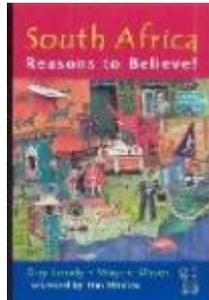


## South Africa:

### Reasons to Believe!

*By Guy Lundy and Wayne Visser (Aardvark Press, 2003)*



### ~ 1 RAINBOWS AND STORM CLOUDS ~

#### **Weathering the storms of change**

There are many words to describe South Africa's incredible journey through recent history. 'Dull' is certainly not one of them; neither is 'boring' or 'predictable'. Rather, words like 'epic' and 'revolutionary' come to mind. Much like those brave and sometimes arrogant navigators and explorers of the new world, we South Africans are a travel-hardened and weather-beaten bunch, with many rough storms and cruel twists of fate behind our back. Amazingly, we have endured. We are survivors. And we should be immensely proud. We should constantly remind ourselves how tough we really are; how, despite all the trials and tribulations we have faced, we have, repeatedly, overcome.

Of course, it's easy to be philosophical during the good times, when the sun is shining brightly and the waters are calm and sparkling. It's far more difficult when the wind is howling and the ship's mast is creaking, when the waves are crashing over the bough and the senses are numb from the lashing rain. And yet, this is exactly what the last few decades in South Africa have felt like – a relentless cycle of storms and rainbows. Like a sailing ship on the high seas, we have ridden out deep, dark troughs of fear and intimidation to ride high on the crest of the waves of liberating change, only to be plunged back into the torrid swells again. It has been a rough ride, by anyone's reckoning, and the journey is not yet at its end.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that fear and uncertainty still hangs like a dark cloud over our national psyche. We want to start this book by acknowledging the bad-weather pessimism that many people feel in our country today. But we also want to place it into perspective. In this first chapter, as we briefly recall some of the highs and lows of our roller coaster ride of recent years, we take heart from how far we have come in such a short time. After all, in the broad sweep of history, our achievements are nothing short of amazing. We remind ourselves how good we are at surviving and thriving, despite the odds. We are proof that the sun always does come out after the storm. We show that even the darkest clouds on our horizon have a silver lining. And, for good measure, we buff up those breathtaking colours of the rainbow that this nation has become.

### ***Dark and gloomy days (1985 to 1988)***

Let's face it; the clouds had been building up steadily in the distance for some time before the storm eventually broke. The gold boom that propped up our economy at the height of the apartheid era was not at the end of a rainbow after all. But its seductive lustre conveniently blinded the ruling nationalist government and its complicit white electorate to the shameful evil of the racism it had institutionalised.

The rest of the world saw things much more clearly; quite simply that South Africa was rushing headlong into a bloody civil war. The way we look at Israel and shake our heads today is the same way that the majority of the international community looked at us then, with an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and desperation. Do you remember those dark days, in 1985, when our then president, PW Botha (alias 'Die Groot Krokodil'), licked his lips, wagged his finger and made that disastrous Rubicon speech, in which he dismissed the world's criticism with a pat on his own back and a warning that they must "not push us too far".

Gloomy days indeed, as we continued to deny the majority of the population the basic right to vote and the nation suffocated in the icy grip of a political state of emergency and the iron fist of outrageous censorship laws. As international isolation descended like a shroud over South Africa in the late 1980s, multinationals packed up and left, foreign direct investment dried up, the cultural boycott cut us off from the world stage of sports and arts and anti-apartheid demonstrations gained momentum, both inside the country and abroad. Detention without trial, military conscription, flying bricks, flaming 'necklaces', tear-gas police assaults, crippling labour strikes – the ghostly memories of that period of spiralling anarchy still have the power to haunt.

By the time Anglo American business leader, Clem Sunter, crystallised South Africa's future into 'high road' and 'low road' scenarios, few believed that the high road was anything more than a wishful fantasy. But we stood fast through the mayhem. We survived and lived to tell the tale.

### ***Rays of hope (1989 to 1990)***

We can be eternally grateful that the millennium came ten years early. Perhaps the dramatic upheaval and sweeping changes in the world in late 1989 – the fall of communism as the USSR broke up and the Berlin Wall came crashing down – served as the revelatory Damascus experience that ultimately saved South Africa from itself. As FW De Klerk ousted the ailing PW as president, there was a miraculous break in the clouds and almost blinding rays of hope began to shine. The ANC and other freedom-fighting organisations were unbanned, apartheid laws were abolished and political prisoners were freed, including the soon-to-be immortalised icon of the struggle, Nelson Mandela. Who can forget his long walk to freedom, culminating in his release from Victor Verster Prison – free at last, after 26 years!

