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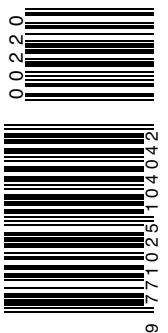
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PANJANDRUMS'
HIDDEN AGENDAS:

Klatzow defends Noakes



80-year-old
widow takes
on Nedbank
in Jersey court



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CYRIL FOR HIRE ■ KZN KILLINGS: PROBE ON TRIAL



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Letters

Water shortage: who benefits?

THE SPEECH BY MAYOR OF CAPE TOWN Patricia de Lille on the city's water situation, quoted in your editorial (*nose218*) may not go without a comment. In the mid-80s we were informed that the Western Cape was going to become a water scarce area as a result of climate change/global warming. Global warming did not decrease, neither did it remain constant: it increased.

Fast forward to 1990 when the flood of people from the then Transkei and Ciskei began, resulting in a sharp increase of the population of this city, putting severe pressure on its water resources. This development compelled the administration to start using water from Theewaterskloof Dam – which farmers say was originally built for agriculture only – for domestic purposes.

To compensate, the dam in the Berg River at Franschhoek was built. However, it was already stated at that time that this development was going to be insufficient to satisfy the water needs of the area. Add the decrease in rainfall, then one can only start counting down.

Always keeping an eye on the satellite photographs of the southern Atlantic, I got a big shock in the winter of 2008. The fronts over South America, which take about seven days to reach South Africa, had disappeared half-way across. What was left were some cloudy areas from which we received some rain when they reached the Cape.

This development most certainly should have set some alarm bells ringing. It did, with Agri-SA, and the company in Strand that is building desalination plants in the Far and Middle East. The latter went public, stating that, due to new technology, desalination and purification of the groundwater reserve under the Cape Flats had become an attractive possibility. Reaction from the authorities was that they were talking about it.

A few years ago they both approached the province and the city with their worries about the water security in the Western Cape but were cold-shouldered by them.

Take into account that the city has been taking from agriculture without giving anything in return.

The disastrous rainfall pattern over the past few years changed a serious situation into a disastrous one, without any initiative from the authorities. The De Lille prayer could be heard in the city hall: "Please Father take this cup away from us". Unfortunately the Father did not listen and we have to contend with a situation resulting from a total lack of action by the authorities. Even during the summer of 2016/17 they were counting and praying for a good rainy season in our 2017 winter. Only when this appeared to be a real pipe dream did they start to impose ever-stricter water restrictions. A real case of "after the horse has bolted".

What we have seen developing is a destruction of the water security of the Western Cape, an endangering of the food security of the area, a threat to job security in the area and an undermining of the financial position of the metro. With the imposition of an illegal DA-incompetency-tax/water levy, they have placed the metro in a kind of Sanral situation, with a tax/levy that is not going to be paid.

It is infuriating that a party which hopes to form a government after the 2019 elections can willingly allow this situation to come about.

Teddy Roosevelt said that "in politics nothing happens, everything is very carefully planned". This statement will make sense when we look into who may possibly gain from this disaster. What immediately comes to mind is "property development".

Since last winter we have been bombarded by development announcements: Maiden's Cove; a R1.8-billion project somewhere in the Eastern part of the CBD; The Culemborg area; the development around the freeways and their completion (being the mayor's legacy); an unwanted development near or at the border of the Bo Kaap; and more promised to come.

I have no doubt that many developers will be salivating when they look at or think about Franschhoek, Paarl, Stellenbosch and the

Helderberg. We can be sure that the value of the land will not increase due to water shortages. Of course at this stage, this is all speculation but it is not nonsensical.

In your Editorial you express the hope that learning comes from mistakes. This raises the question: Can people who seem to have no clue what they are doing make mistakes?

Pieter Wesselman

Waterfront, Cape Town

■ THE CITY OF CAPE TOWN, ESPECIALLY Dear Leader Mayor De Lille, has been useless, useless, useless. And could someone please explain how an 80-year-old widow living on her own on the sixth floor of a block of flats in Sea Point will flush her toilet?

Robert de Vos

Cape Town

■ MAYOR DE LILLE HAS BEEN APPROVING upmarket developments all over the City for years, in the face of strong civic resistance and professional advice. All these new projects have large water footprints in construction, diminish groundwater recharge, increase consumer water demand, pollute more watercourses and require provisioning with water-dependent industries. She does not talk about this we note.

Patrick Dowling

Kommetjie

Knysna: ineptitude or worse?

SO, MORE INACTION AND INCOMPETENCE from the Knysna municipal authorities, then a farce of an expensive investigation and report that blatantly lies, and then, when the lies are exposed in *Noseweek*, some other fantastical story is concocted as an alternative but also factual explanation of the "facts". If you're going to lie, at least, make the lie plausible.

David Arundel

Cape Town

■ THE "SECRET" INVESTIGATION IS ENOUGH to let us know something official went very wrong. Was it gross carelessness in the end?

Arlette Franks

Somerset West

Douw's raiding of Sassa grants

THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO LOOK INTO all these so-called billionaires to see where their wealth is coming from.

How can anyone with a heart take from the poor? Douw Steyn is not the only one; there are sadly many others like him.

Edith Steyn

Zurich, Switzerland
Not quite like him! – Ed.

■ THIS IS AS CRIMINAL AND IMMORAL as Zupta's criminal actions; sheer callousness towards others in the name of insatiable greed.

Lee Ward Able

Port Elizabeth

■ LIKE WITH ANY OTHER POLICY/ insurance company, it is not the company itself but the corrupt agent that is doing this. The more contracts she/he sells, the more commission earned. She does not want to cancel these policies as it will influence her monthly income.

You should report the agent to the necessary authorities for taking advantage of people who don't know better.

Lorita de Bruin

Bloemfontein

Nuclear plan needs aerotropolis

ZUMA PROMISED PUTIN MUCH AND THEY need a private port of entry to facilitate the nuclear build so I don't think we've seen the end of this story.

Mortis

Hilton

■ NOSEWEEK IS TAKING A BEGGING BOWL around to fund malicious gossip and rumours.

Molebatsi Masedi

Polokwane

And you are clearly a loyal ANC voter who will hear, see and speak no evil of the party. – Ed.

Liquidators milk pig farm feud

AND NOW I SEE THAT THE SELF-SAME liquidators have been appointed to manage the Honeydew/Dairy Day fiasco. Now the cows are really going to get milked! Yip, a few more stories could be written in these pages

by the very liquidators named in *nose219*. They are lucky to still be operating. Their day is coming.

Mortis

Hilton

Iqbal's unicorn

THE PROMOTION OF IQBAL SURVE'S personal interests in *Business Report* (*nose219*) is shameful, but to be expected. The last straw was when Auntie Adri [*Adri Senekal de Wet*, *Business Report's Executive Editor*] lectured her readers on how to be proper patriotic South Africans.

'Ex-subscriber'

Umdloti

Agony of elusive redemption

IT'S BEEN OVER A DECADE SINCE I LET YOU know about the passing of Dr Frank Carlisle, my father. A concerned fellow citizen wanting more details about Rob Lowe brought your article, "How Lowe can you go" (*nose218*), to my attention. It brought back a flood of very sad memories. I tried to bury the whole saga along with my dad. I had no fight left, after seeing what the pursuit for the truth did to my entire family. My parents never got the chance to live out the retirement that they had planned, travelling around South Africa in a camper-van.

When Mercantile Bank tried to have my dad arrested for breaking a gagging order by virtue of an email, it was time to give up. The pen is not always mightier than the sword, and it's useless without ink.

My mom had to give up medical aid along the line, and she died after receiving inferior cancer care at a municipal hospital, and before she reached 65. She was buried in Mossel Bay, where the two had met and later married in 1963. My dad chose to stay in Mossel Bay and in touch with the good memories, but sadly died from a stroke in another municipal hospital, only nine months later. He was only 66 years old, but withered and battered and unfairly abused.

Without Rob Lowe's theft and the bank's resulting position, and without the years of endless litigation in pursuit of the truth, and without the real fear of arrest and

harassment, I do believe 100% that my parents would have enjoyed a much longer and happier life together.

I was robbed of my only family and my children, of their grandparents and any legacy or memory.

In cruel irony, on the same morning, not long after receiving the phone call about my dad's passing, I walked passed Rob Lowe and his partner enjoying R1,000 crayfish on the Camps Bay strip. It took all my restraint not to help that mid-morning brunch in, down, and out the other side in one filthy swoop.

However, from what I read about his sick pornographic past, a crispy crustacean violation might have gone down nicely with a glass of Chardonnay and a sea view.

It was uplifting and heartwarming to read the words "well-respected educationalist", and I thank you for that. My dad worked 14-hour days all his life, lectured on Saturdays, his brunch was a sandwich behind his typewriter, and during his 20 years at the helm of the Production Management Institute (PMI), a Johannesburg training and education centre, he helped tens of thousands of people achieve emancipation through education. He pioneered progression and portability two decades before SAQA adopted the principals. Adult students with no secondary education could progress through the levels and eventually get a B.Sc Hons. Rob Lowe eroded it all.

This is the end I guess. I don't hold out much hope for justice and accountability.

In much appreciation, and keep up the good work.

Phillip Carlisle

Durban North

Also see noses49,54 & 85. – Ed.

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

While I respect your right to choose a pseudonym, please don't do so unless it is imperative for your protection.

We live in a country where we are entitled to express our personal opinions. Exercise that right proudly in your own name. – Martin Welz.

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Editorial

Most wanted list

A LEAKED LIST OF LIKELY CABINET appointments in a now-it's-on, now-it's-off Cyril Ramaphosa presidency reveals only one thing for certain: there are slim pickings for clean cadres left in the ANC.

The list was published online by Donwald Pressly, long-time parliamentary correspondent, now editor of the online news publication *The Cape Messenger*, who claims to have compiled it from information leaked to him by senior sources within the ANC. A cursory check reveals that many of the 36 people named are weighed down by a load of smelly baggage. It is only thanks to the intervention of other crooked cadres that they have not been banished from Parliament or prosecuted.

While Ramaphosa is no ANC darling (see page 11), his proposed deputy, David Mabuza, has led one of the most corrupt provinces in South Africa – Mpumalanga – which remains rife with politically motivated killings.

Enoch Godongwana should be allowed nowhere near Economic Development, where he has already served as deputy minister. He resigned from the same department in 2012 during an inquiry into the disappearance of R130m from the SA Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (Sactwu) – in which he was embroiled. He offered a measly R1.3m in compensation.

Appointing David Mahlobo, who is being touted as Minister of Environmental Affairs, is akin to putting a lion in charge of a zebra enclosure. While State Security minister he was directly mentioned as a “friend” by Chinese rhino-horn smuggler Guan Jiang Guang during an *Al Jazeera* news investigation. Mahlobo claimed he only went for “pedicures” at Guang’s brothel in Mbombela. And then, somehow the country’s security services never got around to questioning the Chinese businessman, allowing him plenty of time to slip out of the country.

The Health Department under Dr Aaron Motsoaledi has witnessed two of the most shocking medical disasters in South African history – the Life Esidimeni crisis that killed 143 mentally

handicapped patients, and the collapse of KZN’s oncology departments, leading to the untimely death of hundreds of cancer patients unable to afford treatment elsewhere. Both were the result of gross mismanagement and corruption.

Malusi Gigaba may look the part, but his last foray at Home Affairs crippled the South African tourism industry by introducing bizarre and restrictive visa regulations for foreign visitors.

Thandi Modise cannot manage her staff on her own farm, let alone the Department of Labour. Ebrahim Rasool – accused of paying journalists to write favourably about him when he was Western Cape Premier – is touted for Mineral Resources, a seat currently being kept warm by Mosebenzi Zwane (known for his mystery trips to Dubai).

