. They were representative of other academics, who had become convinced that constitutional change was essential. Five ANC members could be contacted, of whom one was openly pro-Zuma and anti-dialogue at the time, two were only available for short conversations and one (white) had been a covert ANC member at the time.

This is a shortcoming of the analysis as of March 22, 2010. There is not sufficient input from the ANC side, with Thabo Mbeki's voice missing in particular. Also that of Dr. Boraine would be important: Dr. Orbon reported that immediately after Didymus Mutasa broached the question of a project based at CCF, he called Dr. Boraine, who was still in the vicinity and who joined in the discussion and was thus involved with ZISA from the very start.

To explain the need for ANC leadership voices, it is necessary to grasp the tensions within the ANC then and now.

Tension within the ANC

In February 2010, twenty years after the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and return of the exiled ANC leadership, one of the former Rivonia prisoners took issue with ex-President Mbeki over the pre-1990 talks. Mbeki had mentioned that official talks began with talks in Switzerland, referring to a meeting in September 1989 between Jacob Zuma and himself in Switzerland with two South African intelligence officers. Andrew Malange pointed out that Mandela had first made contact with the Botha regime.

Both are right: Mandela's bold approach was the first move an ANC leader had made towards the Pretoria administration, while Mbeki's Swiss talks were the first official talks between the ANC and the then government.

The brief public exchange gave another glimpse of the rift within the ANC, which had erupted publicly at the turbulent 2008 Conference at Polokwane to oust the then President Thabo Mbeki as ANC leader. The latter had been at the centre of the pre-1990 efforts to establish dialogue between the ANC and Pretoria. As various individuals, who had been players during this pre-negotiation phase, have since written or spoken of the events with varying emphasis, the interpretation as to who met whom and why, has become a sensitive issue.

Even the actions during 1989/1990 period by the then President De Klerk is viewed differently by different individuals. Twenty years on, the ANC's party line tended to negate the significance of De Klerk's move to unban illegal parties and release Mandela to allow negotiations to begin which led four years later to a democratic constitution. For this bold act De Klerk, jointly with Nelson Mandela, received the Nobel Peace Prize. Yet in February 2010 President Zuma was quoted as stating that it was the people who had freed Mandela, implying that the pressure from within and outside South Africa had forced De Klerk to act as he did - an ungenerous view? De Klerk took an enormous risk that might well have gone wrong. The speech on February 2, 1990 had undoubtedly opened a new page in South Africa's history book. President De Klerk's announcements could not be reversed and set the scene for the New South Africa.

Bold it was. Despite De Klerk's assertion that he had everyone firmly behind him, there appears to have been little, if any consultation with his cabinet, party or Broederbond, with even the military left out in the cold.⁽³⁴⁾ Possibly De Klerk would have been blocked, had he widely consulted everyone. As it was, there had been the danger of the military taking power in its own hands. However, General George Meiring, head of the army, refrained from action, not being anxious to unleash a bloodbath. Besides, the generals had previously advised the politicians that the problems could never be solve militarily, so that a political solution had to be found.

Within the ANC there had been a tug-of-war over the issue of dialogue and negotiated peace. A faction around military figures such as Chris Hani and Joe Slovo tended to advocate that it was necessary to smash the regime militarily (without considering the advantage of taking over a stable economy and infrastructure), with others such as Thabo Mbeki showed a preference for a peaceful transfer of power, while advocating a continuation of the armed struggle. Subsequently – and still today – there is criticism about the negotiated settlement, seen as giving too much away and favouring 'big business'. Criticism continued into Mbeki's presidency regarding its neo-liberal policies and the creation of a black business elite and avaricious middle class, with the poor majority left out in the cold.

It is thus important to hear Mbeki's views on ZISA, the usefulness and importance he attached to it at the time, also how he reviews it in retrospect.

VII. INTERVIEWS BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2009 AND FEBRUARY 2010

In the course of a private visit to Johannesburg in November 2010, Ruth Weiss spoke to three individuals who had been concerned with dialogue in the 80s: Journalists Hugh Lewin, then in exile in Harare, who had attended media meetings at ZISA but did not comment as to its importance, Allister Sparks who had been at the Dakar meeting and had subsequently written about the secret talks pre-1990 and attached more importance to the ANC-government talks; Moeletsi Mbeki, who had worked at ZISA and who pointed out the current delicate nature of the dialogue issue.

She also met Dr. Orbon in Stellenbosch, where they spoke to Professor Johann Kinghorn, who had been the first Stellenbosch academic to organise meetings with anti-apartheid groups and with Professor Jaques du Plessis, from the Department of Private and Roman Law, who had been one of the students in the 1988 group visiting Lusaka and subsequently Harare. It had been a tremendous experience for the latter to meet “terrorists” and discover they were likable human people; but he hadn’t understood why they insisted on “armed struggle”, when to his mind all could be settled by negotiation.

In February 2010 the following interviews were conducted:

Lengthy interviews with **Justice Dikgang Moseneke, Dr. Helmut Orbon;**
a telephone interview with the **Hon. Frene Ginwala;**
a conversation with the **Hon. Barbara Maseke.**

Talks also took place with the representative of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation Hubertus von Welck and a member of the German Embassy in Pretoria, Stephan Ohme, Head of Development Cooperation at the German Embassy, who had been in Harare at the time of ZISA.

In Cape Town the celebration of freeing Mandela on February 9th and the opening of Parliament on February 15th made access to ANC Members of Parliament and the Cabinet difficult. Thus Deputy Minister Derek Hanekom who had hoped to find time for a meeting, was taken up with official duties during the first week of the team’s stay in Cape Town and left on a foreign trip immediately afterwards. Pallo Jordan, who too had tentatively promised an appointment, was taken up with other matters, as he was nominated for a UN post by President Zuma during that time. Also a telephone contact to Vally Moosa did not materialise towards an interview.

Five Stellenbosch professors involved in ZISA dialogue meetings were available for interviews: **Gerhard Erasmus, Johann Groenewald, Bernard Lategan, G.F. Lubbe, Colin McCarthy** (also a brief conversation with Dr. Jeanette Groenewald)

Andrè Zaaiman, an ANC member now a successful businessman in Cape Town, who, as stated above, was responsible for IDASA’s student programme in ZISA’s time. Denis Goldberg was also contacted.

In Durban, the ANC lawyer **Phyllis Naidoo** as well as **MacMaharaj**, an important ANC leader, were able to meet the interviewer.

To sum up:

Five respondents were ANC members,

One PAC member,

Five Stellenbosch professors,

Three of the respondents had been present in at Dakar, all attended one or more meeting in Harare

VIII. QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEW RESPONSES

The proposed questionnaires (attached) could rarely be fully used, for instances in the interview with Justice Moseneke. Only Prof. Lubbe had kept notes and papers, while other respondents recalled few details, so that they were unable to reply to the questions listed, thus:

Phyllis Naidoo's memory was impaired, Prof. McCarthy only recalled the Harare economic meeting vaguely while remembering other conferences well, Prof. Erasmus had organized the major constitutional conference but had forgotten all details, André Zaaiman had organized numerous trips for Afrikaner students to Harare, but talked only in general terms about these, though for him the facility was of great importance. Professors Groenewald and Lategan had also not kept any notes and spoke more of the background than the actual meetings. Mac Maharaj was not at any Harare gathering, while Barbara Masekele could not recall the women's conference she had attended and Frene Ginwala viewed the Harare meetings as those in a series of others held during this time of transition.