Millions of South Africans and anti-apartheid activists from around the world rejoiced; many danced in the streets. Promises of re-investment started to flood in. There was an excitement in the air, a nervous energy throughout the land. Most of us felt a bewildering mixture of emotions – we were amazed and happy and cautious and uncertain all at the same time. But all in all, whatever our past prejudices, in the heart and soul of our being, we knew that these were good times. For the first time, it really looked like we might rescue ourselves from the gaping jaws of death into which we had been staring for so long as a country. Perhaps we might even make the transition relatively peacefully and safely. The 'high road scenario' suddenly started looking not only do-able, but desirable as well.

Finally, after so many years of fighting and skulking and apologizing and campaigning, we were all openly proud to be South African – what a feeling!

### ***Storms of chaos (1991-1993)***

The bubble soon burst. The South Africa that Mandela and his comrades returned to from incarceration and exile was not a peaceful one. After decades of political skulduggery, indoctrination and violence, the divisions and mistrust between the people of our country were massive. The gaps between black aspirations and white fears were all too obvious. Not surprisingly, suspicion was the order of the day. And even as the courage and wisdom of our political leaders – FW and Mandela, Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer – steadily nudged us towards a negotiated settlement, our society was being torn apart at the seams.

Political jostling and public mud-slinging between the parties involved in the 'Codesa' talks spilled over into violence between the Inkatha Freedom Party and ANC members in Natal. Added to this explosive cocktail was the mysterious 'third force' (later linked to conservative right-wing groups) that aimed to wreak general havoc and set the black political groups against one another. And as we continued unabated towards a democratic future, the desperation of the old guard increased. ANC leader, Chris Hani, was brutally assassinated and the country teetered on the brink of civil war again. There was an abortive invasion of Bophututswana by members of the neo-nazi AWB group, some of whom were shot without mercy in front of live television cameras.

As we were tossed and bruised in the violent storms of change, chaos alone seemed to rule supreme. Many felt like they had been painfully and unceremoniously dumped from the dizzy heights of their initial wave of hope, especially the insecure white population. As fears of 'another Zimbabwe' began to mount, so too did the white tide of mass emigrations, and the term 'brain drain' became a part of our everyday vocabulary. Most of those who took such rapid flight from our newly liberated shores proceeded to justify their choice by spreading disaster scenarios about the future of South Africa to all who would listen – and many did. Many still do. But the vast majority of South Africans gritted their teeth and stuck it out. We endured, again.

### ***The sun comes out (1994-1996)***

Fortune favours the brave. And so it was with our eventual transition to democracy. The predictions of doom and destruction never materialized and April 1994 came knocking. We don't deny that those were tense times, as bombs exploded in a last-ditch effort to avoid the inevitable, and the paranoid minority barricaded their houses and stocked up on tinned foods. But on the day itself – election day – in peaceful queues that snaked for miles around the country, an overwhelming feeling of relief and happiness, and pride in being South African, returned with a vengeance. How far removed this was from the holocaust that had been predicted by the eternal pessimists.

The 'rainbow nation', coined by then-Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was once again a fitting symbol for our political miracle and the promise of a brighter future. In fact, in those few years that followed, South Africa didn't seem to be able to do anything wrong. In 1995, the country held its breath as Joel Stransky kicked the drop goal that took us to glory as Rugby World Cup champions, and tears of pride flowed as Mandela donned a number 6 Springbok rugby jersey in a victory salute to the nation. We came desperately close in the Cricket World Cup that year too, as we blamed the rain in Australia for robbing us of our place in the final. Then we won the Soccer African Cup of Nations, which bode well for the next Soccer World Cup. Success breeds confidence, so we even decided to bid to host the

2004 Olympic Games in Cape Town. For a sports mad nation, these were extremely powerful events. We were flying again.

Off the sports field, our charismatic political and sports leaders had earned the respect of the world and the passionate support of our nation. Nelson Mandela, FW de Klerk, Desmond Tutu, Tokyo Sexwale, Francois Pienaar, Hansie Cronje – here were people who couldn't help but buoy our spirits and make us feel that it was all going to be okay. International recognition followed and national pride swelled when Mandela and De Klerk jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize. People overcame the initial shock to the senses of our colourful new flag and began to love it. We hadn't forgotten the enormous problems that South Africa still faced as a country – the poverty, unemployment, lack of housing, crime, HIV/AIDS and countless other challenges – but we were happy to ignore them for the time being, while we basked in the sun of our own brilliance.