For the Police ministry, Pressly names Jeff Radebe – the man who cannot control his own member when texting young women, let alone an entire police service.

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma is maybe a shoo-in for Social Development. This is not surprising as social grants provider Cash Paymaster was rumoured to be paying for Dlamini-Zuma’s presidential-bid campaign. Keeping them in business would be a top priority for the Zuma faction.

Fikile Mbalula might be moved back to Sport and Recreation where he will need to properly understand what it means to “crush a man’s balls”. One need only recall his penchant for divisiveness, name-calling and racial slurs and the fact that he was a direct beneficiary of Brett Kebble’s stolen largesse, to know that he should be kept as far away from government as possible.

The last time Bheki Cele got near security services was when he was the National Commissioner of Police. But he was fired after he signed an illegal R500m property rental deal with ANC backer Roux Shabangu. Giving him access to the State Security Agency’s slush funds is simply not prudent thinking.

But when you’re the newly elected head of a criminal syndicate, those are all you have to choose from.

The Assistant Editor

Survé keeps it in the family



IF IT STILL ISN'T ABUNDANTLY clear that the press baron with a thin skin Dr Iqbal Survé (who incidentally blocked *Noseweek* on Twitter from viewing his account) has turned the Independent Media empire into his personal diary and scrapbook, then the launch edition of the *African Independent* magazine should clear things up.

This was picked up by Cape Town reader Dave Fair who informed *Noseweek* via Facebook: "Further to your article on Survé's self-promotion (*nose219*: "Survé rides his unicorn up the newsroom Everest") check out the front cover of the *African Independent* – Paul Lamontagne on the cover! And Survé's daughter on the editorial staff! Coincidence?"

As revealed in *nose219*, Lamontagne is the CEO of a little-known company called Sagarmatha Technologies

which, despite relative obscurity, has enjoyed an unusually large amount of publicity on the front pages of Independent Media's *Business Report* since October 2017.

The company is effectively an extension of Survé's business empire, sharing office space and staff.

The good doctor was a listed director of the company almost from its registration in October 2013 until he resigned 9 October 2017 just days before the company received bucket-loads of free publicity from Independent Media.

But throughout the exorbitant amount of positive coverage that Sagarmatha has enjoyed there is no mention of this. Instead the articles are written in such a form, including editorial pieces, that tries to falsely convince the reader that the articles have been naturally

reported in the process of news gathering, free of bias, and hold serious news value.

The *African Independent* magazine article is no different. However it is slightly more obvious, as the piece is co-written by Survé's 24-year-old daughter Saarah Survé, who also happens to be the magazine's editor.

Sarah's editorial stated: "Lamontagne is embarking on an exciting venture to make his company the leading digital technology platform in Africa". ■



Stent

Fishy response from MTN over iPhone theft

ON CHRISTMAS DAY *NOSEWEEK* reader Karen Varejes had her iPhone stolen from her handbag on the Camps Bay beachfront. She discovered it was missing within minutes and called MTN to deactivate it. Next day she dialled her number, only to discover that it had been reactivated.

A man answered, claiming he had picked up the phone and was happy to return it. However he had already had two other people claiming it was theirs, so could she prove it was hers by giving him the PIN number? She was not as gullible as that.

Karen's husband, Clive, then went into an MTN store where they again agreed to deactivate the sim card. Somehow, from somewhere, it was reactivated within minutes. This happened at least 10 times over the next four days. "Each time we called the number, the cheeky thief answered," said Clive. "Is MTN simply grossly incompetent or is someone in MTN friendly with the thief?" he asked. You decide.

At some stage the thief managed to have R50-worth of airtime on Karen's phone transferred to another number. Call that number – and he answers.

Only when Clive called Cape Talk and Radio 702 with their story, did the couple get effective action from MTN. Someone from head office called and arranged for the phone itself to be remotely locked, making it useless in the hands of the thief.

A formal charge of theft was laid at the Camps Bay Police Station. "They informed us that they suspected the racket was operated by a gang from Côte d'Ivoire or Nigeria – but three weeks later, still no action from the police," Clive Varejes told *Noseweek*. ■

Law Society moves slowly to get Gihwala struck off

THE FINAL UNRAVELLING OF ONE OF South Africa's more famous gentleman crooks, celebrated attorney Dines Gihwala, will reach its climactic conclusion within months, when he stands to be stripped of both his professional status and his ill-gotten fortune.

Already in August last year attorneys Abrahams and Kiewitz, representing the Cape Law Society, filed an application to the high court to have Gihwala struck from the roll of attorneys – the ultimate disgrace for a member of the profession.

The curiously protracted process has been conducted in great secrecy, but *Noseweek* is reliably told that the public record of Gihwala's misdemeanours in various court cases was found to be so extensive that the society's disciplinary committee decided to proceed with the application without having conducted their own more-usual internal disciplinary hearing.

Gihwala has filed an answering affidavit opposing the application. The case is expected to be scheduled for hearing within the next two months.

Later this year Gihwala faces further court proceedings: the debatement hearing, expected to last weeks, will begin in the same high court where, as ordered by the Supreme Court of Appeal, he will have to answer questions relating to claims totalling nearly R100 million, arising from his devious misconduct and failure to account for various business transactions.

Gihwala – once favoured by Mandela's Minister of Justice Dullah Omar with an appointment as acting judge of the high court – went on to become chairman of one of South Africa's big five law firms, Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr, and was entrusted by the Financial Services Board with the co-curatorship of Fidentia, a billion-rand financial services group.

Noseweek was never taken in by his claims to fame and respectability, publishing its first disclosure of his unprofessional conduct in January 2000 (*nose28*).



Dines Gihwala

But, in the end, one man – UK-based businessman Karim Mavji – must take the credit for bringing down this worthy, professional crook who brazenly used his position as an officer of the court as a cover for his criminal activities.

Reassured by Gihwala's then professional status, Mavji had made the mistake of trusting him with the management of some major investments made by two of his offshore companies: Grancy Property Ltd, registered in the British Virgin Islands, and Montague Goldsmith AG, registered in Switzerland. It is their claims totalling R100m that are scheduled for debatement in court later this year.

These companies have succeeded with various smaller claims in previous court proceedings that have seen Gihwala having to pay more than R12m in damages. Arising from them, in June 2014, the high court found that Gihwala had misappropriated funds, making payments totalling millions to himself – to which he was not entitled, was recklessly in breach of his fiduciary duties, and failed to disclose serious conflicts-of-interest.

The court found it had no option but to declare Gihwala a delinquent director, not fit to be a director of any company or be entrusted with managing any corporate entity.

Bringing Gihwala to account has so far taken Mavji eight years and cost him in excess of R20m in legal fees. ■

Eighty-year-old widow takes on Nedbank in Jersey

After years of battling for justice, furious pensioner takes on legal and banking establishment. By Martin Welz

WIDOW DOROTHY BRAKSPEAR, 83, who lives in Northampton, England, is a beneficiary of two offshore trusts set up and administered by various offshore subsidiaries of the Nedbank Group. They are the Brakspear Trust, registered in the Isle of Man, and the Westley Trust, registered in Jersey.

On Wednesday, December 6, 2017 at 4:18pm Brakspear copied *Noseweek* in on an angry email she sent to advocate Paul Matthews, Judicial Greffier (clerk) of the Royal Court of Jersey. His main job is to guide foreign litigants in the archaic court procedures that are followed on that once-French Island. It was also copied to Ms Debbie le Mottee, the court's judicial secretary (a post that closely approximates our registrar of the high court). It reads:

Dear Ms Le Mottee and Advocate Matthews,

1. Advocate [Mark] Taylor [for Nedbank] tells an untruth when he says we have not responded to him – we did so yesterday, 5 December 2017, in an email addressed to both him and Advocate Matthews. This is another in a long line of untruths told by Advocate Taylor in writing to us, to the Court and now the Court offices, and I have evidence of it all, but the falsehoods continue and yet no one raises any concerns. This is not what ethical lawyers do.

2. Advocate Taylor's reason for [wanting] an extension was due to the Christmas holidays – notwithstanding that his client liquidated the Westley Trust's only asset on 23 December 2008, 2 days before Christmas. [She is referring to the by-now-notorious application brought in the Durban high court by attorneys Edward Nathan Sonnenbergs (ENS) on behalf of a Nedbank subsidiary for the liquidation of a South African property-owning company called Westdunes. (See



Royal Court States building, Saint Helier, Jersey

noses128,177,179,&182).]

That "Christmas application" suited Nedbank way back then, but now that the shoe is on the other foot they claim it is totally unacceptable.

3. We have not even been before the Court for the Judge to confirm and sign the Order of Justice [a form of summons with extensive particulars of claim issued against Nedbank by Mrs Brakspear and the beneficiaries] and yet Nedbank are [already] issuing summons [what in SA would be called interlocutory applications: two of them – one to allow Nedbank to delay indefinitely the filing of its answers to the extensive, shocking charges raised by Mrs Brakspear and her

co-applicants in the Order of Justice (OJ) they filed in the Royal Court of Jersey in December; the other to allow Nedbank to bring an application to have Brakspear's entire OJ (summons and particulars of claim) struck out on grounds that they are frivolous, scandalous and vexatious, before it can be heard. – Ed.] How is that legally correct, given that a Jersey Advocate sets out our OJ in the proper legal format and the Deputy Bailiff subsequently signed the OJ?

4. Since this started in 2015 our allegations have not changed one bit, yet Nedbank's story changes every time they put anything on paper.

This summons [application by Nedbank] is not about the truth and justice – this is about

Nedbank refusing to answer allegations on paper of dishonesty and deceitful conduct, it is about Nedbank companies colluding in the suppression of their own contradicting trust accounts and documents, versus what they stated under oath in various courts and the silencing of me, an 83-year-old widow, by Nedbank defending the indefensible, using a draconian strike out application to attempt to drive me from the seat of justice.

I have not been copying-in certain members of the SA and UK press (including the UK paper that kindly provided us with original copies from the Panama Papers), despite numerous requests by them to chronicle my journey through the Courts of a tax haven.

However, due to this unrelenting war of attrition by Nedbank on me, and the continuing untruths being told by Nedbank and their Advocate, I will now start to blind copy them all in my correspondence, including my local [UK] Member of Parliament, as I believe what is happening with these continuing falsehoods is totally unacceptable and unjust.

We want to oppose this summons [*application*] by Nedbank (if it is legally correct) for “an extension” and that we “pay the costs”, so may I ask how do we do this?

Yours sincerely
Dorothy Brakspear

In a “skeleton” argument drawn up and submitted to the Jersey court by Advocate Taylor on 11 December 2015 to oppose an earlier attempt by Brakspear to bring her complaints before the court, he claimed there were “signed letters” by Brakspear and her daughter Alison resulting in a “settlement agreement” between them and Nedbank. Both denied ever having written such letters or having made such an agreement.

Taylor, despite repeated requests since then, has never been able to produce such letters. It was most likely just wishful thinking on his part: had they signed such a settlement agreement it would have put an end to their case – without Nedbank’s having to answer any of the serious charges brought against them.

In his most recent submissions to the court he makes no reference to any such agreement, as he had so emphatically alleged earlier.

He has yet to offer any apology or explanation. His main defence strategy has shifted to alleging that the recast charges set out in Brakspear’s Order of Justice have either prescribed

‘This is another in a long line of untruths ... and I have evidence of it all but the falsehoods continue ... this is not what ethical lawyers do’

(lapsed by passage of time) or have already been adjudicated upon by a South African court. If he succeeds with either argument, it will obviate Nedbank’s having to produce its own records and evidence in its defence – likely to be extremely embarrassing, judging by the bits and pieces that have already emerged

A foretaste of what might be to come for Nedbank were this strategy to fail: Brakspear and her fellow trust beneficiaries have brought a separate court application in terms of Jersey’s Bankers’ Book Evidence law, summoning Nedbank to court to explain why it should not be ordered to produce its own books and records relating to their trusts for the beneficiaries’ inspection. And for them to make copies of those documents and records they need for their case.