Unfortunately the interviews were heavily weighted on the white side, thanks to the Stellenbosch academics, with insufficient weight on ANC leadership, which hopefully can still be rectified by interviews with such VIPs as Thabo Mbeki added.

Interviews were recorded and due to error in speech, mishearing of names and other problems, transcripts were edited.

Interviewees also spoke informally over a cup of coffee or a meal, with some remarks subsequently noted by interviewer.

Questions to white South Africans:

What motivated you to participate in meetings in Harare organized by ZISA?
All respondents felt that change had to come.

What was your relationship with IDASA?
Only André Zaaiman had a relationship with IDASA, his employer.

With what expectations did you come to Zimbabwe?
None of the academics came with specific expectations.

At which meeting(s) did you participate?
Professors Erasmus, Lubbe were at the Jan. 1989 constitutional conference, Prof. McCarthy at one economic conference, Prof. Lategan thought he was at least twice in Harare, Professor Groenewald in Oct. 1989.

How do you evaluate such meetings with hindsight?
All five academics had positive recollections of the meetings. Prof. Erasmus thought they contributed to better relations and understanding. Prof. Groenewald said the meetings were important and meaningful for them, as it made them feel that they were participating in peaceful change.

Did these change your perception of the opposing party or individuals?

Prof. Lubbe spoke of tension at the constitutional conference which was dispelled during the meeting; Prof. Lategan: the important thing was that they realised the ANC was serious about setting up a workable government and that the 'other side' discovered that Afrikaners were serious about being part of the future without precondition. For him the Harare meetings shattered previous stereotypes, he thought Africans also had to change their view of Afrikaners. One did not change one's perceptions by being nice to one another, but by talking to one another.

Did you develop any kind of relationship with any individual?

Prof. Lategan said that friendships were formed and as this had happened at a difficult time, these were friendships for life, and he mentioned people such as Frank Chikane and Essop Pahad.

Did they reduce any fears you may have had previously?

Professor Groenewald spoke of his students' fears before meeting the ANC and that these were dispelled, as in the case of a female student who wept after meeting Mbeki. Prof. Lategan said there was a great deal of mistrust which was only broken down through several meetings.

Did you find much common ground with the opposing side?

All five professors had found common ground in that they all had the same aim, that of finding a peaceful solution

Did you discuss pre-conditions to negotiations?

Pre-conditions from the African side were obvious (as stated by Justice Moseneke), i.e.: end of the state of emergency, release of political prisoners, one person-one vote; while Professor Lubbe spoke of the Bill of Rights demanded by whites which was fully discussed at the January 1989 constitutional conference

Did you think that stumbling blocks could be removed to enable negotiations to proceed?

The lawyers among the academics felt that a peaceful transition was possible

Did your experience and that of other whites affect public opinion in South Africa?

The Dakar meeting was given wide publicity and though this was adverse, several of the academics felt it gave people food for thought, that Afrikaner intellectuals were meeting the ANC.

Did you subsequently discuss your experiences with officials?

Prof. Lategan thought that some of those present discussed the meeting with Pretoria officials, mentioning that Prof. Esterhuysen spoke to Mbeki with the consent of Pretoria.

Did any of the views expressed serve as input into the subsequent official talks?

Prof. Erasmus said the ideas discussed in Harare were also discussed elsewhere and flowed into negotiations though not, as Dr. Orbon put it, on a one-to-one basis.

Do you think such contacts helped subsequent official talks to succeed?

Prof. Lategan saw the Harare and other meetings as practice rounds for Kempton Park, i.e. negotiations.

Did any of the issues discussed form an input subsequently in talks about talks, negotiations or legislation - if so in which way?

This was already phrased and answered above.

What did you think of ZISA's work?

Prof. Lategan summed his view up by saying:

The important contribution was that Cold Comfort provided a venue where opposing parties and individuals could meet in a way where stereotypes from both sides could be challenged and where it was possible to at least start to think differently about one another. That I think was their most important contribution. They did not have any power, they did not have any specific position, but they facilitated these meetings. And in the longer run of things, I think it was absolutely essential for South Africans to know one another, because of the isolated positions. Cold Comfort did not take a side, certainly they had their own personal conviction but they took great care of making it possible for people from totally opposing view points to meet in a way, that nobody had thought possible. It was not in a sense that you are put in the position of the accused and you are being bombarded with accusations. It was a genuine attempt to start dialogue.

André Zaaiman said a number of people came together who all wanted the same thing and they did "an amazing, wonderful thing".

Did ZISA present an honest platform for dialogue?

Prof. Lategan answered this above.

Were you interested in Zimbabwe as a newly independent state?

Several respondents considered this very important including Profs. Lategan, Groenewald, Justice Moseneke, André Zaaiman.

What did you expect from ZISA's coordinators?

None had specific expectations.

What kind of programme had you expected?

Some had been involved in producing the agenda; such as Profs. Erasmus and Lubbe for the constitutional conference.

Who proposed the meeting as well as subject matter for discussion and worked out the agenda?

Prof. Lategan mentioned Prof. Johann Kinghorn as the pioneer of the idea of talking to the ANC.

With hindsight, what contribution did the meetings provide for the transformation?

The five academics were agreed that ZISA made a contribution by providing a venue for talks.

In your view, did the concept of reconciliation as symbolised by Cold Comfort Farm play any part?

None were aware of CCF's political significance within Zimbabwe.

Do you consider it useful to form a network of those engaged in ZISA meetings at the time? (For instance, a gathering of former participants?)

Profs. Erasmus, Lategan and Groenewald said they would be prepared to attend a workshop on dialogue as a method to work towards a conflict resolution, if it fitted into their programme.

Questions for anti-apartheid participants:

The questions were only put to Justice Moseneke, as Naidoo, Ginwala, Masekele had little recollection and Maharaj was not in Harare

What motivated you to attend a meeting or meetings in Harare?

Justice Moseneke said that PAC had given his name to the organizers in Harare.

Of which organisation were you a member at the time?

PAC

Who proposed the meeting as well as subject matter for discussion and worked out the agenda?

He thought ZISA as host had some responsibility.

Which meeting (s) did you attend?

He attended several meetings, the first in 1987.

What did you expect from the meeting (s)?

His expectation ahead of the first meeting was not high.

With hindsight, can you evaluate the meeting (s) as follows:

He said ZISA played an important role that would help to begin discussion in Harare about the possibility of facilitating change other than in a violent way.

Did these change your perception of the opposing party or individuals?

He did change his views about some of the whites as in time mistrust was reduced, in particular concerning prominent businessmen who he thought genuinely wanted change.

Did you develop any kind of relationship with any individual?

He became acquainted with men such as Mike Spicer of Anglo American Corporation..

Did the meeting reduce any fears you may have had previously?

It reduced mistrust.

Did you fully approve of a negotiated settlement before the meeting?

Justice Moseneke said it was PAC policy not to give up the armed struggle but to talk and fight at the same time..

Did the meeting make you realise what the effect of a successful outcome of negotiations would mean for your party and yourself?

He felt the Harare meetings opened a way to discussing peaceful change.

Did you any common ground with the opposing side?

Both were serious about peaceful change.

Did you discuss pre-conditions to negotiations?

He felt pre-conditions were obvious, namely the end of the state of emergency, release of prisoners, unbanning banned organisations

Did you think that stumbling blocks could be removed to enable negotiations to proceed?