### ***The rainbow fades (1997 to 2000)***

You would think we would learn from our previous experience of travelling through the peaks and valleys, but many were nevertheless shocked when it became clear that the massive social and economic problems were not simply going to be wished away. So we hit the ground with a hard bump (again) as the old realities, as well as some new ones, made their presence felt in many highly-publicised and confidence-crushing ways.

On the sporting front, which South Africans unwisely seem to take as a barometer for 'life, the universe and everything', things seemed to get progressively worse. We lost our bids to host the Olympic Games and Soccer World Cup, while our rugby winning streak came to an abrupt end and former-hero captain, Francois Pienaar, was given the boot. Everyone was devastated when national cricket captain, Hansie Cronje, disgraced the country with his cricket match-fixing scandal, and we got thoroughly beaten at the Soccer World Cup in France (our ability to score own-goals didn't help our cause).

On the political front, Nelson Mandela's retirement had the financial markets in jitters, despite the ample capability and intellectual prowess of his successor, Thabo Mbeki. The 'Madiba magic' was always going to be a tough act to follow, but Mbeki's counterproductive stance on such issues as HIV/AIDS and Zimbabwe did little to endear him to the media or the masses. Other highly respected and charismatic political leaders, such as Tokyo Sexwale and Cyril Ramaphosa, threw in the political towel and headed off to economically empower themselves in the boardrooms of big-business. And Winnie Madikizela-Mandela continued to embarrass and irritate many with her scandalous antics.

The dent in our national ego was deepened by a string of high profile fraud and corruption incidents during the nineties, which included ANC stalwart and clergyman Alan Boesak's conviction for embezzling anti-apartheid donations, Tony Yengeni's alleged Mercedes 4x4 bribe acceptance in a R43 billion arms deal, and the collapse of the Health & Racquet Club through directors' misappropriating funds. It didn't help that the primary listings of the country's biggest businesses overseas, such as Anglo American, South African Breweries, Old Mutual and Dimension Data, were interpreted by many as a vote of no confidence in the South African economy. Nor that the Rand plummeted against other major currencies in the 1999 developing country market crisis. National depression almost visibly set in as the Reserve Bank's attempts to prop up the Rand by raising interest rates to around 24 percent failed to protect the currency from further speculative attack and culminated in 2001 lows of R13.85 to the Dollar.

### **Dinner-talk blues**

As a matter of fact, in many ways, the stormy ride we have just recounted are not dramatically different from the experiences of countless other developing countries, but they were enough to keep the South African public and media moping in the gloomy

trenches of a nationwide depression. In fact, it was during this period that we believe pessimism started to become something of a national pastime. Each successive 'war story' recounted at dinner parties seemingly tried to top its predecessor by being 'worse than ...'.

### ***The path of least resistance***

Why is this? Are there some underlying reasons for our current malaise of pessimism? Of course, we all know, it is easier to criticise than to be constructive, to complain rather than compliment and to break down rather than build up. So, in that sense, being negative is the path of least resistance. It takes no imagination or effort to run down the country. It's the easiest thing in the world, especially when the media is pumping out so much negativity.

Another factor is that the majority of people hate change. Tests by American psychologists, Holmes and Rahe, show that the most stressful events in life are virtually all related in some way to change – things like divorce, retrenchment, retirement, changes in finances, new work, and even taking a vacation. They point out that exposure to high levels of stress over a period of time can lead to anxiety, depression and pessimism. It's not difficult to spot the link to our South African condition, where radical change has been the rule rather than the exception over the past ten years or more.

Likewise, people fear the unknown. Although this is a survival mechanism that forces us to be cautious in the face of potential danger, it can also work against us, when negative projections of the future become self-fulfilling prophecies. The lack of predictability, or a positive direction, in South Africa is no doubt one of the drivers of the pessimism that exists today. People have made their own assumptions to fill the gap in their knowledge, backing it up with what they are told by others and what they see in the media. The overwhelming negativity of that information in turn only fuels their fears.

Another dimension of coping with 'unknowns' is the fact that apartheid was very effective in keeping blacks and whites apart in South Africa. And ignorance about each other's cultures and lifestyles has entrenched our false fears. This persists even today. After all, how many white people go to a black friend's home for a party, and vice versa? To illustrate the point further, Muzi Kuzwayo's book *Marketing Through Mud and Dust* aims to help white business executives better understand the black people to whom they are trying (often unsuccessfully) to market their products and services.