In terms of Jersey’s financial services trusts law, trust companies such as Nedgroup Trust (Jersey) Ltd, must also be able to identify and trace in their books and records all money transactions relating to these trusts. If they are unable to do so, it is deemed to be proof of dishonesty and a criminal offence.

In the 2008 liquidation application brought by Nedbank’s trustees in South Africa, they based their application on money transactions they

claimed – under oath – to have taken place.

The South African court chose to believe the Nedbank evidence, despite the contradicting documentary evidence submitted by Ian Brakspear, the trust beneficiary resident in South Africa.

This is but one of the money transactions Nedbank will be called upon to evidence and trace through its books and bank records.

This application is set down for hearing in the Jersey court on 19 February.

For the past ten years the Nedbank trustees have steadfastly refused any access to their books and records. The few documents that have emerged in other court proceedings or from the Panama Papers have revealed fraud, dishonesty, incompetence and negligence – in that order – on the part of Nedbank and its employees.

In his most recent submissions to the Jersey court, Advocate Taylor is asking for extra time and an extended court date for Nedbank to bring a so-called “strike out” application to have the Brakspear’s Order of Justice thrown out of court without the banking group and its trust employees having to answer to the charges raised in it or produce evidence in their defence.

But for two months the much-vaunted strike out application has not been forthcoming.

The Brakspears lost patience and have had him summoned to court to set a date by which it must be delivered – or fall away. This issue was to be decided a day after *Noseweek* went to press.

Brakspear, accompanied by a carer, will be flying to Jersey for the hearing. Based on bitter experience, she told *Noseweek*, she does not trust what the lawyers will get up to in her absence. She will argue her case in person. The court has appointed an *Amicus* – an independent lawyer who will assist the court in determining the legal merits of her argument.

Noseweek will publish a full summary of the 30-page Order of Justice, with the 40-page affidavit by Brakspear and 180 pages of annexures that accompany it, that was served on Nedbank in December, in our next issue, (*nose221*). The defendant is, formally, Nedgroup Trust (Jersey) Ltd. ■

Cyril for hire

NEWLY ELECTED ANC PRESIDENT and likely next president of the republic, Cyril Ramaphosa, is no stranger to the pages of *Noseweek*. Since 2005 we have tracked his rise – which is largely backed by corporate South Africa. They would hand him cash and he would provide political cover. Many have argued that he has been essentially a political negotiator-for-hire to the highest corporate bidder.

In April 2005 (*nose66*), *Noseweek* introduced its readers to the new black oligarchs: Ramaphosa, Tokyo Sexwale, Saki Macozoma and Patrice Motsepe. We called them the “jaga” – a Malay word that translates into “gatekeeper” – as this is what they were doing, controlling access to the banks and insurance companies while being supported and sustained by older capital.

Noseweek noted that Ramaphosa was supported by Anglo-American/De Beers, Alexander Forbes, Standard Bank and Investec. His central financial vehicle, Shanduka, was funded by Old Mutual and he was also connected to FNB. Through Johnnic Holdings – from which he subsequently resigned – Ramaphosa had media interests, primarily in the *Sunday Times*, *Business Day* and the *Sowetan*. *Noseweek* noted that he is the brother-in-law of Patrice Motsepe, and that he shared numerous business interests with Macozoma through New Africa Investment Limited (NAIL) and Standard Bank. His security net, *nose66* noted, was buried within the Anglo-American/De Beers sphere of influence. Ramaphosa’s network – as that of the first oligarch – was already beginning to look like “old money”.

In *Noseweek*’s profile of September 2014, “The man who would be king”, (*nose179*) Ramaphosa was rated “a shoo-in as the next president of the ANC and the country – but largely as the ANC’s default candidate”. This piece made some astonishing predictions, including the emergence of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as a serious contender in her failed bid to become the next ANC president.

While acknowledging his undoubted

charm and sophistication, the profile laid bare Ramaphosa’s blind ambition, his desire to accumulate wealth, and the little-spoken-about whispered truth that (quoting UCT Professor Anthony Butler) “Nobody [*in the ANC*] likes Cyril particularly, either in KZN or the Eastern Cape, but for that reason alone, a lot of people think it will be good to have him as leader, as he’s not associated with a particular regional or ethnic bloc.

“His key strength is that he draws disparate groups together who don’t want ethnic Zulu dominance of the party.”

Ramaphosa’s talent for drawing disparate groups together made him indispensable to the trade union movement in the days when he presided there. For the same reason he is widely acknowledged to have played maybe the key role in getting all parties to collaborate in drafting South Africa’s much admired constitution.

In *nose191* of September 2015, Barry Sergeant argued that Ramaphosa was nothing more than a hustler who knew how to cash in on his political status: he was handed investments on a platter, often with little-to-no risk, from which he amassed his fortune – presumably in exchange for political cover.

The first example that Sergeant highlighted was Ramaphosa’s minority stake in Lonmin, a deal solidified in 2010. His company Shanduka held 50% in Incwala Resources, which held an 18% share in Lonmin’s two main operations. To acquire its stake, Shanduka only needed to put up £27 million; Lonmin paid the remaining £206m on Shanduka’s behalf (about R2.3 billion at the time). The deal was virtually risk-free as the loan was secured with Lonmin shares. If the company were to fail, Ramaphosa needed only to return the shares. Lonmin’s share price has since tanked and the ghost of the Marikana massacre has scarred the company indefinitely.

Next, Sergeant revealed how Ramaphosa had featured in the toxic Eskom/Gupta drama which was then still developing around the

Optimum Coal mine.

Optimum was established to supply Eskom’s key Hendrina Power Station. The 30-year contract, signed in 1993, determined that the price of coal supplied to Eskom was to escalate in line with the general inflation rate. Over the years, however, mining costs rose at a far higher rate than the general inflation rate. The mine’s losses became so great that by 2010 owners BHP Billiton were happy to sell – some say give away – Optimum to a BEE consortium, in a deal that is interesting for many reasons not relevant here.

Shortly afterwards Swiss-based international commodities giant Glencore bought control of this coal mining enterprise from its supposed BEE shareholders for all of \$800m (R8.2 billion at the time), making them all unspeakably rich.

Which brought Sergeant to the crunch question: “Why would a huge and vastly experienced international commodities company, not known for gestures of charity to third-world countries, have bought such a pup – and continued to feed it? [...] Were they perhaps assured that, with the right BEE partner, the problem could be made to disappear?”

Their 10% BEE partner, via his company Lexshell 849 Investments, was Ramaphosa. They likely anticipated he would be able to renegotiate a higher-price coal deal with Eskom. If so, they were to be disappointed: by then the Guptas clearly had more political muscle in the ANC than Ramaphosa.

Sergeant’s conclusion: Ramaphosa’s business record is better forgotten. “Let’s face it: he may have more luck back in politics.” ■



ANC president Cyril Ramaphosa



A Modern Galileo?

The backlash against Prof Tim Noakes's ideas about nutrition is just the voice of vested self-interest, argues Dr David Klatzow

IN 2013 EMERITUS PROFESSOR TIM Noakes, then still head of the University of Cape Town's Sports Science Centre, contributed just one chapter to a bombshell of a book, *The Real Meal Revolution*, which quickly soared into the book-sales stratosphere. Its dietary recommendations rapidly found traction with the South African public and anecdotal reports of success flooded in. The book's message was that most people would be well-advised to abandon the widely recommended high-carbohydrate/low-fat diet and switch to the exact opposite: a low-carbohydrate/high-fat diet.

From the early Seventies the received wisdom dispensed to patients by dieticians and cardiologists was that high fat was a recipe for heart attacks and a high cholesterol-level in the blood was the harbinger of a heart attack. Noakes himself subscribed to that view. In fact he kick-started his career as a popular author in 1985 with a book titled *The Lore of Running* (It went into its fourth edition in 2003), soon followed by *The Lore of Cycling*. The books advocated a high-carb diet. Noakes has since gone

on to say: "If you've got *Lore of Running*, tear out the section on nutrition."

So, how come Noakes is now scandalising his colleagues by arguing that the entire dietary edifice should be turned on its head; that all the "eminent" cardiologists and dieticians had got it wrong and were in fact promoting a diet that actively harmed many of their patients?

Noakes explains: "Originally I was taught, as part of my medical training, that a high-fat diet was dangerous for your arteries and heart – the standard paradigm subscribed to at the time by UCT's cardiology department. But then, on 12 December 2010 I was given a book by Eric Westman called *The New Atkins for a New You*. I had just done some blood tests on myself and discovered I had Type 2 diabetes. So I decided to try Westman's low-carb diet. Within days I started losing weight, felt better – and my blood glucose dropped remarkably to normal.

"Westman's book was filled with scientific research references which had never been mentioned in our curriculum at medical school. I started

to read them and found there was a substantial medical constituency that did not hold the standard view dispensed at UCT. My own further research confirmed their findings."

It is surely a mark of integrity if a scientist is prepared to change his view on being presented with new data – but to contradict the so-called received medical wisdom of the day is a perilous exercise, as many before Tim Noakes have discovered.

An early example is that of Hungarian physician Ignaz Semmelweis, who discovered that he could reduce the high death rate from childbed fever by the simple expedient of washing his hands in chloride of lime before examining the patient. His colleagues, outraged by the suggestion that they themselves were infecting their patients by their lack of hygiene, launched a concerted campaign against him, mostly by way of attacks on the man, rather than his argument – a common response when outsiders, and more especially insiders, challenge the gurus of medicine.

In the less-distant past we have seen a number of standard medical

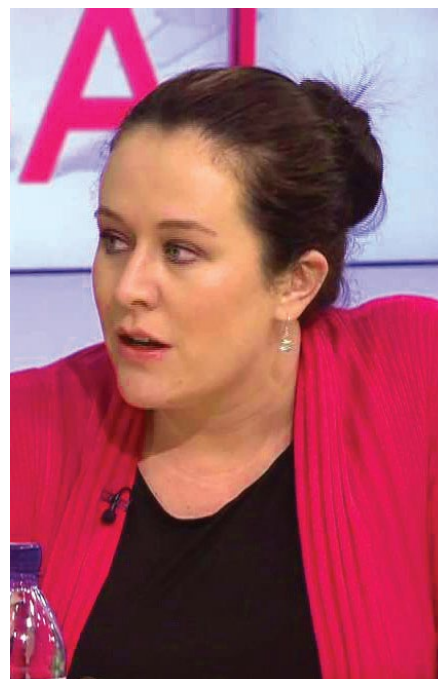
teachings overturned in quite spectacular fashion. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for post-menopausal women has been shown to have severe cardio-vascular consequences. Mutilating – even life-threatening – gastric surgery for stomach ulcers has been replaced with a short course of antibiotics. The brutal, radical mastectomy once routinely prescribed with absolute conviction by UCT’s professors of surgery to treat breast cancer – leaving the unfortunate patient in a permanent state of distress – has been replaced by a far less radical lumpectomy, with better long-term outcomes.

Over all of this the professors of medicine preside in a god-like way. These are the leaders of medical research and their word in a given department is law. God help you if you express a dissenting opinion. Barely 20 years ago, those women who dared question the prescribed radical mastectomy were told by the presiding professors at Groote Schuur Hospital to “go elsewhere for treatment and never return”.