The pre-conditions were stumbling blocks.

Did your experience affect your friends and comrades?

He thought that the Pretoria officials were affected by the tenor of the talks.

Did you subsequently discuss your experiences with your party officials?

This was not asked as it was obvious that as party deputy chairman he had done so.

Did any of the views expressed serve as input into the subsequent official talks?

He said nitty-gritty issues were not discussed. Justice Moseneke was later member of the drafting committee of the constitution.

Do you think such contacts helped subsequent official talks to succeed?

He had made friends and kept contact with some.

Did any of the issues discussed form an input subsequently in talks about talks, negotiations or legislation? If so, in which way

See response to question above.

What did you think of ZISA's work? Did ZISA present an honest platform for dialogue?

See above response that he considered ZISA's work important.

Were you interested in Zimbabwe as a newly independent state?

He said that it was one reason for going, because they were going to Zimbabwe, a successful country, well run "they are self reliant and many things were working pretty well. That gave us hope."

What did you expect from ZISA's coordinators?

See above, that his expectations were not high.

What kind of programme had you expected?

He said a reason for going was to discuss issues that could not be discussed inside South Africa.

With hindsight, do you think the meetings contributed to the transformation?

He said he had no doubt that the Harare talks made an impact on formal talks. The value was that the talks informed each side what are the obstacles and what was possible and what could be achieved.

In your view, did the concept of reconciliation as symbolised by Cold Comfort Farm play any part?

He was unaware of CCF as a symbol.

Do you consider it useful to form a network of those engaged in ZISA meetings at the time? (e.g., a one-off gathering of former participants?)

He said he would be interested to attend a workshop discussing conflict resolution if his programme allowed it.

Summary of interviews

Professor Gerhard Erasmus, constitutional lawyer, had organised the first Constitutional Conference, in preparation of which he travelled to various countries in the period between 1987 and 1989. For details he referred to Professor Gerhard F. Lubbe, now head of the Stellenbosch Law Faculty, who fortunately had kept a file of papers and his notes, the only one to do so. It was important for him that an organisation – ZISA – was available in Southern Africa to facilitate and host conferences. He warned that ZISA’s role in dialogue-negotiations should not be over-estimated, but that it was important nonetheless, above all because it allowed the conference to take place in Southern Africa.

Frene Ginwala and Barbara Masekela, both senior ANC leaders, saw ZISA as one of the paving stones in ANC’s policy of dialogue, with little recall of detail of the women’s conference, which both had attended.

Ginwala said the meeting had been important. It had been part of a process begun in the early 80s, that of talking to people inside. There was a groundswell inside the country and talks were in the air, with different departments inside the National government anxious to take control of these. Eventually the National Intelligence Service became involved and events unfolded.

Masekela was at the Dakar meeting, which she saw as an important breakthrough. She had made friends and felt many views previously held were dispersed thanks to the face to face meeting. She considered the Harare women’s meeting as part of the flurry of meetings they all attended during that time.

Johann Groenewald, sociologist, gave an account of his visits to Lusaka and a meeting in Harare in October 1989, which was a follow-up to the Lusaka trip. He thought the ZISA meetings made a positive contribution, he felt that it gave the academics the sense that they were doing something meaningful, as none of them were individuals who would have taken up arms but were looking for ways towards peaceful change. He believed in the “human agency” towards transition and negotiation. The impact on him was to make him more outspoken and also to question, what he could do. In the event it made him get down to writing about the issues.

Jeanette Groenewald, wife of Prof. Groenewald who briefly joined the discussion, had worked as an educationist at the University of Western Cape at the time of the non-white student unrests in the 80s and had seen the way police treated and provoked the students. As mentioned, she was at the women's conference in Harare.

Bernard Lategan, theologian, described the place of Stellenbosch within Afrikaner society. Support of the government was still very strong, but there was opposition and a sense of change in the air. His department of Biblical studies had established a new value system to assist the transition to a new dispensation of an inclusive democracy to replace apartheid. He mentioned his then colleague Prof. Esterhuysen who, he thought, talked to Mbeki and had been sanctioned by both sides to do so. Other colleagues outside the university were approached and following Dakar, he himself attended a meeting in Harare. He felt this and other meetings were important in paving the way to a peaceful transition. Cold Comfort had contributed to this by training people in dialogue "to get a constructive engagement". He acknowledged that some relationships forged at that time became friendships for life. It was a "wonder" that a negotiated settlement had been found without bloodshed. In his dealings between management and workers at companies, he found that giving respect was important.

Gerhard F. Lubbe, legal expert on contract law, current Dean of the Stellenbosch University Law Faculty had kept a file on the Constitutional Conference of January 1989, at which the Bill of Rights issue was the underlying theme. He described Thabo Mbeki as the dominant figure who kept everyone focussed on the issue of effecting transition. Albie Sachs attended the meeting, his first public commitment following his discharge from hospital after an assassination attempt. He felt that the mistrust at the start of the conference was dispelled and that the atmosphere was very cordial; there was a good deal of socialising. Prof. Lubbe also mentioned a visit to Lusaka with Prof. Erasmus as part of the preparation for the January 1989 meeting. Usually he said there were two sides to every issue, but in the South African case it was clear who was in the wrong and that this had to change.

Mac Maharaj, senior ANC leader, was adamant that the series of meetings in the last days of apartheid were to serve no other purpose but to demystify the perception of the ANC. He also maintained that his movement did not identify Afrikaners as responsible for the situation, but had correctly defined the enemy as racism, which had already existed at the time of the British. Apartheid was used as a convenient peg on which to hang the struggle against racism. With regard to a paper he had written on transition, he felt that the Berghof Institute was wrong to see an overall solution to conflict possible, he felt each case differed from the next and needed its own solution.

Maharaj's emphasis in the interview on South Africa's secret service is explained by his experience: he was despatched by Oliver Tambo in the late 80s to work under Operation Vula, an attempt to infiltrate top ANC leadership into South Africa to direct the internal unrest and establish an intelligence network. Apart from his presence in Dakar, he was not involved in dialogue and is said to be in the faction which opposed talks. He is an outspoken opponent of Mbeki and a Zuma supporter. Maharaj was in the country clandestinely when the exiles returned, left it

secret to return openly, only to be arrested because of his Vula activities. He was later released and amnestied.

Professor Colin McCarthy, economist who had attended a major economic conference in Konstanz and others in the UK, could barely remember his Harare visit, which for him was one in a series of on-going dialogue events. He thought it was good to have been held in a 'normal' society.

Dikgang Moseneke, then PAC deputy chairman, now Chief Justice of Constitutional Court attended his first meeting in 1987. He felt ZISA played an important role to help establish contact in order to begin talks. Mistrust existed at first and was dispelled only gradually. Whites wanted a Bill of Rights and human rights protection, Africans insisted on preconditions such as lifting of state of emergency, release of political prisoners, unbanning of banned organisations.

He had found it useful to have made the acquaintance of important business leaders such as Anglo American's Mike Spicer, so that he could call him up and ask for help in specific circumstances. To call it friendship would be putting too high a value on it. He felt the Harare talks were useful in furthering talks about talks.

Helmut Orbon, then ZISA Director, explained the establishment, aims and work of ZISA, the latter falling into two parts, organising meetings and disseminating information about South Africa. He saw ZISA only as a facility established at the behest of the ANC and IDASA, which at no time initiated meetings, but responded only to requests. All requests for meetings with liberation movements were referred to the latter for decision. He felt friendships had developed out of ZISA meetings and realisation that reality was richer than confrontation between good and evil.

