

NEWS YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO KNOW

noseweek

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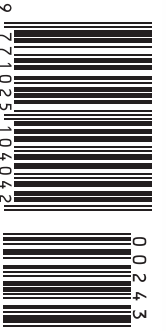
**Cyril's secret
deal with
SARS men**

**Wonderboom
airport: It gets
much worse!**

**Another Berrangé
liquidation fiasco**

**Philippi gardens:
What's the DA done?**

**Sandton
valuation
scandal**



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ISSUE 243 • JANUARY 2020



- 4 Letters**
- 6 Editorial**
- 28 Books**
- 29 Letter from Umjindi**
- 30 Last Round**
- 31 Smalls**

FEATURES

8 Cyril's secret deal with 'rogue unit' executives

Nugent Commission suppressed an affidavit that potentially compromised Ramaphosa

12 New Wonderboom fixers hail from the realm of state capture

Airport has no budget for trio's R12 million consultancy fee

14 What is WikiLeaks?

Why you should care about its founder Julian Assange's threatened extradition to the US

18 Another Berrangé liquidation scandal

'Dishonest dealings' over sale of multi-million-rand property development

21 Cape Town mayor urged to save precious aquifer and treasured Philippi farmland

An open letter to Mayor Dan Plato by Karen Morris

24 Julia from Jakkalsfontein

Feisty octogenarian has driven the length of Africa and documented her adventures in 'My African Conquest: Cape to Cairo at 80'

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Letters

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McLaren does it again!

I HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM A SITE INSPECTION of The Leonardo, Africa's tallest skyscraper newly towering above the richest square mile in Sandton, just 100 metres from the JSE.

The occupation certificate has been issued and the lights are on. The sectional title register has still to be recorded in the Deeds Office, so I don't yet know who bought the penthouse suite sold off-plan for R250 million.

In the Johannesburg General Valuation Roll 2018 the council's service provider eValuations valued it as Vacant Land, at R4,792,000. Remarkable, since, according to the deeds registry, the owners bought the land in 2013 for R110m.

There was only one objection to their 2018 valuation – lodged by me.

The outcome: eValuations revalued the bulk development land for this mixed-use precinct (penthouses, apartments, 11 floors of offices and retail including a MacDonalds) for the tallest building in Africa – height: 234 metres (11m taller than Transnet's Carlton Centre built by Anglo American and SA Breweries in 1973) at just R11.9m on 28 Feb 2019 – one-tenth of what had been paid for

it six years earlier and only 5% of what the owners got for just the three-floor penthouse! I have lodged another appeal.

In case there is any doubt about the valuator's incompetence (or worse), Nedbank currently hold bonds on the property for a total of R2.2 billion!

A title deeds search for Sandown Erf 6 Rem. Ext. 5948m² reveals that the owner is Seventy Five On Maude Pty Ltd.

The directors are listed as Albertus H Dorrestein, Kenneth L Reynolds, Patricia L Stone and Neil G Yates.

Dr Robert McLaren
Rates crusader

Thank you Rob! – Ed.

Tshwane land purchases

THANK YOU FOR THE DETAILED REPORTS researched by Susan Puren. I've been involved in marketing residential properties around Pretoria for more than 40 years and the calculation of feasibility studies for different township developers. Why on earth would a purchaser rely on a valuation undertaken by the Seller?

The purchase price of R48 million recommended by Metse Mabeba and Nava Pillay is more than four times

higher than the real value determined by Mankuroane Matseba.

The three people involved (Mabeba, Pillay and Mothoagae) in this dubious transaction should be thoroughly investigated and be held responsible for the loss if found guilty.

The proposed zoning of 60 units/ha would result in a development of more than two storeys and, in case of 1,026 units, of more than three storeys!

P.R.
Pretoria

Pillay's pension

A CASE OF "ALL POLITICIANS ARE CORRUPT, but some politicians are more corrupt than others"?

David Arundel
Coventry, UK

■ PILLAY'S PENSION CAPER (NOSE 242) SOUNDS like the EFF in disguise. The man in the street must work from 8-5 every week day and pay exorbitant taxes so that government ministers and their cronies can benefit from schemes such as this. It is a disgrace. Pravin Gordhan and his mates are devious.

Andre Crause
Southbroom



Stent

Letters

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■ IF THIS IS AN OFFENCE IN LAW, BRING it on and charge him. Or was he, like many of his ilk, just playing the system to his own advantage?

Klaus Muller
Jukskei Park

■ AT MOST, PRAVIN GORDHAN MAY BE guilty of “accommodating” an old “struggle colleague” by using his discretion somewhat unwisely. He derived no personal benefit. I don’t believe he has ever claimed to be a saint.

Elio Boezio
Kragga Kamma Park

At a R1.1m cost to the tax payer, setting a precedent that could cost billions. – Ed.

■ NEITHER PILLAY NOR GORDHAN HAVE pillaged millions, as many other cadres have done. This is really “small fry”.

Theresa Wysoke
Johannesburg

Old Mutual is dismayed

WE NOTE WITH DISMAY, YOUR COMMENTS IN the December *Noseweek* about our decision to withdraw our application to close the Old Mutual Gold Fund.

While we are aware of a previous *Noseweek* article regarding investors’ concerns around the decision to amalgamate the fund with the Old Mutual Equity Fund, given our appreciation of editorial freedom and the right to express opinion, we were comfortable that the opinions in that article be voiced. So also with David Melvill’s recent article on the topic.