Medical research has in my view entered an era where, to accept its findings blindly, is dangerous; all its findings must be seriously questioned and if accepted, then only with caution. You do not have to take my word for it. The distinguished Dr Marcia Angell, former editor of the pre-eminent *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*, has had reason to warn: “It is simply no longer possible to believe in much of the clinical research that is published, or to rely on the judgement of trusted physicians or authoritative medical guidance. I take no pleasure in this conclusion which I reached slowly and reluctantly over my five decades as editor of the *NEJM*.” (*New York Review of Books*, January 15, 2009.)

Her view was echoed by Richard Horton, editor of *The Lancet* in the 11 April 2015 issue of that pre-eminent medical journal: “The case against science is straightforward: Much of scientific literature, perhaps half, may simply be untrue. Afflicted by studies with small sample size, tiny effects, invalid exploratory analyses, flagrant conflicts-of-interest, together with an obsession for pursuing fashionable trends of dubious importance, science has taken a turn towards darkness.”

Into this snake pit Noakes has ventured, suggesting that any number



Opposing voices: Sports scientist Tim Noakes and dietician Claire Strydom

of self-important professors of medicine may inadvertently have been harming their patients for the past 40 years.

The trigger point came in February 2014 when a Twitter user asked Noakes the following question: “Is LCHF [*low-carb, high-fat*] eating OK for breastfeeding mums? Worried about all the dairy + cauliflower = wind for babies?” Noakes tweeted back: “Baby doesn’t eat the dairy and cauliflower, just very

healthy high-fat breast milk. Key is to wean baby on to LCHF”.

This simple exchange saw Noakes dragged before the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). Within 24 hours of the tweet, a dietician, and president of the Association for Dietetics in SA (Adsa), Claire Julsing Strydom, had lodged a complaint with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) accusing Noakes of giving “incorrect, dangerous and potentially life-threatening advice”.

To everyone’s surprise and to the lasting shame of the HPCSA, they took it seriously. These proceedings lasted more than three years – and, indeed, have still not ended (there is an appeal pending).

Noakes is not alone in promoting the low-carbohydrate high-fat (LCHF) diet. Swedish diet blogger and best-selling author Dr Andreas Eenfeldt promotes the same notions. So, too, do American cardiologist Professor William Davis in his book *Wheat Belly*, and many other well-informed and eminent physicians. (Many more references are to be found in Nina Teicholz’s book, *The Big Fat Surprise*, published in 2014.)

Of great relevance to the current case, and further demonstrating just how far behind the times South

**The various bodies
who have conspired
to discredit Noakes
have, it would appear,
significant vested
interests in the whole
debacle**

Africa's health establishment has become: Sweden's Dr Eenfeldt has had the way cleared for him by a predecessor, Swedish family physician Dr Annika Dahlqvist. In 2006, two dieticians reported Dahlqvist to Sweden's National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW). The dieticians felt that advising people with diabetes to eat fat was unacceptable and would result in the patients getting sick.

The NBHW deliberated for two years, reviewing the science. They had it in their power to censor Dr Dahlqvist or even revoke her medical licence. But in January 2008 the NBHW exonerated Dahlqvist completely, even stating that low-carb diets can today be seen as compatible with scientific evidence and best practice.

It should be obvious that the purveyors of junk food such as Kellogs and Coca-Cola have a vested interest in pushing their carbohydrate-loaded products. They are also in the forefront of demonising fats to distract attention from carbohydrates, especially sugar.

As significant, although perhaps less obvious: many of the bodies that have conspired to discredit Noakes share these vested interests. It simply requires taking a closer look at the sponsorships they receive from the likes of Kellogs and Coca-Cola (through innocuous-sounding front organisations such as the Association for Dietetics in South Africa, and the International Life Sciences Institute), and the large research grants from drug companies that the medical faculties at all our universities have come to rely upon.

These research grants have plenty of strings attached. It has been long known that the best indicator of the outcome of a research trial is the interests of the sponsors and funding organisations. One only has to look back to the '50s to find "learned" physicians denying the link between smoking cigarettes and lung cancer. No prizes for guessing that the funders were the big tobacco companies.

For at least four decades cholesterol has been vilified as the cause of heart attacks. One of the biggest money-spinners for the drug industry happens to be a class of drug called statins. These cause a lowering of blood cholesterol and are considered by the anointed professors of medicine to be an all-

round good thing. It follows that if you believe that cholesterol in the blood should be kept low then these are the drugs of choice. But what if cholesterol and blood fat are not the real cause of heart disease? And what if statins make no difference to the effort of curbing or preventing heart disease; what if they are actually harmful to the patient?

Suggestions like these would not go down well with the establishment. The drug companies who make literally billions from the sale of these noxious drugs and who have a vested interest in maintaining the belief that fat in the diet and blood cholesterol are the villains of the story, are unlikely to take this heresy lying down.

In their recently published book, *Lore of Nutrition*, Noakes and his co-author reputed medical writer Marika Sboros, conclude that it is these interests that lie behind the campaign against Noakes. In a concluding chapter, Sboros sets out to name and shame all the doctors, dieticians, and academics who used their power and positions to embark on sustained campaigns attacking both Noakes's character and

The avalanche of metabolic disorder, obesity, heart disease, arterial disease and Type 2 diabetes seems to originate from the 1960s when the food triangle was turned on its head

professional reputation.

The authors have good reason to believe that the battle is being fought by proxy combatants: the medicine departments that get large grants from the front organisations are themselves part of the shady war. The parties who have been ranged against Noakes have failed to declare their serious conflicts-of-interest in this respect.

That is the elephant in the room. In the debate by the high panjandrums of medicine it gets not the slightest mention. The pompous, self-important high-ranking members of academic medicine pontificate to their staff and the pontifications then filter down as gospel truth to the students and medical graduates.

Totally ignored is the very obvious fact that the avalanche of metabolic disorder, obesity, heart disease, arterial disease and Type 2 diabetes seems to originate from the 1960s, just when the food triangle was turned on its head and carbohydrates were promoted as the most important component of our diet, to the virtual exclusion of meat, dairy and fat. Five decades of population studies are surely enough to show that this is where the problem lies.

The high personages in medicine have come to share some of the features of long-term financial gurus who often get it wrong quite spectacularly, but carry on as though nothing much has happened.

As mentioned, HRT was widely prescribed to post-menopausal women. While short-term benefits were undeniable, the long-term damage to women's health has now become obvious.

During my stay in the surgery department at Witwatersrand University, gastric ulcers were treated according to the dictums of Prof D J du Plessis: "Cut them out!" The treatment consisted of savage surgical mutilation of the upper gastrointestinal tract, producing three generations of gastric cripples. This is not an understatement. The profession fought tooth and nail to discredit two young Australian upstarts who dared to suggest at a medical conference that a bacterium was the cause of gastric ulceration. At Du Plessis's instigation, they were laughed out of the conference.

Undaunted, the pair went on to show that *Helicobacter Pylorum* was the culprit and, happily, today the treat-

ment for gastric ulceration consists of a course of antibiotics and some stomach acid inhibitors. No longer do you have your stomach and digestive tract all but surgically removed and vital nerves severed, with all the resulting digestive chaos.

The two Australians, Barry Marshall and Robin Warren, gained the Nobel Prize in Medicine. (At Wits Du Plessis's ulcer regime is forgotten and he is, quite rightly, acknowledged to have been an extremely talented surgeon responsible for schooling three generations of surgeons of high repute.)

In an astoundingly uncollegial way, Noakes's colleagues at the University of Cape Town medical school wrote a joint letter to the *Cape Times* on 22 August 2014. The letter was signed by: Prof Wim de Villiers, then Dean of Medicine at UCT who is now Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University; Prof Bongani Mayosi, head of the Department of Medicine at Groote Schuur Hospital and UCT; Prof Lionel Opie (now emeritus); and Associate Prof Marjanne Senekal, head of the UCT's Division of Human Nutrition in the Health Sciences faculty.

In the letter, they accuse Noakes of maligning the integrity and credibility of his peers. This is a bit rich; I was not aware that entering into scientific debate and voicing dissenting opinion was tantamount to maligning colleagues who hold a different view.

Turning to Noakes's HPCSA hearing, it has had all the appearances of a witch-hunt, poorly thought out and likely to discredit the organisation. Before the appointed tribunal, the charges against

Noakes failed on every point. The prosecuting legal representatives of the HPCSA failed to appreciate the subtle difference between cross-examination and examining crossly.

It would also appear that they and their witnesses were poorly prepared. They were driven to make major concessions under the probing cross-examination of Noakes's senior counsel, advocates Mike van der Nest and Rocky Ramdass. In contrast to the evidence presented by the HPCSA – if it could be called scientific evidence at all – Noakes was able to bring an avalanche of data-based evidence supporting the LCHF diet.

It seems that the prosecution team was confused between ketoacidosis, which is a dangerous medical condition, and ketosis, where the body uses ketones derived from burning fat to supply energy. This is quite harmless, as demonstrated recently by Dr Otto Thanning when he swam the English Channel on the “Noakes diet”, using ketones as his source of energy – incidentally making it into the *Guinness Book of Records*. That's how dangerous ketones are for you.

Noakes pointed out material errors in a paper by Dr Celeste Naudé of the Centre for Evidence-based Health Care at Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. But, says Noakes, these have yet to be adequately addressed.

This was the slender evidence that launched the prosecution. What if it is wrong?

The other major prosecution document – prepared by one “Rossouw” – is

alleged by Noakes to actually show the reverse of what it purports to prove. Its author, despite being able to attend, mysteriously did not do so, thereby avoiding being pitted against Noakes and his counsel. Probably a wise move.

In the last chapter of *Lore of Nutrition* titled “Closure”, Sboros speculates that the HPCSA hearing – which has run up legal bills in excess of R10 million against him – might not have happened at all were it not for the inflammatory open letter to the *Cape Times* attacking Noakes in 2014, which was signed by the four UCT professors.

How and why did parties with little or no knowledge of the details of Noakes's work, such as Professor John Terblanche, a former head of surgery at UCT, and Professor Denise White, a psychiatrist (now deceased), choose to become involved, unless it was part of the general umbrage taken at a cheeky puppy suggesting that anointed members of the club could just possibly be wrong?

Equally mysterious: why did some of the prosecution witnesses fail to declare their vested interests upfront? Why were the front companies and sponsors not declared to the tribunal? Many would consider this to have been sharp practice.

This trial may yet turn out to be a repeat of the trial of Galileo all those centuries ago when he dared argue that the earth revolved around the sun and not the other way around as then believed.

Let's hope the popes and cardinals of medicine don't take as long to find out that Noakes was right all along. ■



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Investigation into KZN killings on trial

Is the Moerane Commission an important cathartic exercise, as some witnesses believe, or is it just another fruitless enterprise likely to be buried by a compromised ANC? By Desiree Erasmus

U SELESS, FRUITLESS AND EXPENSIVE. That's what the more cynical witnesses who have testified think of the Moerane Commission, the three-person panel tasked with investigating politically linked violence and killings in KwaZulu-Natal.

But there are also those who have described the commission as cathartic. They are hoping it will reveal the perpetrators of political violence and the network of people who are paid to kill, as well as expose whoever leads and influences the network.

Established in October 2016 by KZN premier Willies Mchunu, and led by advocate Marumo Moerane SC, it is not the practical workings of the commission that lends itself to cynicism, but rather the possibility [*probability?* – Ed] that, if detrimental to the ANC, any significant revelations will be swept aside, played down or simply kept from the public.

Although Moerane has said the commissioners want the final report released, this is mostly an ANC problem – and a highly contentious national election is looming.

The commission held its first public hearing on 20 March 2017, but the groundwork for investigations started in January. Up until December 2017, over 50 people had testified before Moerane and fellow commissioners Vasu Gounden and Professor Cheryl Potgieter.

Several witnesses sought protection before and after testifying.

The commission has been extended into 2018 as more witnesses come forward wanting to testify.