Following De Klerk's February speech, exchange programmes were introduced to expose South Africans to life and work in black African countries.

Andrè Zaaiman had stated publicly in 1986 that he had given up his commission in the SADF, feeling that he could not defend the indefensible. He secretly joined the ANC and worked for IDASA as manager of its student programme. For him, the ZISA facility had been an important help in his work organising trips outside South Africa, also because it was situated in a neighbouring country which was independent and African-ruled.

IX. CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM INTERVIEWS

1. De-mystifying the ANC

All the respondents were positive in their assessment of dialogue and the ZISA meetings. Mac Maharaj insisted that from the ANC's point of view no further purpose was intended or achieved in the long series of meetings with regime officials and civil society than to de-demonise, de-mystify the ANC in the minds of white South Africans. He took part in Dakar, but shortly after that was immersed in Operation Vula, a dangerous assignment, which meant he was working illegally and underground in South Africa.

The de-mystification succeeded, as the experience of Professor Groenewald proved. The students who had accompanied him and three other academics to Lusaka in 1988 had been very fearful of meeting the dreaded ANC communist-terrorists. Yet Steve Thwete approached them with smiles and talk of rugby which overwhelmed the young men. Groenewald himself was overwhelmed when he was welcomed by the much hated Joe Slovo, who gave him a video of his daughter's film *Worlds Apart*, the story of a little girl growing up in a politicised household, which impressed him as well as the students.

He also mentioned the experience of one student, who travelled with him to Harare, where she met ANC leaders such as Thabo Mbeki, an experience that caused her to collapse in a flood of tears: these were people, who in the estimation of her conservative family, belonged behind bars (and whom she had experienced as humans not monsters). Pretoria's anti-ANC propaganda had done its job well and the discovery that the "enemy" had a human face proved emotional.

The meetings had other effects as well:

2. Owning negotiation process

Mac Maharaj felt the success of the South African negotiations was the fact that no outside mediator was involved, so that the South Africans "owned" their own process.

3. Finding common ground

Both Justice Moseneke and Dr.Orbon said that both sides found areas in which they agreed, as both had the same aim, that of a peaceful South Africa.

4. Breaking down mistrust

Given the unstable internal situation, Africans, who travelled to Harare from inside the country such as Moseneke, were apprehensive about face to face meetings with whites for the first time. However, as first overtures in a neutral environment began, mistrust broke down over time.

Justice Moseneke explained that this first meeting in 1987 had been very important, though he couldn't talk of friendship or complete trust. He also found it important to get to know prominent businessmen who were genuinely interested in change. It proved to be useful to be able to approach a man such as Anglo American's Mike Spicer, who was able to ameliorate a crisis situation or help with projects.

Moseneke was later on the drafting committee of the interim constitution but (being PAC) had not taken part in the constitutional meeting in January 1989.

5. Building new friendships

New friendships were also forged between ANC exile leaders and white South Africans. Thus Barbara Masekela was impressed by the journalist and writer Antje Krog with whom she made friends. In Dakar she also became friendly with Dr. van Zyl Slabbert and when she was appointed Ambassador to France, she took his

daughter with her. She spoke of yearning for home during her long years of exile and how a South African accent heard in some foreign country made her feel emotional. For her the emotional impact of Dakar was tremendous.

Professor Bernard Lategan, who attended some three meetings in Harare, said that the stereotype perception of blacks held by Afrikaners was broken down through the face to face contacts. He said that friendships were forged “for life” as a result of the shared discussions and finding common ground.

Thabo Mbeki acknowledged his friendship with some of the whites he met in the course of his meetings. This included van Zyl (though this broke down in the late 90s, as Dr. Van Zyl explained in his book *The Other Side of History*).

6. Acquiring new insights

Professor Bernard Lategan recalled one meeting he attended in Harare, when a two-hour fluent presentation was made by a Russian officer, part of a delegation from the Soviet Embassy, who gave a lucid account of Moscow’s role in Angola, explaining Soviet reason for support against colonial oppression and providing moral grounds for Moscow’s stance, which gave him a new insight.

7. Meeting other activists

ANC, PAC and Black Consciousness representatives met each other in Harare at ZISA meetings, which helped to soften the antagonism between them, as Moseneke experienced. Even if the Patriotic Front envisaged by the ZANU-PF government did not materialise, improved relations with rivals was a positive effect.

8. Developing new diplomatic skills.

The ANC headquarter staff in Lusaka, which some commentators described as a government-in-waiting, was stretched to deal with the requests made on their time and for their presence, especially during 1989 (as mentioned by Barbara Masekela). Officials had to learn quickly to represent their movement and its policy adequately, thus grooming them for the official talks ahead. Mbeki had been involved in diplomacy longest and more than most others, but he too benefitted: van Zyl described in *The Other Side of History* that after 1990 it was of great importance that the Afrikaner right and Afrikaner farmers were brought on board for negotiations to succeed. He was able to get Mbeki and Zuma to engage these groups and also to persuade General Constand Viljoen and Mangosuthu Buthelezi to participate in the elections. (33)

Mbeki had got to know the Afrikaner establishment through the IDASA-ZISA contacts, which helped with these later encounters with the Afrikaner righ..

9. Spelling out pre-conditions for talks

Justice Moseneke said that pre-conditions for negotiations were discussed, even if these were self evident such as the end of the state of emergency or release of political prisoners and unbanning banned organisations.

10. Affecting public opinion inside South Africa

The meetings between Afrikaner establishment and the ANC had an impact on the general public as well as on Pretoria. Coverage of the Dakar meeting, though on the whole adverse, nonetheless made an impression, with people interested that the intellectual elite should be meeting “terrorists”.

Pretoria officials were aware of the talks. Dr. Groenewald said that they knew someone within their group would report to some official, but this caused no headaches, as they wanted it made known that they were meeting the ANC. The effect on public opinion was positive, even if the Dakar participants were bullied on their return. Dr. Orbon said the meetings helped to de-sensitise the issue of future negotiations. It also legitimised these within the apartheid opposition in general and the ANC membership in particular by holding out visions of the reward of a settlement, thus encouraging pro-negotiation positions.

X. ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS POSED TO ZISA

The interviews provide some answers to questions posed on page 17 above:

1. Can dialogue contribute to conflict resolution and if so, to what extent?

Respondents saw dialogue as a means of getting acquainted (Moseneke, Masekela, Groenewald).

2. Under what circumstances does dialogue affect the situation and what is required to make dialogue possible?

Dialogue became possible once external events had changed the situation of both sides.

In the case of South Africa it was the fall of the Berlin Wall i.e. the end of the Cold War.

3. Can dialogue be instituted at any time in a conflict situation or only under special circumstances, e.g. when the conflict has reached a certain stage?

The Broederbond papers of 1986 and 1989 show that this policy-making think tank realised constitutional changes made by President Botha had reached a dead end.

4. Did the location (Zimbabwe) or the venue (Cold Comfort as a symbol of non-racialism) have any relevance in the South African dialogue which took place under ZISA's aegis?

Several respondents saw Zimbabwe as a venue as important, as it showed that blacks could run a country and run it well. (Andre Zaaiman, Bernard Lategan, Johann Groenewald, Bernhard Erasmus) Zaaiman in particular considered it important that the ZISA facility was close to South Africa.

