

“verantwoordelikheid dra en sy is so standvastig, moedig en vol geloof ...”. Anna beklemtoon self ook in die “Ter inleiding” hul moeder se rol in hul lewens tydens die oorlog.

Nêrens word daar regtig melding gemaak en verwys na die rol wat godsdiens in Anna se dagboek gespeel het nie, terwyl daar talle verwysings daarna is: “Moeder sê ons kan veel vir ons land en volk doen met gebede ...” (p. 50); “... moeder het ons wakker gemaak en so hartstogtelik gebid...” (p. 89); “... ons bid elke dag ...” (p. 90); “Ons ouers is vir ons ‘n ware voorbeeld ... hulle wankel nie in hul geloof nie en volhard in hulle vertroue in die goedheid van God” (p. 93). Anna se geloofsworsteling met Japie se dood en teen die einde van die oorlog met die verlies aan vryheid soos verwoord op p. 145, beklemtoon weer die prominente rol wat godsdiens in Anna se lewe en in die Barry-familie gespeel het.

Ten spyte hiervan, lê die waarde van die dagboek in die weergee van ‘n familie-verhaal wat meer as net Anna Barry en haar familie se gebeure, persepsies en emosies tydens en na die oorlog deel. Dit is ‘n uitsonderlike historiese introspektiewe egodokument oor die verhaal van ‘n oorlog wat wýd gestrek het, velerlei mense en gebeure ingesluit het en sou oorloop in ‘n nuwe, meer ingewikkelde ruimte en tydsges wat die kompleksiteit van die destydse (en die huidige) Suid-Afrikaanse konteks belig.

*All the way to an Independent Namibia*

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**Dirk Mudge**

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Dirk Mudge’s autobiography traverses the rugged political landscape of South West African/Namibian politics from the period of South African occupation until the country’s independence in 1990 and beyond. This book reflects the long and turbulent career of a man who was regarded as a controversial key player in Namibia’s advance towards national independence. This book redraws his journey from being a member of the Namibian National Party to the

Turnhalle Conference, and then to becoming the founder of the Republican Party and the chairman of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA).

It may be doubted whether this book will change prevailing perceptions of the man, which have been oscillating between the image of a “puppet” of apartheid South Africa who prolonged Namibia’s painful independence process on the one hand and of a staunch fighter for a genuine democratic Namibia on the other. This book cannot entirely resolve these contradictory notions, partly because of the twists and turns in Namibian history but also because of Mudge’s apparent ambiguity regarding his own stance towards the complexities of race relations in a country that was in the grip of the segregationist South African state for decades. His account routinely blames SWAPO combatants as “terrorists” during the liberation struggle but, as if in an unguarded moment, the more appreciative term of “freedom fighters” seems to have slipped in at least once without any sense of irony (p. 186).

In a similar vein, Mudge does not hide his initial sympathy for the grand plan of Verwoerd’s apartheid (pp. 83-94), but then frequently asserts his growing discomfort with the everyday social humiliations that petty apartheid caused to black Namibians (pp. 169-170). His aversion to white colleagues, who refused to share as much as a cool drink with black Namibians and whose racism was dressed up in pseudo-philosophical ruminations about the perils of “secularism”, sounds sincere. Deep-seated stereotypes occasionally seem to shine through, however, such as Mudge’s claim that “segregation among people based on their population group is acceptable”, presumably as long as it can be represented as a voluntary process based on cultural differences and not on top-down racist discrimination (p. 182). He repeatedly expresses his appreciation of the South African military for protecting Namibians because, as he explains, “we lived on the battlefield and were soft targets for terrorists” (p. 20, see also pp. 227, 252). This sentiment of gratitude will not be shared by all black Namibians. Most surprising is his assertion that he heard about South African military operations in Angola only after independence (p. 360). Such comments are, however, useful reminders of the heated arguments not only between white and black Namibians but also within the white community, which became increasingly aware of their precarious situation against the background of rising internal resistance and international pressure on South Africa from the 1960s. Mudge provides many anecdotes on the contempt and even hatred that he often encountered among his white compatriots who viewed him as a traitor of the doctrine of white superiority and privilege.

The book is most convincing when the author describes his emotional ties with his country, and many readers will be prepared to pay Mudge their respect for his tenacity in standing up for his political convictions. His stubbornness also extended to his dealings with the members of the South African Government. Mudge describes his relations with Vorster as relatively cordial, but him and Pik Botha did not see eye to eye. PW Botha also receives some acidic comments for using Namibia as a testing ground for his own ill-fated experiments with constitutional models in South Africa (p. 380).

Although Mudge never expresses any sympathy for the motivations of those Namibians who looked up to SWAPO and their leader, Sam Nujoma, for releasing them out of South Africa's clutches – he maintains that he was on a SWAPO hit list – he showed himself to be pragmatic about the future of an independent Namibia. He denies what some observers at the time feared, i.e. that the DTA was planning for unilateral independence in the style of Rhodesia, but this comment, too, is not presented without some ambiguity since he indicates that some DTA members may actually have contemplated such a move (p. 318).

A tighter editing process may have improved the chances of the author to present his side of the story to the readers. The English translation from the original Afrikaans is occasionally clumsy. The book also could have benefitted from cutting down on the many detailed accounts of meetings, gatherings, conferences, and speeches. A very long chapter on the debates about the writing of the Namibian constitution provides interesting glimpses into the process, but it does not encourage the engagement with a text that is very dense and privileges exhaustive thoroughness to the disadvantage of readability.

All politicians may be expected to represent their activities as being driven by honourable intentions, which should not discharge the readers from the obligation to engage in a critical inquiry. Mudge is no exception. Whether one sees Mudge's political pragmatism as having gained momentum only with the impending end of the Cold War or whether one views his politics as being shaped by an unbending insistence on democratic principle, he undeniably played an important part in Namibia's road to democracy. Moreover, Namibia's relatively peaceful transition to a constitutional democracy in 1990 also helped to soothe anxieties among whites south of the Orange River, and it therefore encouraged the negotiated transformation of the apartheid state into a democratic South Africa four years later.