Almost all testimonies follow a

few common threads that are hardly secret: the ANC is dysfunctional, divided, prone to violence, and some party members are implicated in the killings for reasons that include greed – particularly a desire to climb the tenderpreneur ladder – and maintain or elevate patronage networks or one's status within the organisation.

But one can also not rule out garden-variety criminality and turf wars over taxi routes, particularly where ANC members and officials own taxis. It has been estimated by the province's transport department that 61 people have been killed in taxi-related violence since 2014, in a turf war between the Klip River and Sizwe taxi associations in the Ladysmith area alone.

In his October testimony, the ANC's KZN chairman Sihle Zikalala said that, by the party's own assessment "which is based on law-enforcement reports we have analysed, the province has recorded more than 80 political killings since 2011".

Zikalala said that victims included party members and leaders, councillors and candidate councillors. He also said that 19 party members had been killed since January 2016 up until the time of his testimony. Two more members were killed a month after Zikalala testified.

Premier Mchunu's office is financing the commission, with R10-R15 million budgeted for the task. "This includes the remuneration of the chairperson, other members of the commission, the secretariat and other personnel involved in the commission and related expenses, disbursements, and costs, including costs associated with

the hiring of venues across the province," said Mchunu.

Thabiso Zulu, self-styled corruption-buster and friend of slain former ANC Youth League secretary general Sindiso Magaqa, used his two-day testimony in October to thoroughly vent his spleen. He alleged that Magaqa, who had been a PR councillor at Umzimkhulu Local Municipality at the time of his death, was gunned down because he had discovered multi-million-rand corruption within Umzimkhulu, which falls under Harry Gwala District Municipality.

In his December testimony, Umzimkhulu Mayor Mphuthumi Mpabanga denied any form of corruption.

Zulu told the commission: "I don't have money, PR firms to spin things on my behalf and I don't have security. The only thing I have is the truth, documents and courage".

"I hope you can take the pressure from politicians who might ask the commission not to release the report because they say it could disrupt the 2019 elections. They are under siege and under pressure and [*will think that*] releasing the report will affect votes," he said.

In January, Zulu told *Noseweek* the establishment of the commission was "not a wrong thing", adding that it was led by "respectable people".

"The commission may be remembered like many other commissions before it: a circus, where a lot of money was spent on lawyers, where those who sought justice for their loved ones went and cried, pleading with commissioners to help them find closure and thereafter nothing happened," said Zulu.



Vasu Gounden, chairman Marumo Moerane and Professor Cheryl Potgieter of the Moerane Commission

It would be a tragedy, he said, if the commission's final report ended up "gaining dust in some office somewhere" or if "politicians and securocrats" used the report to determine how much the public knows.

But, said Zulu, the commission could also serve as a "monument of truth" where brave witnesses told the world about the deaths of their friends, parents, husbands, brothers and sisters.

"They did so knowing that they may have signed their own death warrants. They did so knowing that they would be targets of a band of securocrats, rogue elements, hitmen and corrupt politicians. But they did it anyway.

"If the commission were to fail those brave men and women who appeared before it, who by appearing there were ready to sacrifice their own sweat, tears and blood for the truth, then the commission, to quote Roman poet Horace, would be 'equal to a mountain that went into labour for a thousand years only to give birth to a ridiculous mouse'."

Community activist Vanessa Burger – best known for her work with victims of violence and alleged police torture at Umlazi's bloody Glebelands Hostel (*nose201*) – told *Noseweek* that the commission had performed well "in exposing the systemic rot at the root of KZN's violence".

"[But] it remains to be seen whether justice will be served to any greater

degree than any of the other commissions of inquiry, that, to date, have proved to be of little purpose other than costing South Africans vast amounts of money while allowing offenders to act with impunity," said Burger. Those flaccid efforts would include the Matthews, Seriti, Hefer, Khampepe and Farlam commissions of inquiry.

"The commission's terms of reference allow for full enforcement of the law. This must happen without political interference so that victims' fami-

It would be a tragedy, he said, if the commission's final report ended up 'gaining dust in some office somewhere'

lies can receive justice, closure and compensation," Burger said.

Her testimony before the commission in July last year could be compared to a right hook to a hornet's nest as she declared that Glebelands was a haven for hitmen operating throughout KZN and in other provinces, sometimes at the behest of politicians or police.

Glebelands is a sprawling, squalid, overcrowded complex that consists of 71 blocks and about 22,000 residents. Burger said that while the newer blocks consisted of family units, the medium and older blocks housed up to 10 people per room "at least" – rooms designed to accommodate four people.

Besides hitmen, the hostel is known to be a haven for criminals who extort money from residents and taxi owners. Burger said that money obtained during the "collections" was used to buy weapons, including police rifles, which were used in politically linked violence and other criminal acts.

Her testimony was corroborated when evidence leader, senior state advocate Bheki Manyathi, revealed during questioning that four witnesses who testified earlier in the year had made similar assertions.

Manyathi said that those witnesses testified that the killings in the province and Glebelands were a result of "politics, power, financial enrichment, criminality and failure on the part of the eThekweni municipality, SAPS and Durban Metro Police".



Police stand guard outside Block 52 of Umlazi's Glebelands Hostel as commissioners inspected the squalid complex last year

Burger said that more than 90 deaths in the province could be linked to hitmen based at the hostel.

Burger also told commissioners that the KZN office of the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (Ipid) was “dysfunctional” as it had failed to collect technical reports from pathologists, had done nothing about the alleged supply of firearms to warring factions by a policeman living at the hostel, and had failed to hold identity parades of police officers alleged to be involved in some of the cases of

assault and torture at Glebelands.

In December, testifying for the Ipid, national head of investigations Matthews Sesoko told the commission that its KZN office was under investigation but denied that it was dysfunctional. He said his national office had noted concerns [and] conceded that there were challenges within the KZN office. It had “instituted an investigation into such allegations by [its] Integrity Strengthening Unit”.

Sesoko said the “ongoing investigation” had identified capacity

constraints which could have resulted in non-compliance with standard operating procedures. “Appropriate action will be taken against members found to have acted contradictory to the said policy.”

Testifying in July, S’bu Zikode, founder and leader of the shack-dwellers’ movement Abahlali baseMjondolo, outlined the brutality perpetrated against shack-dwellers that had resulted in several deaths (nose215). He placed the blame for the violence at the feet of eThekweni



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mayor Zandile Gumede and the ANC.

"I do think [*the commission*] will be a success, and will do what it's supposed to do as per its mandate. It will probably exceed government expectations. However I do not believe government will take seriously or implement its recommendations," Zikode told *Noseweek*. "Government has, up until today, never attempted to take reasonable steps to end [*the killings in the province*]. Instead, they just want to be seen to be doing something about it when they simply do not care.

"We are living evidence in our movement: no arrests or serious investigations were undertaken on the murdering of housing activists. The step taken to initiate the commission is a real a worry for the ruling party and those killing politicians within it," he said.

But Zikode also told *Noseweek* that he found the commission to be "useful" and "a healing moment".

"For the first time in our history of losing comrades we were given a chance to publicly give testimony on our side of the story and how we feel about it. At least the public is now aware of how our loved ones were killed with impunity," he said.

"In many of these instances the state (police) and the ruling party were implicated. The biggest challenge though will be how the state is



Corruption fighter Thabiso Zulu, friend of slain former ANCYL secretary general Sindiso Magaqa

going to reclaim the confidence of poor communities and how we are going to trust that they can protect us and that hitmen may no longer be paid with taxpayers' money," he said.

The Hawks are leading the investigations into the KZN killings through a political task team formed over the course of 2016 and 2017, but "Glebelands matters do not form part of the task team investigations", according to Hawks spokesperson, Brigadier Hangwani Mulaudzi.

He said that since its inception the task team had received 44 cases, 25 of which were still under investigation, with 19 in court. "At least 69 arrests have been made thus far and 28 firearms seized."

"It is unfortunate that most of the cases we are dealing with are purported to be politically motivated. The task team is charged with investigating these matters. It must be understood from this background that all cases are referred to the task team based on the severity of the incident. All cases are treated as murder cases thus meaning the motives will only be determined during and after the trial," he told *Noseweek*. ■

National head of investigations Matthews Sesoko told the commission that its KZN office was under investigation but denied that it was dysfunctional



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The aerotropolis in Zuma's back yard

Madcap collaboration with Russians included 100mw nuclear power station outside Maritzburg. **By Jonathan Erasmus**

A BIZARRE PLAN TO BUILD A MEGA “aerotropolis” outside Pietermaritzburg, to be called the JG Zuma Aviation Centre – as first revealed in *nose219* – included a proposal to build a 100MW nuclear power plant next door to the KZN capital.

The entire “aerotropolis” project was officially to have been financed and built by a mysterious Czech Republic non-profit organisation called Open Doors of Europe Fund (Odef). It soon

enough emerged however that Odef was merely a proxy for unidentified Russian interests – of which the Russian government was one.

Odef's top management, together with their various Russian collaborators, arrived in South Africa to canvass for the project just 10 days after presidents Vladimir Putin and Jacob Zuma had signed a “collaboration” agreement relating to South Africa's planned R1-trillion nuclear programme. (That agreement was signed on 8 July 2015

at a BRICS summit held in Ufa, Russia.) The Odef delegation started their South African tour with a visit to President Zuma, where their project received his official blessing.

KwaZulu-Natal – despite having no sites designated for South Africa's official nuclear programme – had played host, just eight months earlier, to a secret conference between the Department of Energy and Russia's nuclear agency Rosatom at Champagne Sports Resort in the Drakensberg.

The aerotropolis also known as “Project Jacob” reeked of pure fantasy. It was to include a Russian plane manufacturing plant, a rail-based coal terminal, university campus, and an air terminal with a 4km runway capable of landing international flights.

In 2015 the project was costed at US\$21,3 billion (about R300bn at the time) which Odef proposed lending to South Africa at “1%-2% interest”. All they wanted was for the bill to be underwritten by the government, effectively guaranteeing their return on investment. Odef saw the South African government as its client.

But the entire project failed because Odef’s local partners failed to convince the National and KZN Treasuries to provide the guarantees required by their Russian funders. There was also an inordinate amount of infighting, driven by greed, for control of the proposed mega-billions that was expected to pour into the country.

The project’s failure was not through a lack of trying. They had got Zuma’s pledge of support; had schmoozed his son Edward Zuma; met the then-KZN premier Senzo Mchunu and various government officials; involved a black empowerment partner (that had no capital but was fronting for the KZN

**‘Project Jacob’
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government); and set up a South African company (a “special purpose vehicle”) called Avrora SA (Pty) Ltd to undertake the development. Even the Russian Ambassador to South Africa Mikhail Petrakov was kept in the loop.

One insider with direct knowledge of the airport deal told *Noseweek* that the Russians had made it clear there were “two prices they were willing to pay: the official one and the unofficial one” and they appeared to be flush with cash.

In documents seen by *Noseweek* the airport power plant was initially expected to be a 500MW coal plant, however, according to Mario Grothe, a Germany-based consultant who acted for Odef, they intended to build a 100MW thorium-based nuclear reactor instead. Grothe’s company, Global Union was also the lead consultancy for the airport.

The mooted Maritzburg nuclear power plant was not the only energy project that interested Odef. They claimed to have a “general agreement” with the Public Investment Corporation and claimed to have made available “€5 billion” as debt financing for the Ilanga Concentrating Solar Power (CSP) project in the Northern



Left to right: South African businessman and fixer Dr Austin Bene, Russian businessman Alexander Tokmurzin, Thorium nuclear specialist Trevor Blench, Stanislava Rousova from Open Doors of Europe Fund, Russian engineer Oleg Vasiliev and German consultant Michael Will

Cape in which the PIC holds a 20% stake.

