

## Redaksioneel

### Suid-Afrikaanse historici en kontinentale kontak

Sedert die negentigerjare van die twintigste eeu het veral Afrikaanssprekende Suid-Afrikaanse historici 'n besondere bewuswordingsproses ondergaan. Vir die eerste keer in ruim drie dekades was dit moontlik om kommunikasie te bewerkstellig met vakgenote in alle wêrelddele. Die era van politieke, ekonomiese en sosiale isolasie het plaaslik sy merk gelaat. Dit was en is steeds moeilik om uit die greep van 'n argaïese beskouing van die intellektuele bindinge met die Europese kontinent te kom. Daar is bemoedigende tekens dat ons tans vooruitgang maak. Die proses het nog nie heeltemal 'n vlak van vernuwende sintese bereik nie. Die verwagting is dat dit weldra sal kom.

In hierdie uitgawe van *Historia* is verskyn twee bydraes van vooraanstaande Europese geskiedsfilosowe. Proff. Jörn Rüsen, van Duitsland, en Frank Ankersmit van Nederland, het vroeër vanjaar Suid-Afrika besoek en met vakgenote aan verskeie universiteite gesprek gevoer. Hulle het ook die tweejaarlikse konferensie van die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika in Augustus toegesprek.

Hulle bydraes tot filosofiese denke oor die dissipline van geskiedenis sal in die komende maande en jare uitkristalliseer in 'n intellektuele gemeenskap wat steeds sterk aansluiting by die kontinentale tradisie van geskiedenis vind.

Kommunikasie met Europa het ook 'n interaktiewe fase betree. In Julie vanjaar het Nederlandse en Suid-Afrikaanse historici reeds 'n tweede gesamentlike konferensie (sedert 1997) in Wassenaar, Nederland, gehou. Die skakeling het 'n dinamiese effek gehad waarvan die resultate merkbaar is in die verwerkte konferensie voordragte wat in hierdie en die volgende uitgawe van *Historia* gepubliseer sal word. Trouens prof. Gerrit Schutte, 'n gerespekteerde Nederlandse historikus, wat oor 'n tydperk van baie jare die statuus van 'n hegte vriend van Suid-Afrikaanse vakgenote gekry het, het as mede-redakteur vir die afdeling oor die konferensie-artikels opgetree.

Dit is so dat die Anglo-Amerikaanse historiografiese tradisie tans die belangrikste invloed op geskiedenisdenke wêreldwyd uitoefen. Daarmee is min fout te vind as gelet word op die uitstaande resultate wat gelewer word. Verally op die terrein van die geskiedenis van Afrika is hierdie invloed van groot waarde. Dit is egter ook noodsaaklik vir Afrika-historiografie om by die fontein van kennis in Europa die dors na wysheid te stil. Wie weet? Miskien kan die veelkantige simbiotiese interaksie 'n nuwe en innoverende effek op die inheemse produksie van historiese kennis uitoefen.

## Die konsolidering van institusionele verbinteniss

By geleentheid van die konferensie van die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika is indringend gesprek gevoer oor die noodsaaklikheid vir Suid-Afrikaanse historici om op 'n meer geïntegreerde manier saam te werk. Die motivering is, min of meer, as volg: Die geledere van akademiese historici is, as gevolg van die huidige onderwys hervorminge, aansienlik uitgedun. Minder studente studeer geskiedenis aan Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite as gevolg van nuwe prioriteite wat in die primêre en sekondêre onderwys gestel is. Die gevoel bestaan ook dat die ideologiese verdeeldheid wat in die verlede bestaan het, sedert 1994 in relevansie afgeneem het. Daar moet op 'n meer konstruktiewe manier gesoek word na basiese vlakke van intellektuele kommunikasie om aan geskiedenis as geïntegreerde akademiese dissipline sin te gee. Die duplisering van bepaalde professionele dienste aan historici is 'n duur onderneming wat nouliks tot meer doeltreffendheid aanleiding gee.

Op bestuursvlak word indringende samesprekinge tans deur die Suid-Afrikaanse Historiese Vereniging en die Historiese Genootskap gevoer. Ons vertrou dat die beraadslaginge in die afsienbare toekoms tot die voordeel van geskiedenis op alle vlakke in die samelewing, asook die land en sy mense sal strek.

## Editorial

### South African historians and continental contact

Since the nineties of the twentieth century especially Afrikaans speaking South African historians experiences an exceptional process of consciousness. For the first time in more than three decades was it possible to establish contact with subject colleagues in all parts of the world. The era of political, economic and social isolation left its mark. It was and is still difficult to move beyond an archaic appraisal of cherished intellectual bonds with the European continent. There are promising signs that we are making progress. The process has however not yet reached a level of innovative synthesis. It is anticipated this will soon follow.

In this edition of *Historia* there are two contributions of leading European philosophers of history. Proff. Jörn Rüsen of Germany, and Frank Ankersmit of the Netherlands visited South Africa earlier this year and held discussions with their South African counterparts at various universities. They also addressed the biennial conference of the Historical Association of South Africa in August.

Their contributions to philosophical thought on history will crystallise in the coming months and years within the confines of an academic community, which still finds a strong, need for association with the continental tradition of the historical discipline.

Communication with Europe has also entered an interactive phase. In July this year the second conference (since 1997) took place between Dutch and South African historians at Wassenaar in the Netherlands. The ability to communicate has had a dynamic effect. The result is evident from the conference papers, which have been adjusted to be published in the form of articles in the current and a future edition of *Historia*. In fact, Prof. Gerrit Schutte, a respected Dutch historian, who has grown in stature over many years as a close friend of his South African colleagues, acted as co-editor for the section dealing with the conference articles.

It is so that the Anglo-American historiographical tradition currently asserts the most influence worldwide. It is good, in view of the outstanding results achieved. Especially in the field of the history of Africa this influence is of great value. It is however also essential for African historiographers to satisfy their thirst for wisdom at the European fountains of knowledge. Who knows? Maybe the multi-sided symbiotic interaction might just have a new and innovative effect on the indigenous production of historical knowledge.

## The consolidation of institutional ties

At the conference of the Historical Association of South Africa intense deliberations took place in respect of the need for South African historians to work together in a more integrated manner. The motivation is more or less as follows: The fraternity of academic historians has been thinned out considerably, as a result of the current educational reforms. Fewer students pursue historical studies at South African universities as a result of the new priorities that have been formulated for primary and secondary education. There is also a feeling that the ideological division of the past, has declined in relevance since 1994. A more constructive search should be conducted to find basic levels of intellectual communication for giving meaning to history as an integrated academic discipline. The duplication of professional services to historians is an expensive undertaking that hardly contributes to efficiency.

At management level negotiations are currently taking place between the South African Historical Society and the Historical Association. We trust the deliberations would, in the future work to the benefit of history at all levels in society, as well as the country and its people.