5. Did the meetings in any way change the agenda of transition from apartheid to democracy?

Not as such. Respondents felt that change was inevitable by the 80s (Professors Lubbe, Erasmus, Groenewald).

6. Did dialogue create additional problems for the leadership?

The ANC leadership was badly stretched to respond to all the calls time of its small headquarter contingent (Frene Ginwala, Barbara Masekela); Dialogue posed a problem for Pretoria, which could not stop participation at meetings outside its borders (Andre Zaaiman).

7. What are the lessons learnt for other processes of conflict mediation

Mac Maharaj thought the most important lesson was that the protagonists must “own” the process, that is, no outside interference. Others felt that dialogue contributed to the success of official negotiations.

8. Was it all worth while?

All interviewees replied in the affirmative, they all saw ZISA as one of the segments in the dialogue process of the late ‘80s.

Perhaps it is best to allow of the respondents the last word. Professor Lategan said:

“The important contribution was that Cold Comfort provided a venue where opposing parties and individuals could meet in a way where stereotypes from both sides could be challenged and where it was possible to at least start to think differently about one another. That I think was their most important contribution. They did not have any power; they did not have any specific position, but they facilitated these meetings. And in the longer run of things, I think it was absolutely essential for South Africans to know one another, because of the isolated positions. Cold Comfort did not take a side, certainly they had their own personal conviction but they took great care of making it possible for people from totally opposing view points to meet in a way, that nobody had thought possible. It was not in a sense that you are put in the position of the accused and you are being bombarded with accusations. It was a genuine attempt to start dialogue.”

Andrè Zaaiman speaking about the processes of dialogue and negotiation said: **It was a glorious moment when a group of serious committed people, who shared an objective, came together in their own ways, in their own spaces and focussed and did a beautiful thing and achieved an amazing thing.”** About ZISA he said that without it, it would have been more difficult: **“The good thing about ZISA - it was there.”**

XI. CAN ZISA SERVE AS A MODEL IN OTHER AREAS OF CONFLICT?

The question whether ZISA as a model can be applied elsewhere is doubtlessly the key issue – that is, establishing a facility in the case of conflict solutions without outside mediation.

Dr. Orbon's remark that ZISA was the right project at the right time at the right place actually highlights the problem: who can answer beforehand if anything is the right thing at the right time? In the case of ZISA, various issues happened to fit:

In the wake of a successful first encounter, both parties, whites and the liberation movements, were in favour of a facility in a neutral country where they could meet;

Zimbabwe as a frontline state was directly concerned with the conflict: like all frontline states President Mugabe's selfinterest was involved in desiring a peaceful solution;

Zimbabwe's recent independence and the President's speech of reconciliation encouraged the whites to pursue the possibility of dialogue with their opponents; Zimbabwe's closeness to South Africa's borders made it possible for meetings to be arranged at short notice.

ZISA's recipe for success was its objectivity, that it served as a facility only. None of the individuals involved allowed their personal views to impinge on their work. Meetings were held at the request of the parties in conflict without ZISA input. The Zimbabwe government once did attempt to propose a solution, a patriotic front of anti-apartheid groups, which failed.

If a "ZISA-structure" is proposed in any area of conflict, it has to be the will of both sides that this should happen. A neutral spot close to the area of conflict with disinterested personnel, prepared to remain objective, would have to be available, as well as generous funding over a lengthy period.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Afrikaner Broederbond
AWB	Afrikaanse Weerstandsbeweging
ANC	African National Congress
AZAPO	Azanian Peoples Organisation
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BMZ	Bundesministerium f. Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (German Development Ministry)
CCF	Cold Comfort Farm
CCFT	Cold Comfort Farm Trust
CP	Conservative Party
EEC	End Subscription Campaign
FS	Frontline States
IDASA	Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) ANC military wing
NIS	National Intelligence Service
NP	National Party
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PFPP	Progressive Federal Party
SADF	South African Defence Force
SADCC	Southern African Development Co-operation Conference
UDF	United Democratic Front
ZISA	Zimbabwe Institute on Southern Africa

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Analysis of the WFD preliminary study of the transferability of the Zimbabwe Institute for Southern Africa (ZISA) dialogue approach

Background

In due time for the twentieth anniversary of the non-violent end of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the German peace organisation Weltriedensdienst (WFD) decided to explore the impact the ZISA (Zimbabwe Institute for Southern Africa) dialogue process had on the ending of the Apartheid regime in order to assess any possible ‘lessons learned’ and to determine their transferability to other ongoing conflict settings.¹

During this initial stage of the project, former participants at the ZISA dialogue meetings were interviewed in South Africa between 31st of January and 24th of February 2010 by Ruth Weiss, a German-South African Journalist, and Manfred Schumacher, Civil Peace Worker for the WFD. The findings from these interviews were regarded as the basis for a manual, which would provide ‘lessons learned’ to ongoing and future Civil Peace Service projects, as well as providing peace practitioners and peace researchers with a useful tool in their work.

The following questions were relevant for compiling the manual:

1. Did the dialogue meetings make a contribution to the transformation process, and if yes, which contributions?
2. Which general conditions enhanced or hampered the process?
3. In what ways did the ZISA dialogues impact the peaceful transformation process?
4. Which concrete achievements can be identified?
5. In what ways and to what extent did the meetings influence individual attitudes of the interviewees?
6. Are there any ‘lessons learned’ that are transferable to other mediation processes?

Why it didn’t work...

Unfortunately, answering the above questions has not been possible due to insufficient data. This lack of data arose due to a number of reasons, such as;

- The spectrum of interviewees was non-representative (e.g. only male white academics from Stellenbosch University. Representatives from other professions or backgrounds were lacking), and the initiators of ZISA and other key-participants were not interviewed.
- A priori assumptions regarding the importance of the dialogue process. It was already stated in the project proposal that the ZISA dialogue process can be regarded as one of the most effective initiatives in international conflict resolution, although this is the target of the project itself.
- The willingness of former ZISA participants still active in the ANC to take a stand on questions regarding the dialogue process due to current political priorities.

The interesting side of the project...

In spite of the insufficient data, a number of interesting aspects were identified in the interviews regarding the ZISA dialogue meetings. These aspects will here be summarised as

¹ It is here referred only to the dialogue programme of ZISA, not to the journalistic information programme.

they would have appeared in the planned manual, with the difference that the following entry points for similar dialogue processes should not be seen as examples of ‘good practices’ or ‘lessons learned’, but rather as a mere set of opinions by participants.

I. General conditions for the ZISA dialogue process

a) Aspects of ownership:

The ZISA process offered a platform for dialogue between black and white South Africans and was of advantage for both participants and staff. Because of the *absence of any external facilitator, mediator or moderator*, ZISA was absolved from responsibility for success or failure of its events (see: Dr. Orbon, final report 1993). In a similar spirit, Prof. Lategan, one of the interviewees, also mentions that “[t]hey did not have any power, they did not have any specific position, but they facilitated these meetings (...). The process did not take place in order to accuse anyone. It was a genuine attempt to start a dialogue not only between South Africans internally, but also between South Africans and people as unlikely as the Russians.” Ruth Weiss stated it was a wide process which was self-determined by the initiating parties of ZISA: African National Congress (ANC) and the Institute of Democracy in Africa (IDASA).