The indoctrination and prejudices that we have been subjected to throughout our lives in South Africa are very difficult to shake off, especially for those of us who never went to multiracial schools or who were subject to daily brainwashing during compulsory military service. This helps to explain, but not excuse, many white South African's lack of belief in the competence of fellow black South Africans. In the face of empowerment and affirmative action, many whites also feel that they have been unfairly pushed aside; hence, they tend to nurse their own ego by finding fault with their 'affirmative replacements'.

Another source of our negativity is our insistence on comparing ourselves to the UK, Europe or the USA. Although we never have been a first world country, we constantly use them as our benchmark. We have so much more in common with our real competitors on the international playing field, such as Brazil, Mexico, India, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, Egypt or Morocco. Unrealistic comparisons with highly industrialised nations only serve to exacerbate our pessimism when we can't live up to the inappropriate expectations that this creates.

So while we are poised at the crest of a wave, with everything in place to surf the transformation needed to create a fantastic future, instead we are talking ourselves down

into a stormy trough again. We shake our heads as we read the next depressing front page news story and talk about it constantly with our friends at braais and dinner parties, reinforcing each others' feelings of doom and gloom. We have noticed that the country's dinner-talk blues are consistently dominated by a handful of issues, cited as reasons why some people do not believe in South Africa and its future. These are crime and corruption, HIV/AIDS, Zimbabwe, and the Rand. So, we'd like to tackle these head-on, right here, upfront in the book. While we don't want to downplay their seriousness as problems, we do also want point out their silver lining.

### ***Turning the tide on crime***

Crime and corruption, at any level, is unacceptable. Full stop! And in South Africa, the levels are worryingly high; certainly, in general, higher than in most first world countries. Rape and child abuse, in particular, as well as other violent crimes, are shockingly prevalent. Our police have traditionally been poorly trained and underpaid. Our courts are bogged down and overloaded. Our jails are overcrowded and have become universities of crime, sometimes exacerbated by corrupt officials. We don't deny these things. And we definitely don't endorse the situation. But we also don't lose our perspective on the issue.

One of the favourite sweeping statements of the pessimists is that South Africa has the highest crime in the world, or that our cities are the murder capitals of the world. This is simply not true. According to the United Nations, Colombia has the highest rate of intentional homicide per 100,000 people, Australia has the highest burglary rate, Spain has the highest robbery rate, and Norway has the highest rate of drug offences. Homerton Hospital in the London district of Hackney treats more gunshot and knife wounds per capita each month than the Chris Hani Baragwanath hospital in Soweto. Almost twice as many cars are stolen in Buenos Aires than in Johannesburg, three times more breaking and entering happens in Dar Es Salaam and twice as much robbery happens in Rio de Janeiro. But debating who is worse is a pointless and unconstructive exercise.

The question is, have our government and other institutions of society recognised the seriousness of crime in South Africa, are they doing something about it, and are they winning the battle? The answer is, in each case, 'yes'. South Africa actually already has quite a high number of police per population. Compare our 1 policeman per 446 people with Denmark's 1 per 1530, the USA's 1 per 1400 and the UK's 1 per 422. In any case, the SAPS plan to up our number to 1 policeman per 389 people by 2006. Furthermore, the government committed R8.4 billion to combating crime in the 2002 budget, a significant increase on previous years. This will go towards providing thousands more better-trained police on the streets and towards solving crimes more effectively and efficiently. In many cases, the tide on crime is already turning. For example between 1994 and 2000, the incidence of murder, attempted murder, arson and motor vehicle theft all decreased, while rape, shoplifting, possession of firearms, and commercial crime all stabilised.

Like many other countries, South Africa has its fair share of white-collar crime as well. But we are not unique in this. Corruption scandals continually rock the political and business establishments the world over. Just think of the collapse of Enron and Worldcom and the almost daily allegations of corruption in the US, UK and Europe, with some scandals reaching as high as the US Vice-President, the UK Secretary of Trade and Industry and the German Chancellor. What's more, South Africa has recognised the problem and is doing something about it, with initiatives ranging from the introduction of tougher legislation on money laundering, proceeds of crime and asset forfeiture, to setting up improved government mechanisms like the National Directorate of Public Prosecutions. We have also committed to investigating areas of special concern, such as the Jali Commission on corruption in the prison system, and created specialist FBI-type fraud detection crack-squads like the Scorpions Unit.

