



Trading places

Eugene de Kock presided over the police hitsquad base, Vlakplaas. Television journalist JACQUES PAUW made deals to produce the De Kock documentary, *Prime Evil*. The film sparked a lot of debate as evident in these excerpts from the Media, Truth and Reconciliation workshop.

THESE PEOPLE from Vlakplaas are available and can be traced quite easily. You get addresses from court records, even the telephone directory. I was amazed that there were not more journalists looking for them. You literally just make an appointment to speak to these men. Getting them on camera, however, was a different story.

We decided early to use close-ups with black backdrops, to be dramatic and let these people speak. I tried to interview Jan Viktor, founder of Vlakplaas, but like FW de Klerk he would not speak to me. I also had to make deals with other sources about the case, and agree that they wouldn't speak about the murders they were involved in.

Craig Williamson (former police spy) refused to be interviewed against the backdrop, and wanted to be interviewed in his lawyer's office wearing a jacket and tie. It was either get him on these terms or not: this was the only way we could get him. I never thought it important that people watching the programme should know this. It would have broken the story to tell the viewer that we are interviewing him in an office instead of against a black backdrop. We only had 110 minutes, and could have made a four-hour documentary.

I tried to interview De Kock's family. But I had to make a deal with De Kock. I asked him in jail if he would give me three people who could talk on his behalf. He gave them to me and the deal was that I would not pursue his family. The three people were Peter Caselton, Lucas Kalina and De Kock's brother Vossie. I would very much have liked to include his wife and family in the documentary, but we couldn't.

To get the truth, the Truth Commission guarantees amnesty. Journalists have to operate like that. To pretend that a journalist can go and get Craig Williamson to just talk is not realistic.

I am a journalist. Even if Eugene de Kock takes my hand and says "my brother", but also tells me what I want to know, that is OK with me. I have spent hours with these guys in bars hearing their stories. It was a process of dealing with these scumbags, risking one's life. The fact is that we know very little of what happened inside the military, because we have not been able to get into it.

There has been criticism that my documentary is too sympathetic to Vlakplaas people and to De Kock. On the other hand, some whites have complained that they were shown as drunken killers. Was it a case of presenting some of the perpetrators as victims of De Kock? At some stage, yes. But not all people at Vlakplaas killed. There were 150 men there in total. It is too easy for the killers to say they were victims of De Kock, political pawns. Yet Joe Mamasela (police killer) says he was a victim, "forced into killing my own people".

I don't think I'll make another documentary like this. I don't think I can go through all this again. I have had enough of these people — I don't want to deal with them any more. The only remorse these guys feel is that they lost the war. It makes you realise how difficult reconciliation is. Jacques Pauw



A complex of ethics

AT THE first Truth Commission hearings in East London, the Pebco Three widows were some of the first people who testified. It was incredibly dramatic evidence. The widows were pleading for answers about what happened to their husbands. We already had the answer because a few months earlier I did an interview with Joe Mamasela where he gave a very graphic description of how they tortured and killed the Pebco Three.

I also had an agreement with Mamasela that I wouldn't use the interview except in the Eugene de

Kock documentary. We basically broke our agreement and broadcast the interview. There were some legal ramifications and we had to draw up a new agreement with Mamasela. But we still talk to one another. Unfortunately.

We had very good co-operation from the Truth Commission, however. We went to them before we broadcast the interview, and asked them to go and assist the widows with what they were going to hear the next day. A whole Truth Commission team was sent to help them when we broadcast.

Jacques Pauw

Confessions of a personal kind

In his television documentary on Eugene de Kock, JACQUES PAUW spoke about his own regrets — provoking challenges from other journalists:

ANTJIE SAMUELS:

IT IS fascinating that Jacques put himself in the documentary, not only as a narrator, but as part of the story. In it, he says that he did not warn Bheki Mlangeni. (Ex-policeman Dirk Coetzee had told Pauw about a possible parcel bomb that could — and did — kill Mlangeni. Pauw expresses his regret in the documentary for not having taken Coetzee's warning seriously enough to pass it on).

I wonder how Mrs Mlangeni felt, looking at the documentary. She told me that she could see that Jacques wanted to take something out of himself. Those are the words she used: "he

wanted to take something out of him". And she added: "but I wonder why he did not tell me when he interviewed me for the programme".

JP: What is it that people want before they can come to the step of saying, yes, I forgive you?

AS: She was saying that she can't forgive you because you did not tell her privately. So what she is actually saying is that she does not want you to dictate the narrative. She wants to dictate the narrative.

JP: I was a witness in the Eugene de Kock trial and testified that Dirk Coetzee had warned me about the parcel bomb. Mrs Mlangeni was in court then; I only interviewed her afterwards. It is part of the story, that is why I put it in the movie. I don't quite understand what it is all about. There is a sort of implication that I am also a perpetrator now.

Sexy eyes tell a sick story

WE SHOULD explore our fascination with perpetrators. The camera certainly finds Goliath a lot more sexy than David.

Dirk Coetzee is actually a gift to any TV programme maker. He is slick. He is a story-teller. You get into a situation where Dirk goes off to meet the relatives of (one of his murder victims) Griffiths Mxenge. We travel with him in the car, and everything is seen through his thoughts and from his perspective. And so when the Mxenge family choose not to interact with Dirk Coetzee, we are in a situation as viewers where we feel almost robbed, almost irritated with them. It has to do with power — to do with who we allow to tell the story.

It is not enough as journalists to say we will show Coetzee, then we will show the victims, and that will be a balanced programme. Sometimes, two sides don't make a balanced programme. Fiona Lloyd