Possibly, one might view ZISA as a micro-level reflexion of the later macro-dialogue processes at track 1, as the South African negotiating parties in both cases were keen to settle their affairs by themselves. This is illustrated by the fact that neither the *selection of participants*, nor the agenda for the meetings, was determined by ZISA. In fact, all decisions were made in agreement with the ANC (Dr. Orbon, André Zaaiman). “During the first year the meetings were specifically those between the ANC and representatives of the white community, mainly IDASA.” Dr. Orbon recalls that the ANC was sceptical about the project at the beginning, and this is why leading ANC members attended the meetings in order to keep an eye on progress. In addition many individuals and particularly academics at the Stellenbosch University and organisations from within the white communities participated. André Zaaiman, who had organized travels for IDASA, could not remember a moment where anybody said: We don’t want this group. Indeed, after Botha’s stroke the number of requests raised to such an extent that ZISA had to become selective. Prof. Erasmus mentions the ANC had difficulties sending personnel to all the meetings taking place. All together, the composition of the participants seems to be relatively exclusive, however, as mostly white academic Afrikaners and members of the ANC attended the meetings.

b) Frequency and composition of the ZISA meetings:

One main aim of the ZISA meetings was to facilitate as many encounters as possible between the representatives of the white and black population of South Africa. Compared to other dialogue processes, however, ZISA did not facilitate a continuous dialogue between consistent groups from both conflict parties. One of the interviewees, Prof. McCarthy, regrets the lack of any follow-up meetings as was the case with the Chatham House meetings in London. It thus seems as if the ZISA meetings served the primary purpose of building a critical mass within the Afrikaner community in order to create a multiplying effect within the community.

c) Zimbabwe as location:

Many of the former participants have described Harare as a location for the meetings as important. This single fact was motivation enough for Mr. Moseneke to accept the invitation for example. He said: “Zimbabwe was a good idea for a number of reasons. For one reason, it was successful, and for another, it still has a sufficiently [strong] army and was not afraid of

South Africa”. Mr. Zaaiman describes Harare as an inspirational, but primarily a safe place and as an example for a better future. Further, it was meant to serve to reinforce a momentum in white people’s head and illustrating that “you could be free and you are ruled by black people.” This is also how both Prof. Lubbe and Prof. McCarthy perceived Zimbabwe ten years after its independence.

d) Confidentiality:

Prof. Lategan emphasises that ZISA was organised to prevent any negative and hostile reactions from the communities of white Afrikaner participants. Ruth Weiss further confirms that there reigned certain secrecy over the meetings, in order to protect participants. The possibly only public document that has ever left the meetings (final communiqué of the lawyer’s conference) was published on the 5th of February 1989 in the Zimbabwean “Sunday Mail”. But it mentioned only Cold Comfort Farm Trust, not ZISA.

e) Timing:

Both Mr. Moseneke and Prof. Erasmus felt that one of the main values of the ZISA dialogues lie in its timing, as it was one of the earliest efforts to facilitate dialogue in South Africa. Other dialogue processes commenced at a much later stage.

In the ZISA Project proposal, it is stated that there was never a pre-set agenda to the dialogue meetings. The interviewees show differing opinions regarding this statement however. The common practice, it seems, was setting the agenda directly in consent between the participants (a practice that is a negotiation process itself). Prof. Groenewald mentions, however, that the agenda at times was set up in the run-up to the meetings. Nonetheless, none of the interviewees disagreed with the assumption that ZISA did not set the agenda.

Another point that was perceived in different ways relates to the expressed outcome orientation of the meetings. Some emphasised the journey being the reward, while others seemed to have been kept in uncertainty about the underlying motivation for the meetings. One side stated, it was a series of “symbolic meeting” (Mrs. Weiss) and another that the aim was to create human encounters (Prof. Lategan). However, Mr. Moseneke and Prof. McCarthy also stressed the limitations of this concept of a “symbolic encounter”, as one needs at least a few meetings in order to break down mistrust as Mr. Moseneke mentions. Prof. McCarthy, who also highlighted an entirely different aspect of the ZISA meetings, seemed to prefer the sustainability of the Chatham House meetings. He had “the overall impression that its not an exercise and liaise with the ANC, that’s more an exercise to meet an[sic] liaise with compatriots of a neighbouring country, with Zimbabwe.” Further, there seems to be some confusion with regards to preparation of the Communiqué of the Lawyers Conference and other documents produced during ZISA meetings, as it is not clear whether they had been prepared by the participants in advance or created spontaneously.

Due to the many years that have passed since the meetings took place, it is today difficult to determine anything specific with regards to the agenda and programme for each meeting. Meetings seem to often have consisted of presentations by representatives from both sides (according to Prof. Groenewald and Dr. Orbon) which subsequently served as a basis of discussions. Different workshop settings were applied, depending on the composition of participants. Mr. Moseneke states that his first meeting split up into workshops, but not along professional lines, but rather along subject lines” (e.g. gender, economy, land distribution). Two of the interviewees (Mrs. Weiss, Prof. Lubbe) reported on following plenary discussions after subject related group discussions. Mrs. Naidoo and Mr. Moseneke mention the importance of the informal meetings beyond the conference activities, such as having lunch

together or sharing a drink with the ‘enemy’. It is not clear, however, whether the informal settings were part of the structure of the ZISA meetings or not. No questions were asked and nothing mentioned concerning facilitating methods, rules of communication and confidentiality (e.g. Chatham House Rule).

Ruth Weiss recalls the highly professional contributions of the black women at the Women’s Conference, who had developed great organisational competencies through their work during exile. Here, it would be very interesting to further explore the handling of internal group dynamics. Who felt responsible for the process? In what ways were internal oppositions dealt with?

Regarding the Berghof Foundation’s concept of ‘insider mediators’, there have been no significant statements made. Only Prof. Lubbe mentions Thabo Mbeki as somebody who intervened when the discussion would become too academic and took the people back to the realities on the ground. He also describes the Professor of Human Rights Law, Lawrence Ackerman, as playing a strong role during the meetings.

II. Other aspects of the interviews

a. Which ‘connectors’ can be identified?

With regards to the issue of finding a ‘common ground’, it seems that there was a strong agreement regarding the inevitability of an end to the Apartheid system despite differing incentives. The main open question was to *when* this inevitable end was to occur (Prof. Lategan), whether the white South Africans would be a part of this process or not (Mrs. Ginwala), and how this transition was to be shaped (Mr. Moseneke, Prof. Lubbe). Prof. Lategan was even at this early stage convinced that the ANC and the liberation movements would be the leaders of a new South Africa. Further connecting factors were amongst other, participant’s profession (lawyer’s conference), and shared gender identity (women’s conference). Overall, it could be argued that the ZISA dialogue process was more a place for like-minded rather than for spoilers.

b. Which ‘dividers’ can be identified?

Despite a general sentiment of wanting to achieve a common goal, the encounters were undoubtedly characterized by mistrust and fears. The white South Africans were conditioned to perceive the ANC as terrorists and communists (Prof. Lategan). The black South Africans on the other hand, were the clear victims in the Apartheid system and the inevitable power imbalances could at times impact the meetings. Mr. Moseneke recalls his deep mistrust regarding the intentions of the white participants: “we are dealing with guys that are associated with the oppressive power structure in South Africa. Prof. Lategan also perceived a great deal of tension and suspicion on both sides. Prof. Groenewald mentions he did not feel any emotional fear towards the black participants, but rather an apprehension in the sense how it might affect himself and his career. He had himself heard of some cases where participants of similar meetings had to face hard consequences.