Again, we're not saying that things are yet at an acceptable level, but we are saying that the battle is being fought and there are signs that it is being won. We have no doubt that, in addition to the money and resources being ploughed into fighting crime directly, as the country's efforts at economic and social transformation continue to pay off, this too will also have a positive spin-off effect on crime alleviation.

### ***What's positive about HIV/AIDS?***

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a human catastrophe of monstrous proportions, not just for South Africa, but for the whole world, and especially developing countries. A staggering 5 million people are estimated to be infected with HIV in South Africa, and the Medical Research Council predicts that between 5 million and 7 million people will die of AIDS by 2010, leaving around 2 million AIDS orphans behind. As Clem Sunter's book on the subject concludes, nothing short of a 'total onslaught' by every institution and sphere of society is required to halt the epidemic.

The important thing is not to become paralysed by the predictions of doom and gloom. Iraj Abedian, chief economist at Standard Bank, for instance, is of the opinion that, although the economic impacts of HIV/AIDS on the South African workforce will be significant, they will not result in the 'economic catastrophe' some pessimists are touting. Why? Partly because one of the most affected sectors of the population is currently economically inactive (unemployed). But also, in a more positive light, because the problem has been recognised and action is being taken.

Government, despite having wasted valuable time on esoteric arguments about HIV, has committed to increasing spending five-fold by 2004 – from R350 million in the 2001/2 budget to R1.8 billion in the 2004/5 budget. Most of this increase is expected to go into education and research in order to change people's preventative behaviours and improve treatment options. In civil society, the awareness-raising work of organisations like LoveLife and individuals like actor-comedian Pieter Dirk Uys are making huge inroads into changing sexual behaviour, with evidence of a stabilisation in the HIV infection rate found in public antenatal clinics between 1998 and 2001.

At a corporate level, a positive precedent has already been set by increasing numbers of multinationals. For example, Boehringer-Ingelheim has made an offer to the developing world to supply free Nevirapine for five years to stop mother-to-child HIV transmission. BP, BMW and Anglo American in South Africa and Debswana, the diamond mining giant in Botswana, have all set up HIV treatment programmes which include antiretroviral therapy for their HIV positive employees and some or all of their families.

And then there are the inspiring examples of thousands of brave and compassionate individuals, some of whom we feature in this book, who are dedicated to making a difference on HIV/AIDS, whether it be by educating the youth, supporting those living with HIV, or caring for AIDS orphans.

So while HIV and the deaths caused by AIDS are going to put our country under a great deal of strain both emotionally and economically, we shouldn't assume that the future is hopeless. The fact is that awareness and education can have a dramatic effect in reducing infection rates, treatment can prevent mother-to-child transmission, and drug therapy, albeit still incredibly expensive, can prolong the lives of people living with HIV by decades. So it is a war to be sure, but not one that can't be won.

### ***Zimbabwe, the land of the setting sun***

Robert Mugabe's politics are unacceptable and the impact his policies are having on Zimbabwe are tragic. Like South Africa, Zimbabwe is a country of great promise, with the

potential for being a highly productive agricultural economy and spectacular tourist destination. Especially when one considers that one of the positive outcomes of Mugabe's 20-plus years in power has been to improve general levels of education dramatically across the whole population. Alas, with its dictator-style politics, lack of press freedom, anti-West stance, land-invasions by so-called war veterans and confiscation of white-owned farms by the government, Zimbabwe has been brought to its knees, with inflation in triple-digits, a currency that is hardly worth the paper it is printed on, international sanctions, and the population facing a widespread food crisis.

Zimbabwe's current course is not sustainable. As the pressure mounts, from the international community, from the vast majority of countries in Africa, and from the growing progressive population within the country itself, change will come – we think sooner, rather than later. Mugabe faced his toughest challenge yet from an opposition party in the national election of 2002. And it is a positive sign that it was South Africa's President Mbeki and Nigeria's President Obasanjo who announced the suspension of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth.

Of course, South Africa has borne the brunt of negative perceptions about Zimbabwe, especially by international investors and currency market speculators, who tend to lump the whole region together in their analyses of the prospects for growth and prosperity. Some even go so far as to use Zimbabwe as a proxy scenario for South Africa's likely path of development. Many South Africans make the same grave, misinformed error of judgement. But the fact is that there are fundamental differences between the histories, governments and economies of Zimbabwe and South Africa.