However, *Noseweek* was told by the solar project developer, Pancho Ndebele from Emvelo Holdings (Pty) Ltd, that they did not take up the option. The PIC ignored numerous requests to outline their relationship with Odef.

Grothe said the nuclear option was even mooted to the Department of Energy as a possible project to be included in the Independent Power Producer programme most commonly associated with renewable energy. Grothe said the regulations forbidding private companies to own a nuclear power plant were “irrelevant” as ultimately their client was always going to be the South African government.

“Everything that was designed was created for the ownership of the government,” said Grothe.

However he said the investors willing to provide the debt capital for the nuclear plant were “another group of Russians” and not the same lot wanting to build the airport.

Shortly after meeting Zuma in July 2015, Global Union consultant Michael Will, along with Odef president Stanislava Rousova and two Russian businessmen with ties to the Russian government, Alexander Tokmurzin and Oleg Vasiliev, met with Trevor Blench who is an active proponent of the mineral Thorium as a stable nuclear fuel substitute for uranium and plutonium.

Blench owns a sizeable stake in Steenkampskraal Thorium Limited (STL). The company operates a monazite mine about 350km north of Cape Town. Monazite is a primary ore made up of several rare-earth metals such as cerium, lanthanum and thorium. Steenkampskraal is also supported by the likes of Norway’s Thorium Foundation, a South Korean nuclear agency, the US nuclear giant Westinghouse, and has shares in a Norwegian company called Thor Energy. Thor Energy, in turn, uses a Norwegian government nuclear reactor in Halden, Norway, to run nuclear tests using Thorium.

Blench has gone on record several times to advocate for Thorium. Blench plans to use the thorium mined by his company to manufacture pellet and pebble thorium fuels to be used in water-cooled reactors and gas-cooled

reactors respectively.

In South Africa, STL has been designing a gas-cooled, small-modular pebble-bed reactor, the HTMR-100 that according to Blench will not “melt down like the water-cooled reactors at Fukushima”. He has also advocated that Thorium is a safer nuclear fuel.

But one of the problems Thorium lobbyists have faced is that there aren’t many operational examples of Thorium being used and the nuclear industry is sceptical of design and fuel changes for obvious reasons.

Blench told *Noseweek* he’d need at least US\$1bn to build his plant, so when he was called by Will, he hopped on to a plane from Cape Town in the hope that he had a real investor.

“Michael Will invited me to meet them. I flew to Durban, we met, they showed me their airport site and they said they wanted to build my reactor in Kazakhstan and China. They also floated the idea of building a 100MW modular reactor in Pietermaritzburg. They mentioned they had met various people in the nuclear industry too. Rousova said they would get the funding and claimed to have sway with the government in South Africa.

“They claimed they were getting involved in South Africa’s nuclear programme but no documents were ever made available. After several months and telephonic conversations the deal went quiet.”

Blench said he had the impression

**Blench said he’d
need at least US\$1bn
to build his plant, so
when he was called
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that he had a
real investor**

that there was no real money available and he wasn’t convinced that the aeropolis made economic sense.

“They were after crumbs,” he said in reference to South Africa’s proposed trillion-rand nuclear programme.

Grothe, whose consultancy specialises in energy deals, said it made sense to talk to Blench as he was based in South Africa. He said the country was well positioned in its understanding of alternative nuclear fuels after mooting the now-mothballed pebble bed modular reactor. Many involved in the PBMR also worked for Blench.

Grothe said he had even approached the Department of Energy to consider the HTMR-100 being included at the airport and that they considered the option. “We are also working with Chinese with regards to [Thorium] technology.” He said he was not currently involved in any nuclear projects in South Africa.

In Odef’s only listed annual report available online (for 2014/15 and released in January 2016) they said that, having met with Blench they moved to the “marketing stage” to build his Thorium-fuelled power plants. The annual report said companies in Kazakhstan, Georgia and China had already shown an interest and that the project was being driven by Grothe.

The report went on to state that on 13 November 2015 they signed confidentiality agreements with three partners to build the electricity plants. Blench last heard from Odef and Global Union in mid-2016.

The opaqueness in how Odef operates – from a small office above a school supply store in Brno, Czech Republic – makes it hard to believe they are a legitimate enterprise. Judging by their annual report it appears their sole purpose is to convince developmental states such as Sudan and Kazakhstan to provide state guarantees to large projects in which Odef would provide the debt financing, consultants, developers and builders.

They appeared to be more like economic hitmen attempting to lumber countries with unnecessary debt, rather than – as it claims in its articles of association – to work “closely with foreign entities” and “exchange, cultural, spiritual, economic and social relations” between the Czech Republic and the world. ■

Why you should never accept a drink, a cigarette and sandwich

Veteran journalist and arts aficionado Len Ashton celebrates 15 years as *Noseweek's* books editor. Sue Segar chats to him about his long career in newspapers and lessons he's learnt on the job

TRYING TO SUM UP HIS CAREER, LEN Ashton muses: "I've met extraordinary people and done some extraordinary things – a long way from Klerksdorp".

That's where Ashton grew up, having been born en route to the dusty mining town while his parents were in the throes of moving their family there.

He and his seven siblings were born to an English mother and Irish father. His maternal great-grandfather had come to South Africa with the Coldstream Guards during the Anglo-Boer War. Ashton's father ran shops and then worked in the mines "Ours was a very Irish family, of painters and writers – a lot of us – and part of our energy came from a determination to get the hell out of Klerksdorp!"

Len's oldest brother Bill became a renowned portrait painter in Johannesburg and was commissioned to paint, among others, the Chancellor of Wits University and the mining-house bosses. His brother Ronald was a choreographer and another brother, Terence, became a teacher at Pretoria Boys High School. Years later, Lord Peter Hain would pay a moving tribute to Terence in an interview with *The Guardian*, saying that Terence Ashton had played a vital role in his life, especially when the young Hain arrived home with his younger brother one day, to find that both his parents had been arrested.

We've spent a lovely afternoon in Ashton's pad in Vredehoek, Cape Town, going through some of his memorabilia – copies of magazines he's edited, clippings from his vast body of journalistic work, photographs, and souvenirs of



Len Ashton in Pretoria in 1975 flanked by Maud Adams and OJ Simpson who were in South Africa during the filming of *Killer Force*

visits to places like Universal Pictures to interview film stars.

Ashton began his career straight out of school, at *The Star* newspaper, and went on to become arts editor for several of the country's top newspapers.

"That impulse to be creative and outgoing in the world is hereditary," says Ashton. He shows me a photograph of his great-grandpa, Stafford Parker, "a bit of a lovable rogue". "He was president of the Diamond Fields Republic for a whole year before the British said, 'you can't go on like this!'"

He explains: "A bunch of prospectors found diamonds in the area between the Vaal and the Harts rivers and

proclaimed Klipdrift a republic, with Stafford Parker as first (and only) president. The British decided otherwise and imposed their rule on the pioneers. Those who lived there called it the Diamond Fields Republic but in fact, it was part of the colony."

There's a photo of a dashing young Len reclining on a lawn, "somewhere in Pretoria" along with a woman, "Bond girl" Maud Adams, and a younger OJ Simpson – both visiting South Africa for the movie *Killer Force*. In another photograph, there is Len, looking every bit as glamorous as the young Canadian actress he's posing with – Genevieve Bujold (who played Anne Boleyn in the 1969 movie *Anne of the*

Thousand Days). Names of famous people Ashton's met during his career slip off his tongue: Gregory Peck; Jack Lemmon; Olivia de Havilland... "What you really remember is the individuals," he says. "Sometimes the person is a reverse of the public impression."

Ashton has reviewed innumerable plays and movies and interviewed a vast range of people, from politicians to business leaders, to authors and film stars. He recalls once arriving at Parliament, smartly dressed in a suit for the occasion, to interview Baleka Mbete (whose was then serving her first term as Speaker). When she came to meet him in the lobby, she looked right past him then said: "I hadn't expected anyone this organised."

Ashton has "always been interested in words". In standard five, at primary school in Klerksdorp, he won the prize for the best serial story – earning a copy of *Tom Sawyer*.

He went off to Potchefstroom Boys High as a boarder. "The judges sent their boys there from Pretoria. I would tell my mother the food was the best. It enraged her."

While at high school, he wrote to the editor of *The Star* and applied for a job. "They wrote back to me courteously and said, 'we will see you once you have done your exams.'" He got the job.

"I went up, and then what happened is that newspapers educated me. It was not just plain sailing. I was disciplined. New recruits to *The Star* started out in what was known as the reader's box. That's where you read every word in the paper, including the smalls, for about six months. They are testing your concentration and making sure you get the broad picture. You read everything from the politics to the death notices. You had to prove you could concentrate on everything. It was a test of alertness. I enjoyed surviving it. I am picky about language.

"After that there was training. The Argus company had a very good training school. About 20 of us were shipped to Cape Town and the old mahogany boardroom at the top of the Argus building, Newspaper House, was our lecture room. Among the subjects we were taught was newspapers and the law. Our Afrikaans teacher, a fierce redhead, was executrix of poet C.J. Langenhoven's estate.



With Canadian actor Genevieve Bujold at United Artists studio in Hollywood

Rumour was that she'd been his lover. We were all agog."

Then followed a few years of court reporting, first in the magistrate's courts and then the supreme court. He covered a bit of water polo and other sports in between. He also interviewed people, but it was the arts that had the most appeal and really drew him.

Ashton spent a few years in London, on one occasion, working for Reuters. He was also posted to The Argus

Bureau in Fleet Street for three years and on his return became arts editor of the *Pretoria News*. "I remember a young guy coming into my office one day and saying, 'I can write. Give me some stuff to do.' His name was Martin Welz."

Next, Ashton became arts editor of *The Sunday Times*, where his career took off. "I had a lot of fun doing lots of writing and reviewing, writing profiles and humour columns for the Leader page. They were all judgemental exercises. It takes a long time going through the disciplines of journalism. One has to be slapped into shape to some degree and eventually you earn the right to comment and have your say. I have been fortunate in that way."

He had a large staff at that time, including Gwen Gill and Jani Allen – "a highly intelligent young woman who delivered a lot of useful fluff and entertainment. Her weakness was a need for publicity. She was a fragile person who dressed dramatically and worked very hard."

Ashton was promoted to assistant editor of *The Sunday Times* and wrote leaders at a crucial time in South African history.

For many years he was a fixture on the panel of judges for the Fleur du Cap theatre awards. As an arts reviewer he was "out four or five nights of the week".

Ashton's role at *Noseweek*, has included liaising with cartoonists for

'Ours was a very Irish family, of painters and writers – a lot of us – and part of our energy came from a determination to get the hell out of Klerksdorp!'

the magazine's covers. "Compared with the hullaballo of my life before, my time at *Noseweek* has been relatively quiet, but interesting to see how Martin Welz created his dream".

Ashton has been married and divorced twice, with children from both unions. His second wife was an American diplomat who was sent to India and then became Ambassador to Tunisia. "We were together for only three months of the year; it sounds glamorous but was not always easy."

Among the most memorable books he has read, Ashton remembers a forbidden one from childhood, *Great Murders*. "It was a whole set of books which belonged to my father and I wasn't supposed to see them as they were illustrated too. I was caught out eventually. They were gripping stories about horrible crimes, with illustrations of terrified people running away from ghastly villains."

Vanity Fair left a lasting impression on him. "It was a setwork for one of the senior classes and I got hold of it. It's an enormously accurate and exciting observation of humanity. The author, William Makepeace Thackeray, was a contemporary of Charles Dickens and he had that realistic approach to writing. I remember guys at school saying, 'why are you reading that? You don't have to'.

"It has to do with memorable, not black-and-white characters like Becky Sharpe, who was not as good as she should or could have been but had to survive, so she did the best she could.