Prof. Erasmus expressed more broad concerns however. He mentions that “..the lack of constitutions in the rest of Africa was a source of concern, particularly with regards to the future of white minorities”. This seems to have been a great concern for him personally. Further, Prof. Lubbe also mentions a strong tension regarding the Bill of Rights and concerns among the white participants regarding the measures of Affirmative Action (a number of institutionalised ‘positive discrimination’ measures aiming at ensuring increased racial

equality in workplaces for example). He remembered that Albie Sachs replied that “one would not create one inequity to solve another.”

III. Aspects of ZISAs impact on the transformation:

Regarding the relevance of the dialogue meetings, there seem to be different estimations. Mac Maharaj states that “it could not be said that talks for talks sake is a productive exercise”. For purposes of comparison, Mr. Moseneke mentions that the Pan African Progress (PAC) strategy was one of ‘talk and fight’. ZISA, however, was initiated on the basis of creating and facilitating change in non-violent ways. He further mentions that the dialogue meetings did not get down to the details, but rather served as an arena where relations could be established for subsequent talks. Prof. Lategan, however, argued differently, and mentions that the dialogues were substantial and in fact went to the essentials of the matter. He further argues that “you don’t overcome stereotypes by being nice to one another.” For him, as somebody who was convinced that the ANC would be the government after the end of Apartheid, he felt that the role of the Afrikaners was to provide the ANC with feedback and remind them of consequences on critical issues such as nationalisation of industries etc. Prof. Erasmus on the other hand feels the main aim of the meetings was about exploring. He mentions that “the most important thing was that something was happening at all, such as the Dakar meeting. The meeting in itself was significant for the reason that it took place – it made things a lot easier.” ZISA should not be overrated, however, as there were many other factors and developments that played a critical role in the transformation of South Africa.

There are various responses regarding the results of the dialogues. Mr. Moseneke talks about ZISAs contribution to creating a space for further discussions, as it established initial contact between the opposing sides. Through these encounters, both sides became aware of the other’s limits and options. In this regard, the non-negotiable requirement of a power-transfer and the principle of ‘one person, one vote’ was articulated by PAC. Further, it was made clear that the freeing of political prisoners, the lift of the State of Emergency, and unbanning the previously banned organisations were important preconditions for any peace talks. The preconditions of the whites on the other hand were: suspending the armed struggle, guaranty of the Bill of Rights and the protection of private property. In negotiating these preconditions, ZISA helped to create a network of persons that could remain in contact also in their everyday lives, not only in negotiation settings. ZISA could also be deemed relevant in the sense that it assisted in establishing contact between PAC and the ANC, although the formation of a common Patriotic Front in 1991 and 1992 failed. As one of the eight people who wrote the interim constitution, Prof. Lategan states that the ZISA discussions played a pivotal role in what occurred in South Africa subsequently, and argues “if ZISA hadn’t existed, more preliminary work would have had to be done in order to build confidence.”

Prof. Groenewald on the other hand, feels that the ZISA dialogues did not change his political convictions, but encouraged him, however, to further continue on his road to breaking the discursive hegemony at the time. He mentions that he commenced publishing articles to break this hegemony. Further, he stresses that the ZISA meetings were perceived as rather high level, and that the participation at the conference gave him and other white South Africans the feeling of being part of something meaningful and important (see: recommendation, 3rd step).

Prof. Lategan further emphasises that the ZISA dialogues served as an essential part of preparing the ground for an alternative approach of finding a peaceful solution to the situation. In this sense, ZISA can be seen as a training ground for further processes. Prof.

Lategan also highlights that he has remained in contact with some of the participants, primarily with colleagues, but also with Frank Chikane and Saki Macozoma.

Prof. Lubbe notes that he was left with a certain feeling of safety and assurance with regards to future continued respect for the rule of law, and in particular private property rights, as he felt that ‘the other side’ was striving towards the same goals. This perception of the other was further strengthened when he realised that they were competent lawyers, and that they were seriously concerned about their country. Prof. Lubbe thus felt that these were people that one could cooperate with. As a success of the meetings, Prof. Lubbe mentions the final communiqué of the Lawyer’s Conference, which was published in a Zimbabwean newspaper (this can be found on the ANC’s web site²). For Prof. McCarthy on the other hand, the meetings were a fairly minor event with no real results. He did, however, ask himself whether the participation of white South Africans played an important role in convincing their own communities.

The director of ZISA at the time, Dr. Helmut Orbon, stated that ZISA was critical in breaking down prejudices on both sides, and to get both the ANC and the white South African constitutional lawyers to perceive the other as human beings and not as monsters. Also, he felt that the materials produced during the conferences were incorporated into subsequent negotiation efforts, though perhaps not on a “one by one basis”. He further notes the difficulty of direct continuations of negotiations due to the numerous conflicts (e.g. the conflict between ANC and Inkatha, a political party opposing the ANC) along the way. Dr. Orbon compared ZISA with the CODESA process arguing that “it was basically the same thing [as ZISA], only at a much more advanced level.” For him, the value of the dialogue programme was the breaking down of clear-cut, opposing positions particularly regarding the opinions of the Apartheid system. The dialogues thus provided people with new options and alternatives to the hegemonic ways of thinking. If ZISA hadn’t existed, the personal encounters and initial contacts would have taken place later and in a different form. Mrs. Weiss assessed the main value of the meetings being getting to know the enemy as part of a process of moving towards negotiations and a solution to the conflict.

Many of the former participants (Prof. Lategan, Prof. Erasmus, Mrs. Masekela, Mrs. Ginwala, Mr. Zaaiman, Prof. Groenewald) highlighted that the plethora of dialogue meetings in general and thus the continuing opportunities to establish relations, had a major impact on their lives. Some of the interviewees stated that the dialogues contributed to feelings of trust on a personal level, reduced constraints and prejudices (Prof. Lubbe), breakdown of stereotypes and prejudices (Prof. Lategan), and a change in opinion regarding some of the other side after meeting (Mr. Moseneke). Mrs. Masekela, who talks about the Dakar meeting, mentions that “we realized that they were humans.”

The assessment of ZISAs influence on the government is varying. Mr. Moseneke believes that several of the participants had close relations to the government and reported from the ZISA meetings. He further believes the government was aware of several dialogue meetings, including ZISA, which influenced the government’s decision-making regarding freeing of political prisoners. Prof. Lategan notes that “the security police were very interested in the talks and we were visited by them, but we did not volunteer any information.” Nevertheless, he assumed information reached Pretoria indirectly. Prof. Groenewald, on the other hand, does not believe the ZISA meetings had any particular influence on the decision-making

² <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=ancdocs/pr/1989/pr0204.html>

processes in Pretoria. This illustrates the diversity of opinions and memories from these meetings.

IV. Assessment of transferability of ZISAs dialogue approach:

Mr. Mac Maharaj explicitly warned against creating a theory of conflict negotiations and transferring the South African model to other contexts. He strongly believes there is no need for a theory of dialogue, as each case is unique. Prof. Groenewald shares this view, but believes, however, that there could be a possibility to ‘translate’ the findings to other contexts. Prof. Lubbe states: “I think the difficulty about generalisation is that in this case [South Africa], it was the shared morality- the moral issues were clearly illuminated. I mean, in most cases you have to (*sic*) side, both thinking they are right.” Mr. Moseneke, in contrast to other respondents, did not see why one should not be able to transfer the ZISA method to other contexts.

