

INTRODUCTION

Vista University is proud to publish Volume 2 of the *New dictionary of South African biography (NDSAB)*.

The *NDSAB* dates back to 1968 when the first volume of its predecessor, the *Dictionary of South African biography (DSAB)* was published. Since then South Africa has experienced extraordinary change. The biographical dictionary, too, has turned over many a page. This is an appropriate parallel: South Africa has moved from being restrictive and oppressive to being a truly democratic country. Likewise, the emphasis of the dictionary has shifted from portraying personalities - mainly men - who were prominent in the former white-dominated South Africa, to giving credit to men and women from all sectors of the population who, in their various ways, have contributed to the process of change in the country.

The last volume of the *DSAB*, Volume V, was published by the Human Sciences Research Council in 1987. This was followed in 1995 by Volume 1 of the *NDSAB*. The change of name signified a new approach: While it would complement the former series, the *NDSAB* would strive to correct obvious imbalances. This approach was also followed in compiling Volume 2, which has the same format and contains photographs or illustrations where available.

The publication of Volume 2 of the *NDSAB* under the auspices of Vista University's Department of History is a milestone for this institution as it is the first time that a biographical dictionary has found a home at a South African university.

While it is in the nature of biographical dictionaries to publish essays on noteworthy persons, the *NDSAB* now strives to add another dimension: it looks specifically at people within the South African context, focusing on how the complexities of South African society have impacted on individuals and how, in turn, these individuals have helped to transform society through their achievements.

Another important aim of the *NDSAB* is to acknowledge otherwise undistinguished persons who merit attention because they have helped shape history or a culture. In this country, where the majority have been marginalized for centuries, this is particularly relevant. Furthermore, Volume 2 contains elements of 'oral history' since it records the achievements of certain individuals about whom very little has been written, for instance, taxi industry leader James Sojane. In such cases reliable persons were interviewed to ensure that valuable and interesting data could be recorded.

Vista University's Department of History became involved for various reasons. It contends that by undertaking this task it is, *inter alia*, preserving valuable source material for future historians. It also sees a biographical dictionary as a tool to enhance the popularity of the study of History. Furthermore, while the first series, the *DSAB*, tended to ignore the contributions made by black people and by women, the Department of History has accepted the challenge of making the *NDSAB* truly representative of the South African population.

There are bound to be errors and inadvertent omissions in Volume 2. However, the Department is committed to learn from the publication of this - its fledgling volume - and to set right any such errors in future volumes. It is inevitable that the choice of certain

profiles for Volume 2 will be criticized by some, as will be the omission of others. It must, however, be obvious that the list of persons included in any one volume cannot ever be exhaustive and that this must always be grounds for regret. By the same token, serious omissions will be given priority when compiling future volumes.

Volume 2 has various limitations; two of the major ones being a very small budget for publication and restricted space, which required that each profile had to be fairly short. Regarding the editing of profiles, the rule was adopted that it was to be light so as to preserve the individual styles of the writers.

The cut-off date for the dates of death of personalities featured in a particular volume of a biographical dictionary is a moot point. For Volume 2 it was decided that this date would be 1995.

The year 1999 marks the centenary celebration of the outbreak of the South African War (1899-1902). The role of the Africans in this war was never fully recognized. We would like to acknowledge the part they played in this major war by publishing profiles of two prominent personalities from that period - Captain Mpisane Nxumalo and Chief Kgolane. Unfortunately biographical particulars about both men are scant.

Sadly, five of the writers of biographies have passed away since work on this volume started: Dr Howard Botha, Professor H.P.A. de Boom, Ms D.H. Radloff, Mr Christopher Ribeiro and Mr Brian Saks. We are honoured to publish their contributions.

The Department of History wishes to thank the following persons and institutions for their commitment in supporting us in producing this publication:

- ❑ Prof. Kader Asmal, Minister of Education, for writing the Foreword
- ❑ The Anglo American and De Beers Chairman's Fund Education Trust for the grant it made available
- ❑ The writers of the biographies
- ❑ The reviewers, who were selected on the basis of their expertise and their familiarity with the subject
- ❑ Relatives, friends and colleagues of the persons included in Volume 2 who were approached for additional information
- ❑ The Vista University Department of Academic Language Editing for the dedicated and meticulous editing of the manuscript
- ❑ Ms Marieta Keyser of the Vista University typesetting department for typesetting the manuscript
- ❑ The Vista University Library staff members who helped search for and provide relevant material
- ❑ Dr H.E. Joosub who, of his own accord, made a financial contribution to the project
- ❑ The HSRC for the use of its library, and HSRC staff members who had been involved in publishing Volume 1 and shared their expertise so generously
- ❑ Various newspapers, libraries, museums and archives, which supplied reprints of photographs free of charge

J.S. Mohlamme

Head of the Department of History and Editor-in-Chief
Vista University