"When I read that book, it was the first time I'd come across that kind of character: sophisticated and true. That's how human beings are."

He also rates John le Carré as an all-time favourite. "I enjoy and envy his brilliant observation. He is like a very good host. He entertains and he surprises you. He's one of the people I would really like to meet. A friend of mine was reading a Le Carré novel on the plane a few years ago and the guy next to him wanted to talk. All the way from London to New York my friend buried himself in his book. Guess who the guy next to him was? It was Le Carré himself. Poor old Ian. The author asked him if he'd enjoyed the book. Le Carré was the one person he'd have loved to engage in conversation."

Characters who have fascinated him



With friend in Tunisia in 1997

include the Indian director Mira Nair, who directed "one of the finest films I have ever seen", *Farewell Bombay*, about a child who lands up in that city by mistake. In South Africa, a firm favourite is "extraordinary" actress Sandra Prinsloo.

A movie that stands out among the hundreds he has reviewed was the 2003 epic war film *Cold Mountain*. "What a romance! It didn't hurt that Nicole Kidman was at her radiant best. She is magnificently beautiful. The movie had a restraint about it."

A highlight of Ashton's career was meeting Nelson Mandela when he visited the *Weekend Argus*. "His hand was like a boxer's hand. I found it very moving."

And one of the most impressive people he's met was Bram Fischer, whom he encountered as a cub reporter. "Fischer was conducting a very complicated case to do with land rights in the Pretoria Supreme Court. I couldn't really understand what was going on, so I approached him. He invited me to a café and, over a toasted cheese and tomato sandwich he explained everything with such clarity that, click, I understood! I thought, that is a mind! He was an extraordinary human being with great charisma."

What does Ashton think of the decline of the print industry?

"It's depressing but the world is

changing. It's the electronic age. It's no good if you're in the news business, trying to sell news, as it's out before you can run to a phone. It's a more superficial world because it means there is not much time for thinking about things and weighing them up.

"I remember one of the early news events I watched covered on television was the Six Day War. I was in London. It was very dramatic but I kept thinking, there were so many flashes and bangs but was there any real analysis of what was going on? You soon realise you actually need to sit down and say 'wait, what does this mean?'"

"I am sad to see the slow death of newspapers. It relates to the superficiality of things. We are all in such a hurry. I was very lucky that my timing was good in the print industry. I was trained and went into the business when it was big, strong, confident and sophisticated."

Ashton, who describes himself as a reticent man, not accustomed to being interviewed, says of his style of writing: "I was trained to be the observer, it was strict training. You do not obtrude yourself. You get it right... you get the meaning of whatever you are observing. It is not a vanity trip. So there was no room for that kind of thing. You got the facts and got the opposite side of the story."

Can he name a lesson he has learnt from life?

"As a young reporter I learnt not to take a drink, a sandwich and a cigarette simultaneously. I was at a British Embassy reception. A beautiful, wicked woman wearing a hat came and offered them to me and I found I couldn't handle all three. Eventually the butler rescued me.

"I'm also still learning how to make a proper contribution to friendships. A woman friend once asserted that men are hopeless at sustaining society. 'Women organise every social event and men think these are things you attend.' She had a point. So every two or three years I throw a party of some kind, just to get friends around."

Fellow journalist and friend Jen Crocker has a tale about Ashton: once when he came to visit her in hospital he brought her a bottle of Aromat as a gift – "because hospital food is so bland". ■

Leading Europe out of darkness

MICHEL HEYNS REVIEWS

A Legacy of Spies by John le Carré (Viking)

THIS IS, BY MY COUNT, LE CARRÉ'S 26TH novel, in a writing life extending from 1961 to the present. Possibly his best-known novel is his third, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, of 1963. It is not the least of the virtues of this latest work to send one back to that early masterpiece. For, though *A Legacy of Spies* can stand on its own perfectly well, it leans heavily on the earlier novel for its backstory, and I found myself rereading *The Spy* the moment I'd finished the recent novel, this time with the added pleasure of knowing where it was all going to lead in the 44 intervening years.

Where it leads to is a little farm in Brittany, where Peter Guillam, ex-member of George Smiley's stable of spies at the Circus, headquarters of the Secret Intelligence Service, is trying to live a quiet life. Guillam, in his day one of the lustiest and randiest of spies, is now

a septuagenarian of retired though not celibate habits, and is not pleased to receive a summons to London, to his old employers, in accordance with his "lifelong duty to attend, should Circus needs dictate".

Arriving in London, Guillam discovers that Circus needs dictate that he divulge all he can remember of Operation Windfall, a "British deception operation... mounted against the East German Intelligence Service (Stasi) in the late nineteen fifties and early sixties [that] resulted in the death of the best British secret agent I ever worked with and of the innocent woman for whom he gave his life." The agent in question is Alec Leamas, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, and the woman is his lover, Liz Gold.

It transpires that the moral climate in London has changed: where during

the Cold War the deaths of innocent people could be discounted as the necessary price for the defence of democratic values, nowadays the innocent people or their progeny demand compensation from the faceless bureaucracy that caused or sanctioned the deaths. But the agents of justice need to put a face on the facelessness, and Guillam's is the one that comes up: he is being sued for €1 million by the surviving son of Alec Leamas. To save his skin, he must tell the story of Operation Windfall.

So Guillam, who hardly features in the earlier novel, takes centre stage, and we are given the same events, or many of the same events, from a very different angle. Leamas is now a legendary character, and even the villains of that piece – the vile Hans-Dieter Mundt, the enigmatic Fiedler, the treasonous Bill Haydon – have gone to their deserts. The Circus has moved to a concrete monstrosity on the Thames, and the functionaries interrogating Guillam are young, breezy, cocksure.

Some of the best scenes in the novel are those between the senior Secret Service Lawyer – named Bunny! – and a taciturn, wily Guillam, the one all perky insincere charm, the other all surly evasiveness. But slowly the story of Operation Windfall emerges, as grippingly as the first time, this time with additional material in the person of "Tulip", an East German defector Guillam was in love with.

The theme both novels have in common is explicated at the end of this one by Peter Guillam, in a conversation with a reclusive Smiley: "[H]ow much of our human feeling can we dispense with in the name of freedom, would you say, before we cease to feel either human or free?"

If that question resonates in the age of Trump, Smiley's own question does so no less eloquently, in the age

of Brexit: "So was it all for England then? [...] But whose England? Which England? England all alone, a citizen of nowhere? I'm a European, Peter. If I had a mission – if I was ever aware of one beyond our business with the enemy, it was to Europe. [...] If I had an unattainable ideal, it was of leading Europe out of her darkness towards a new age of reason. I have it still."

Is it fanciful to see in Smiley's testament the 86-year-old Le Carré's own credo?

LEN ASHTON REVIEWS

Churchill & Smuts: The Friendship by Richard Steyn (Jonathan Ball Publishing)

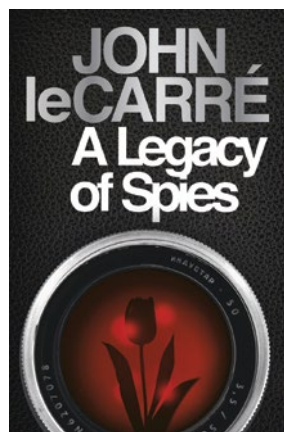
OH, THE BLUSHFUL IRONY OF IT; RICHARD Steyn's fine study of the mutually respectful relationship between two historic free speech champions carries a foreword calculated to appease authoritarian word police.

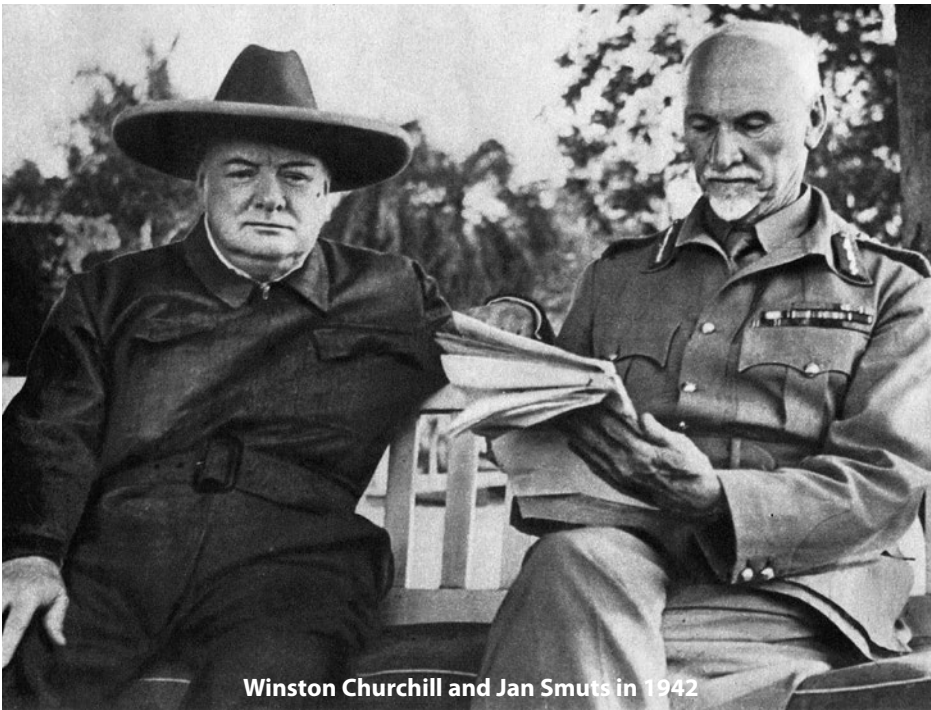
This verbal curtesy reminds us that South Africa is a terminological minefield and that, in Smuts's time, law and custom distinguished between race groups. "In the book I have used the racial descriptions applicable at the time, so that the words 'native', 'black' and 'African', for instance, are used interchangeably".

Steyn's two lifelong protagonists of free speech must be spinning in their graves at the current vogue for limp and confusing euphemism. But clearly the publishers are wary of trouble from deeply sensitive readers. One would hate to provoke a recurrence of book-burning.

Principles derived from hard lessons learned in two brutal world wars could usefully be applied in contemporary South Africa. Both Churchill and Smuts did valiant battle internationally after the end of hostilities, to persuade the conquerors against concentrating on vengeance, instead of taking the long-term view and planning creatively.

Churchill argued that the Germans must be "clothed, sheltered and fed", and warned that the Allies "ought not





Winston Churchill and Jan Smuts in 1942

to be drawn into extravagances by the fullness of their victory”.

In 1918, Smuts, with customary foresight, spent the final months of war agonising about the difficulties of the coming peace. A speech drafted by Smuts for British Prime Minister Lloyd George proclaimed “in the language of moral and political principle” that Britain’s war aims were based upon achieving justice for those who had suffered, rather than a desire for vengeance”. The British economist John Maynard Keynes, with Smuts’s active encouragement, penned a devastating critique of the eventual vengeful war settlement terms, titled *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*.

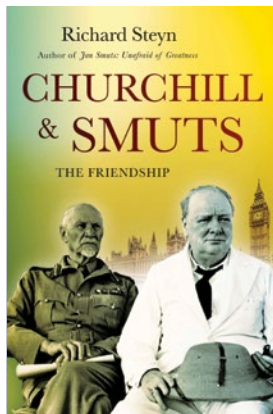
Churchill, in his inimitable style, wrote that the economic life of Germany was “essential to our own peace and prosperity. We do not want a land of broken, scheming disbanded armies, putting their hand to the sword because they cannot find the spade or the hammer”.

After the First World War, Churchill wrote a personal letter to Smuts which

demonstrated the warmth of their growing relationship. An extract: “All the many kindnesses and services you rendered to me in the stormy ups and downs of the great struggle have made a lasting impression on my mind. I can never forget your sympathy and comradeship. I shall always look back on those fierce, crowded days and in them I shall always see your friendship and courage and wise counsel.”

