

The Unveiling of a Memorial

By Gene Friedmann



Ambassador Edward J. Perkins, left, and Public Affairs Counselor Gene Friedmann congratulate one another on the successful dedication of the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial.

In the heart of Pretoria is a city block of wilderness which is the site of the new American Embassy in South Africa. While ground has not been broken yet officially, January 1989 marked the site dedication with a very special event on that terrain.

On the 16th of the month—the Martin Luther King Federal Holiday on the American calendar—people in the United States and throughout the world remembered Martin Luther King and the principles for which he stood. Probably no ceremony was more moving—or more pointed—than the unveiling of a bust of King on the embassy site in Pretoria. That memorial represented the dedication of the U.S. Mission to the goals that King espoused in the hope that those same ideals might prevail in the troubled land of South Africa.

For weeks, mission teams had worked to organize a program that would say something of importance to all South Africans.

The ceremony was a moving one, focusing on the bust of King, which brought all of the elements together. Executed by an American sculptor from Philadelphia, the bust conveyed the dignity and universality of King—he looked at home.

To the audience of black and white South Africans, it was a day of remembrance and reverie, as they were transported to King's homeland, America, and to another city across an ocean—Birmingham, Ala. Ambassador Edward J. Perkins read from

King's masterly letter written from that city's jail in 1963.

I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the Gospel of freedom beyond my home town . . . Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states . . . Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Listeners in South Africa, hearing King's words over 25 years later, were both dismayed and encouraged by the parallels to the United States in the throes of its civil rights movement. There was cause for despair in the gap—and differences—between the two societies but also a challenge to hope, as America in the end heeded King's summons to change. Probably no members of the audience weighed the words more carefully than a group of black community leaders, recently acquitted of the charge of treason.

CAPTURING THE MESSAGE

One who finds hope in King's message is Enos Mabuza—chief minister of the non-independent homeland of KaNgwane and guest speaker at the memorial. Mabuza called for non-violent unity in the face of apartheid. His call was an informed one. As he said in drawing comparison to the struggle that King led: "In our own country, the same bottom line of separateness, bolstered by the Race Classification and Group Areas Acts, prevails."

Non-violent opposition to apartheid has been the rule rather than the exception in South Africa. But unlike their American counterparts, Mabuza made clear, "The defendants of black rights in South Africa could not fall back on a constitution which theoretically, if not actually, guaranteed individual human rights. Instead, they were tried for treason and harassed as enemies of the state and all it stood for, and incarcerated or driven into exile. There was no white political leadership . . . which could parallel the role which the Kennedy brothers played at a critical juncture of the civil rights movement."

David Motlatla, choirmaster of the choral group from the black township of Mamelodi which performed, was another one to capture King's spirit and that of the American civil rights era. When the statue was unveiled by the ambassador and the sculp-

tor, the choir sang "We Shall Overcome" and linked crossed arms—with Americans in the audience following their example. Original compositions in Sotho and Zulu told of King's being "with us" in South Africa—"now he belongs to the ages."

ORIGINS OF MEMORIAL

The seed of the event which culminated on Jan. 16 had been planted in Harare a year before. I had been mulling over the idea of a King memorial in Pretoria, as a sign of the United States' special commitment to the promotion of social and political change there. At a conference in the Zimbabwean capital, I broached the subject to Warren Obluck, serving in USIA's Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs (E Bureau) in Washington.

Obluck's colleagues in the E Bureau, led by Division for the Study of the U.S. Chief Barry Ballow, quickly went to work and identified a sculpture by Zenos Frudakis. The sculptor had been one of three finalists, selected by the National Endowment for the Arts, to create a bust of King for the U.S. Capitol. Steeping himself in King's words and images, Frudakis had worked on the piece for a year—rare video footage running in his studio as his hands molded clay and ideas. When the U.S. Embassy decided to purchase the bust, Frudakis reworked the cast again, with South Africa in mind. The result is a life-size portrait in bronze which somehow combines vitality and force with tranquility and repose.

"It is important to see that there are times when a man-made law is out of harmony with the moral law of the universe." These are the words inscribed on the plaque underneath the bust that will welcome guests to the present embassy building while construction begins on the new one. The words and image will be a reminder to South Africans and to Americans who come and go that a great American and a great man of the world remains an inspiration. When films of King's life are shown in black townships, audiences recite the words of the

sermons and speeches along with the speaker.

As Ambassador Perkins reminded the audience in Pretoria on Jan. 16, the work which King espoused can never be finished anywhere in the world. But his ideas can triumph—in South Africa as in the United States. □

Gene Friedmann is public affairs counselor in South Africa.



Choirmaster David Motlatla directs the St. Peter Claver Choral Group in a moving rendition of "We Shall Overcome" at the dedication of the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial in Pretoria, South Africa.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorialized Worldwide Via USIA TV

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was memorialized the weeks of Jan. 9 and Jan. 16 for audiences worldwide via USIA TV.

Sen. Cleo Fields, Louisiana State Legislature, and Taylor Branch, author of "Parting the Waters: America During the King Years, 1954-63," paid tribute to the human rights activist by participating in live satellite TelePress conferences with dignitaries and journalists in seven countries throughout Africa, Europe, and the Near East. Fields is the youngest senator in the history of the United States.

In addition to the "Dialogues," a two-part series entitled "Martin Luther King: The Making of a Holiday," was transmitted to USIA posts and U.S. embassies in Africa, East Asia, and the Near East. The series highlights the historical achievements of King, emphasizing his influence on Americans and the events which led to a national holiday on his birthday. □

Covering an Election Campaign For International Audiences

By Beverly K. Eakman

Have you ever wondered how VOA election coverage differs from election coverage of commercial American media like ABC or CBS, and from other Western international broadcasters such as BBC or Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty?

I put the question to several VOA journalists and correspondents, asking them specifically: What did VOA's audiences find the most fascinating — and the most difficult to understand — about the American election process? What concepts were most difficult to get across to foreign audiences?

HOW COVERAGE DIFFERS

Alex Belida, News Division coordinator for campaign coverage and senior political correspondent, said that VOA must provide the same kind of coverage America's domestic media offer, but with more explanation to make the event understandable to the Voice of America's vast and varied for-

eign audience.

That means preparing stories that spell out the details of a unique U.S. political process leading to the selection of a new president and Congress, and state and local elections. Expected material such as profiles of the various contenders for the White House must be included, of course. But features giving the flavor of the campaign — particularly the day-to-day debate on the issues and information dealing with public preferences among the candidates and public perceptions about the campaign — also are important.

Linda McKeever, chief of VOA's Morning Programs, said, "VOA is much more thorough, and we generalize less."

"We started with the very first primary — even long before. We covered almost every stump speech, even those with a particular foreign policy angle which might not be considered 'news' to our own commercial media. Then we assigned reporters to follow all the candidates, and we monitored