Aside from the insufficient data which hinders a well-founded assessment of the relevance of the ZISA process on transforming the apartheid regime, there are some aspects, also mentioned by the interviewees that characterise the South African context and thus sets it apart from other conflicts:

- Existence of a shared identity as South Africans (Mrs. Ginwala, Mr. Zaaiman, Prof. Lategan, Mrs. Masekela)
- South Africa’s key role in regional stabilisation and development (Prof. Erasmus) during and after the Cold War
- The peaceful transition in Namibia (Prof. Lategan, Prof. Erasmus) as an example for the whole region
- The impact of external pressure through sanctions, as well as the economic crisis (Prof. McCarthy)
- Internal crisis (Mr. Moseneke, Mac Maharaj)
- The clear moral issues with regards to a continued Apartheid (Prof. Groenewald, Prof. Lubbe).

How the study could be continued (recommendations)...

1st step:

If human as well as financial resources should allow a continued, in-depth study of the role and impact of the ZISA process in the transformation process of South Africa, the first step should be to interview a broader range of former participants.

These should include:

- representatives of PAC,
- representatives of AZAPO,
- representatives of UDF,
- representatives of the Zimbabwean participants,
- representatives of the ANC, especially competing wings and initiators of ZISA,
- representatives of IDASA, especially Mr. Boraine as a founder of ZISA and non-ANC members,
- representatives of church contexts
- representatives of trade unions,
- representatives of security institutions, which observed meetings like ZISA
- representatives of economy
- representatives of media

- representatives of other universities than Stellenbosch.

Only on the basis of the subsequent analysis of these interviews, next steps might be considered.

2nd step:

Should a broad spectre of interviewees assess the ZISA dialogues as relevant to the South African transformation process, a second step might be to interview participants from other similar dialogue processes (previous and subsequent ones, informal as well as formal). This could shed light on different dialogue approaches that existed in South Africa, in order to determine where ZISA fits into the wide spectre of approaches. This evaluation process makes further sense if one takes into consideration the various comments by interviewees mentioning that there were a number of dialogues that had a collective impact on transformation, and not one process alone. The question of ‘how’ different efforts culminated in official negotiations that subsequently resulted in an end to the Apartheid Era, seems to be one possible entry point for further research on this topic. Helpful tools regarding missing links of interdependency might be ‘Reflecting on Peace Practice’ (RPP) or elements of ‘Movement Action Plan’ (MAP).

3rd step:

Should the ZISA process be deemed a relevant position within the various dialogue processes, many interesting questions for further reflection arise. One direction these questions could take us in might be the impact of diverse efforts on different tracks (multi-track diplomacy). Especially with regards to ZISA, it would be interesting to analyse the effects of power imbalances among participants in order to evaluate the impact it had on the subsequent official negotiation process. Considering this power reality, it needs to be taken into consideration that most of the white South Africans have an academic or upper-class background, but with no direct political mandate or access to power (track 2 – 3). The ANC representatives, however, had already a political power basis, and could be perceived at being at least on a track 1,5 level.

One Question in relation to this last point could thus be formulated the following:

- Have dialogue processes between representatives of different tracks like ZISA an effect on ‘power elevation’ in the sense of cumulative legitimating effects for track 1 access? If yes, under what conditions?

A. List of interviewed persons

Helmut Orbon

Justice Dikgang Moseneke

Frene Ginwala

Barbara Masekela

Gerhard Erasmus

Johann Groenewald

Bernhard Lategan

G.F. Lubbe

Colin McCarthy

Phyllis Naidoo

Sathyandranath Ragunanan 'Mac' Maharaj

Ruth Weiss

Andre Zaaimann

B. List of contacted persons

Thabo Mbeki

Moeletsi Mbeki

Hugh Lewin

Hubertus von Welck

Allister Sparks

Johann Kinghorn

Jaques du Plessis

Stephan Klaus Ohme

Derek Hanekom

Pallo Jordan

Vally Moosa

Jeannette Groenewald

Albie Sachs

Alex Boraine

Sampie Terblanche

Musibude Mangena

Peta Thornicroft

Freiherr von Ropp

Gerhart Raichle

Francis Antonie

Tanja Shanker

Dennis Goldberg

Khwezi Kadalie

C. Questions to anti-apartheid participants on ZISA

Name and position of interviewed person:

I. Before the meetings

1. Who invited you to attend a meeting or meetings in Harare?
2. Who informed you about the topics?
3. Of which organisations were you a member at the time?
4. Who proposed the meeting as well as subject matter for discussion and worked out the agenda?
5. Which meeting(s) did you attend?
6. Did you fully approve of a negotiated settlement before the meeting?

II. At the meetings

7. What did you expect from ZISA's coordinators?
8. Who was chairing the meeting?
9. What did you expect from the meeting?
10. Were there taboo-topics?
11. Was there any follow up with the conclusion?

III. Outcome of the meetings:

12. Did the meeting make you realise what the effect of a successful outcome of negotiations would mean for your party and yourself?
13. Did you find any common ground with the opposing side?
14. Did you discuss pre-conditions to negotiations?
15. Did your experience affect your friends and comrades?

16. Did you subsequently discuss your experiences with your party officials?

17. Did any of the views expressed serve as input into the subsequent official talks?

IV. Personal Reflections

With hindsight, can you evaluate the meeting(s) as follows:

18. Did these change your perception of the opposing party or individuals?

19. Did you develop any kind of relationship with any individual?

20. Did the meeting reduce any fears you may have had previously?

21. Did you think that stumbling blocks could be removed to enable negotiations to proceed?

22. Did any of the issues discussed form an input subsequently in talks about talks, negotiations or legislation? If so, in which way?

23. Were you interested in Zimbabwe as a newly independent state?

24. If the ZISA-meetings would not have taken place, would that have effected the negotiating process?

25. Looking back: Would you think that other conflict resolution processes could benefit from similar approaches?

26. Would you be interested to discussing your views with other professionals in civil peace work?

D. Questions to white South African participants

Name and position of interviewed person:

I. Before the meeting:

1. Who invited you to participate in meetings in Harare organised by ZISA?
2. Did you have a vision of the outcome?
3. Who proposed the meeting as well as subject matter for discussion and worked out the agenda?
4. At which meeting(s) did you participate?

II: At the meeting:

5. Were there any topics left out? Were there any taboos?
6. What did you expect from ZISA's coordinators?

III. Outcome of the meeting

7. What was the outcome of the meetings?
8. Was it followed up?
9. In which way?

IV: Personal Reflections:

With hindsight, can you evaluate the meeting (s) as follows:

11. Did these change your perception of the opposing party or individuals?
12. Did you develop any kind of relationship with any individual?
13. Did the meeting reduce any fears you may have had previously?
14. Did the meeting make you realise what the effect of a successful outcome of negotiations would mean for South Africa in general and yourself in particular?

15. Did you find any common ground with the opposing side?
16. Did you discuss pre-conditions to negotiations?
17. Did you think that stumbling blocks could be removed to enable negotiations to proceed?
18. Did your experience affect public opinion in South Africa?
19. Did you subsequently discuss your experiences with Pretoria officials?
20. Did any of the views expressed serve as input into the subsequent official talks?
21. Were you aware of other initiatives of talks for instance at Mells Park?
22. With hindsight, do you think the meetings contributed to the transformation?
23. Were you interested in Zimbabwe as a newly independent state?
24. Are you interested to discuss your experience with other experts on civil peace programmes?