And they cemented their mutual respect in, and after, the Second World War. They understood each other intellectually and physically. Their differences supplemented each other. Both were highly intelligent, both were soldiers, both were idealists with broad international perspectives.

They were free spirits with profound faith in the benefits of democracy. Both would have been puzzled by the current South African tendency to “think small”. They were zestful, admired and idealistic participants in world affairs. Perhaps the new political leadership of this country will begin to demonstrate a broader appreciation of our place in the world beyond our own back yard. ■



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Farm murder. Burying New Year cheer

JUST WHEN I THOUGHT OUR MZANSI was going into the New Year with a rosier outlook – after the ANC elected a president who seems to know what the term “moral fibre” means – our optimism is slapped down by some idiotic incident that drains one’s patriotism and invites despondence. I am talking about the killing of a mourner during a funeral on a farm in Cramond near Pietermaritzburg.

This tragic incident might have been avoided if only the police had heeded the community’s reported request for their presence at the funeral.

News reports and broadcasts said the farmer had objected to the burial being conducted on his farm. The community, anticipating and fearing the farmer’s reaction, had asked the police to be present but the police did not oblige. Now a man is dead and another has ruined his life with almost certain prosecution for murder.

Why oh why did the police ignore the community’s request? Are they oblivious to the tense and volatile situation that surrounds our farm issues? If so, then Police minister Fikile Mbalula needs to put the same kind of energy into educating these cops about community policing as he exerted in his previous position as Sports minister when, a few years back, he was hellbent on trying to bring Beyoncé to South Africa for the South African Sports Awards – at enormous cost to the taxpayer.

Thankfully Mbalula is Minister of Sport and Recreation no longer, otherwise we could have had Beyoncé shaking her bootylicious at the ANC. Yes, the man seemed obsessed with the American singer. May he please redirect that preoccupation into training his police service in community relations.

But let not the Mbalula-Beyoncé humour dilute the serious message.

I happen to have personal experience of something similar: early last year a group of women walked on to my farm and told me they were there on the advice of the police. Naturally, I am baffled. Police? Why?

They explained that their relatives are buried on my farm and they would like to tend their graves. They said they had first gone to the police because they feared the farmer would deny them access or worse. Unfounded fears? Ask the police at Cramond.

Well, at first I was taken aback by the women’s fears. “Why would you be afraid of me, I am one of you, black?” They said they hadn’t known who lived here, only that they would be facing a farmer.

“The police then explained who you were and stressed that they doubted we would face a problem – since you wrote stories about things like this in support of the negatively affected community.”

OK, Barberton is a small town and I am certainly no stranger to the police. And yes, in my case they were spot on. However, they were also wrong to reassure the women that they would find an accommodating Bheki beyond the farm gate.

What if Bheki had insisted to the then Mpumalanga Department of Land Affairs, that there was no land claim on this farm? And what if he did not want to have a bunch of people telling him about some grave of their grandfather, mother etc on the farm? Which is precisely what happened with these women and their graves.

And, while this Bheki might not pull out a gun – as the Cramond farmer is alleged to have done – he could have easily denied the women access and insisted they get proof of the validity of their claims to the graves. A process this writer knows well from covering land-claim cases. This would surely

have been a frustrating development for the women, not to mention the emotional pain of being denied access to a loved-one’s grave.

The moral of the story is that the police should have accompanied these women to my farm – even if only to pave the way for a cooperative interaction between myself and the women – but more, to stress that they have the legal right to access the graves.

The women also said the police had told them that if I refused their request, there was nothing more they could do and they would have to apply for a court order. Legal advice is not what these women had sought from the police; they had asked for police protection from possible hostility and/or harm – one of the police’s main functions: to serve and protect.

The Cramond tragedy has highlighted one of the big problems encountered at our police stations: a laissez-faire attitude to many a request or complaint. For example: “Argh man he is your husband, can’t you talk to him instead of putting him in jail?”

Yes, without a doubt the farmer needs to face the full might of the law. After all, if the media reports are anything to go by, he was carrying three weapons and pumped three bullets into the deceased. However, he is not the only one whose case should be examined in court. Heads need to roll at the Cramond Police Station. Someone there needs to explain why they failed to heed the community’s request for their presence.

And Cramond should send a thunderous message to Mbalula about community policing. I suggest the minister move his bootylicious and address this weak spot. He definitely has a better chance of succeeding with that than having dinner with Beyoncé. ■



Religious groups. Cults by any other name

IN A LAND OF CRIPPLING INEQUALITY AND crime, people look to charismatic leaders to sell them the promise of prosperity and paradise. South Africa is ripe for the taking. It is no surprise that these leaders can be found housed in inner cities where the new-age church is the only source of joy on a dirty, dingy street.

I started thinking of these kinds of churches when I saw some footage of Tim Omotoso, a Nigerian charismatic pastor who operates in South Africa, where, at the end of a sermon, the self-proclaimed prophet and his entourage make their way to a German car as the large crowd of congregants literally throw themselves at him. Even as he closes the car door, others kneel at the wheels to get a chance to touch him, and many cling to the vehicle as it speeds away on a crowded Durban street.

"This is a cult," I thought, amid all the chaos and extreme show of blind devotion. How far does this supposed devotion go? When news broke in early 2017 that Omotoso had been accused of kidnapping and the sexual assault of young female congregants, Hawks and Home Affairs employees who are members of his church allegedly tried to assist him avoid arrest.

One congregant said she was pained by the arrest and accusations. Another accused the alleged victims of lying about "Daddy", a term of endearment for the leader.

Then there is "Dr." HQ Nala. I was told I live under a rock for not knowing about him, but he is evidently a self-proclaimed king who has openly denounced Christianity in favour of his own Jesus-flavoured religion that embraces polygamy.

He registered on my bullshit detector when I learned of his HIV-curing holy water sold at a premium price per bottle. I actually met the man when he came to a television station where



Pastor Tim Omotoso

I worked, accompanied by an entourage of bodyguards and servants who carried his heavy iPad for him.

I saw the charm attributed to many a cult leader swallow my colleagues at the TV station: friends scrambled to catch a glimpse of this new-age messiah clad in a shiny suit of his own unique style. The whole time I had thought they adored the man ironically, but I later found out I was wrong; even people outside his church (kingdom?) believe in his powers and divinity.

That includes the Umzimkhulu Municipal Council, it seems. Nala's church posted a video of him receiving a royal welcome during a council sitting, complete with a standing ovation and praise-singing by councillors as he made his way to a white throne situated opposite the corridor, all king-like. Servants brought him his water and iPad, kneeling next to him, for Christ's sake!

I have no idea what business he has with the Umzimkhulu Municipality but clearly his cult-leader charm has

many in its grip.

So, is it fair to call such churches cults? Is it just a negative connotation I and others have because we find some of their practices harmful? Are they really harmful, or do I just disagree with these practices because I'm an atheist who hates personality praise?

These are just some of the questions that Dr Stephan Pretorius, of the University of South Africa, also raises in an article published in the *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*. He warns against over-generalising what we call a "cult", and that the label does not always have to be a negative one. The term cult can actually just refer to religious defectors who start their own church in protest of the teachings of another, or it can be a term incorrectly thrown around to describe groups most of us consider weird.

He conducted a study in the *Journal of HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, where he interviewed former members of rural and urban cults across the country. Preferring to call them "alternative religious groups", Dr Pretorius writes that people are drawn to these movements because of the love they get from other members, among other benefits. Attractive is also the authoritative charismatic leader who easily convinces them to join.

In the same study, Pretorius notes that members of some alternative religious groups felt their churches did not have a positive impact on their lives, and that in fact, they struggled to "adapt to society and other religious groups after leaving the group".

Cults or not, such churches have captured the hearts and minds of many poor and vulnerable people all over South Africa. They are convinced they've found their saviour, but I'm not so sure. ■



Tiger. Training for wings

DON'T SUPPOSE THERE'S any reason why Witbank should have got less ugly than it was 73 years ago: shabby feral gum trees sprung at random about the flat untidy veld, dirty and dry dry dry, cracks in the brick-hard earth seeping wisps of sulphur dioxide gas, deadly, choking, from the perpetually smouldering coal seams underground. But of course being so flat it was dead right for an airfield, that's where SAAF No 8 Air School was, and right over in a far corner I shared a room with Pupil Pilots Vic and Biebie, fresh out of school and training for our wings.

Only a barbed-wire boundary fence separates us from the repellent landscape, and there one Sunday morning as we come back from breakfast stands incongruously a dainty blue-eyed schoolgirl with a halo of golden hair like the sun rising, her dress is crisp delicate white against the grim background, her voice delicate too, with an accompaniment of soft gurgles from turtle doves. Indeed her name is Dawn.

She is from that farmhouse over there and she wishes she were 18 like us and grown up so she too could learn to fly. We expect to go solo soon, we answer, and she gasps Oh I wish I wish I wish I could do that! It is tradition, say I, that when you go solo you should buy a cake for your instructor. I'll bring you one too.

Up among the clouds in the Tiger Moth the saturnine Bertie Wold in the front cockpit suddenly says "Take me home," and I head for Witbank. There I deftly side-slip off excess altitude and alight graceful as a seagull; now what will he think of that, hey?

"You drive this aeroplane like a shit-cart," says Bertie. "I'm getting out. Taxi back to the fence here."



At the fence I stop and he dumps his parachute pack on the grass, plants his plump bum upon it and lights a fag. I sit there in the Tiger and look at him. He waves me away soundlessly, telling me voetsak. Which I do.

It seems this Tiger hates waddling around on the ground, but we're soon at the downwind end of the field, I turn her into the wind and open the throttle wide. In a few seconds her tail is up and she's nipping tiptoe over the tufts of grass and my ears are filled with the loud hollow drumming of it, she's resonant as a guitar with her wood-and-fabric construction. Then abruptly the drumming stops and it's really happening: I'm flying solo! I nudge the stick back at forty-five knots and without Bertie's freight of flesh aboard she springs so wildly into the air that I have to push her down again and hold her just off the grass, then pull back slowly, and elegantly she sails up to a thousand feet as if she has just risen from the hand of Noah.

I wobble the wings and for the first time get that strange feeling that they are my fingers stuck out in the

air. This air in the air seems different from the air on the ground, sort of brittle as it hisses and tears at my head. I look at the empty instructor's cockpit and get a sudden shock at realising what I'm doing. What if I should suddenly go faint? What if my arms should suddenly go numb, hey? What then, when I'm all alone? But in two twos I'm around the circuit and on final approach and there still sits Bertie with his fat arse on his parachute and he hasn't even done smoking his fag, things have happened so fast.

I come close over his head throttled back. I hold her off at a couple of feet and she

sinks so daintily to the ground that I feel the grass brushing her tyres before the wheels touch it. We do a perfect three-point landing, no bounce because she's totally stalled, and we roll just a few paces before stopping and turning back to fetch Bertie. I pull up next to him, he heaves his parachute and bulbous buttocks into the cockpit and speaks to me over the Tiger's primitive hosepipe intercom: I'll have biltong, he says, I don't eat cake.

On Sunday I nip over to the canteen and buy a big slice of chocolate cake on a paper plate for Dawn, so do Vic and BB with vanilla and lemon, and sure enough, there she is at the fence, beaming at our success. So you did it! she cries, Oh I wish, I wish, I WISH I could!

That awesome sense of reality, the seizing of the sensory moment, these are the things of childhood that get slowly lost to us grown-ups. But this image remains sharp, sharp, clear: the dainty white dress against the shabby veld, the gurgling doves and the cakes. And especially the sunrise golden hair. ■

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