For example, when Zimbabwe changed political hands, the country was nowhere near as economically developed as South Africa is today. Zimbabwe had been torn apart by a bitter civil war, while South Africa changed hands relatively peacefully, after negotiation involving all parties. And rather than ignore or cover up the past, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission helped South Africa to face up to its bitter history and move forward in a positive spirit. The ANC, despite having had an armed wing, has throughout its 90-year existence been primarily a political rather than a military organisation. It has a strong culture of democracy within its own ranks, and a deep commitment to promoting democracy within the country and on the African continent. South Africa's leadership role in the New Partnership for Africa's Development is further proof of this.

On the emotive issue of property rights, any suggestion that white farmers in this country will suffer the same indignities as those in Zimbabwe ignores the South African government's firm stance against land-grabbing and in support of the sanctity of private ownership. South Africa has had a Land Claims Court in place for several years already, and the government is committed to completing the land restitution process by 2005. Added to this is the trend of increasing numbers of South African farmers who are voluntarily helping to empower their workers through shareowner schemes and by donating land and equipment to worker-run co-operatives.

It is also important for everyone, South Africans and foreigners alike, to remember that Zimbabwe is not our only neighbour. If investors want to judge our country by regional performance, they should take cognisance also of the stable democracies and strong economic growth of Botswana, Namibia and Mozambique. Botswana in particular has had one of the highest sustained economic growth rates in the world for more than ten years, in the region of 10 percent per annum. The weight of evidence on the prospects for development in Southern Africa is unquestionably positive.

### ***The up-side of the falling Rand***

When the Rand fell around 37% against the US Dollar during 2001, hitting a low of R13.85 to the Dollar in December, the media went into a feeding frenzy. The issue was seen by many as a national disaster, proof of South Africa's impending economic decline. In the media's sensationalist reporting style, any further weakening was termed a 'collapse', whereas any strengthening in the Rand was referred to as 'gaining some ground'. Indeed, the fluctuations in the exchange rate became something of a barometer of the nation's manic-depressive mood swings.

We concede that any such dramatic change in the one or other aspect of the economic environment of a country is not ideal. It damages business confidence, since stability is a prerequisite for effective forward planning. It also makes overseas travel, for those that can afford it, very expensive. In this particular case, the currency devaluation has been attributed to a mixture of factors, including international instability after September 11th, speculative attack by financial market players, and negative perceptions of developing countries in general and Southern Africa in particular.

However, it is important to put the Rand-slide into perspective. Ours was not the only currency to experience a dramatic drop against the Dollar during 2001 – Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Venezuela, Brazil and other developing countries had a similar experience. As a result there are a lot of these countries that are still relatively affordable for South Africans wishing to travel abroad. Also, the Rand did not go into freefall. In the first months of 2002, it had already recovered over 20% of its value against the Dollar, making it the best performing currency in the world out of 56 currencies tracked by Bloomberg News.

The silver lining surrounding the whole Rand issue is actually an incredibly positive development. While it can and has lead to inflation caused by increased prices of imports such as petrol, food and industrial components, the weak Rand simultaneously makes the country extremely competitive as far as exports and tourism are concerned. Back in November 2001, even before the dramatic fall of the Rand, Tradek economist Mike Schüssler was quoted in Business Day as saying that, on the back of the weak Rand, "South Africa is experiencing a sustained export boom. South Africa's export explosion is bigger than what Japan experienced in the '50s and '60s, and this has been achieved without subsidies. This is a real export boom that would be welcomed as a miracle in other countries." So why aren't we shouting this from the rooftops?

Likewise, during the first two months of 2002, our weak currency was one of the factors that helped to lure more foreign tourists to South Africa than ever before – an increase equivalent to 200 extra jumbo jet loads full compared with the previous year. From Europe alone, the number of tourists increased by 18%. Not surprising when you consider that, in July 2002, Johannesburg was found by a global survey to be the cheapest major city in the world. It all helps.

Rather than spending all our energy getting depressed about our weak Rand, we should be scrambling to take advantage, so that we can fuel an ongoing recovery through increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in our economy. FDI inflows, of course, require not only a weak Rand, but also positive perceptions on the part of the investors. Which brings us back to the main theme of this book. South Africans and friends of South Africa have a huge role to play in helping foreign investors to achieve the necessary levels of optimism. This comes by being constructive about our own future, based on a balanced and factual assessment of our prospects, and communicating that positive attitude to the rest of the world. Some have already given us a head start, as we will show in the next chapter.