[1] However, certain statements in your most recent article titled “Look what we’ve done” (December 2019) are baseless. Journalistic integrity requires serious allegations like these to be supported by facts, however your comments concerning our decision to close the fund include accusations of “fraud” and a strategy to profit from the deliberate misleading of our clients, which we believe to be wholly unfounded. We were also not afforded a right of reply before publication.

[2] Should you not be able to provide the facts supporting these statements,

we respectfully request that you print a retraction on these specific points.

For your reference, we set out the facts which informed our rationale for taking this decision:

[3] As you may be aware, Old Mutual Investment Group is the last remaining asset manager in South Africa to offer a Gold equity unit trust. Like our peers – who have already taken the decision to close their Gold Funds – we conducted extensive analysis of the gold and resources sector before coming to this decision.

We concluded that these sectors are unlikely to offer an optimal solution for clients looking for consistent returns over the long term. This is despite the recent performance we have seen in the gold sector.

[4] The subsequent ballot of investors in the Gold Fund in respect of an amalgamation into the Equity Fund was based on a specified regulatory process. The votes are sent to and audited by independent auditors, with the final outcome subject to approval from the FSCA.

[5] The ballot process was successful, based on industry standards and practice, however, we were concerned about the number of clients that voted against the ballot and, as such, we took the decision to respect the voices of our clients and withdraw our merger application to the FSCA.

[6] While we ultimately believe that amalgamation of these funds into the Old Mutual Equity Fund is in the best interests of our clients, we have nonetheless heard their concerns and given our commitment to consistently putting our clients first, we believe that responding to these concerns is the fairest outcome for clients.

Jenna Wilson
Head of PR
Old Mutual Wealth and
Investments
Pinelands

Noseweek is pleased to hear of your support for editorial freedom and note your appreciation of your client (and Noseweek reader) David Melvill’s right to have expressed an opinion about your proposed fund merger.

On to your complaints in the numbered paragraphs above:

[1] On a closer reading you might note that the accusations of “fraud” and a suspected strategy to profit from the deliberate misleading of your clients – which you believe to be wholly unfounded – are a quote from a letter addressed to the FSCA by the selfsame David Melvill, whose views you have previously so appreciated. We might add that, based on the facts, as stated in our articles, this was not an unreasonable deduction.

The merger would not be in the current interests of the Gold Fund investors, and the so-called majority vote was a legal presumption – what you call a “specified regulatory process,” contrary to the reality.

[4] Given the presumption that a non-vote is a yes vote, and the fact that the majority of clients invariably don’t vote at all, the audit provides a farcical cover for fiction.

The fact that the process is based on “Industry standards and practice” is equally deplorable.

Confronted with the reality by your clients and Noseweek, you in fact concede the point in [5] and [6] by not acting in accordance with the so-called “majority” vote certified by the auditors, but rather taking into account the concerns of the true majority who actually voted against the merger.

The explanation you offer in [4]: that the decision to close the Gold Fund was based on “extensive analysis of the local gold and resources sector” does not accord with what you told clients in the letter advising them of your fund merger plans: there you spoke of client confusion and your fund managers’ administrative convenience.

An ongoing analysis of the local gold sector would have told you that the timing of the merger you were proposing was particularly bad for Gold Fund investors – unless you had another agenda.

I find no reason to apologise for or retract anything in our articles on the subject. I do, however, appreciate your having taken the trouble to write to Noseweek to exercise your right of reply. – Ed.

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Why should we care about Julian Assange?

One of the best ways to achieve justice is to expose injustice – Julian Assange

JULIAN ASSANGE, IS FOUNDER OF WIKILEAKS, the organisation that, over the past decade, launched and inspired the flood of data leaks around the world, exposing the secret misdeeds of the previously untouchable in politics and business. Assange has since been the victim of an intense smear campaign. Like most people, he is no saint. But when you fully inform yourself of his case and his work, he's on the right side of history.

For publishing leaks exposing the misdeeds of the US military in the Middle East, the US political and defence establishments are determined to get their hands on Assange "to lock him up for 175 years".

In 2012 he was arrested in Britain on an Interpol warrant calling for his extradition to Sweden to face sexual offence charges there. While on bail pending the extradition hearing, he learned that the warrant was probably a ruse to hand him over to the United States authorities. (The Swedish sexual offence charges have since been withdrawn.)

Assange decided to accept the offer of asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. Over the past year, after he had effectively been incarcerated in the embassy for seven years, a change of government in Ecuador saw him expelled from the embassy into the hands of UK police who arrested him for jumping bail those seven years ago.

Charged in court, he was sentenced to 50 days' imprisonment in London's Belmarsh Prison pending a hearing set to take place in February, when a judge will determine whether he should be extradited to the US – or not.

In October former British ambassador Craig Murray published an eyewitness account of Assange's current state describing him as exhibiting "exactly the symptoms of a torture victim."

In a separate report, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer accused the UK government of "outright contempt for Mr Assange's rights and integrity".

"I have never seen a single person [who] has been deliberately isolated and, I would say, persecuted – not prosecuted, but persecuted – by several democratic states in a concerted effort to break his will. The more I looked at the facts of this case, the more repelled I became," he said.

Responding to these statements 60 medical doctors sent a petition to the UK government in which they state: "It is our opinion that Mr Assange requires urgent expert medical assessment of both his physical and psychological state of health," they wrote. "There is no time to lose."

Free press advocates see Assange as the victim of an unprecedented assault on journalism because the WikiLeaks publisher faces 18 charges in the US under the Espionage Act, making Assange the first publisher to face charges under that law. They quite rightly say that the case USA versus Julian Paul Assange criminalises journalism wherever it might be practised. Assange is not a US citizen, has not published or operated in America, and is not subject to US laws.

The court that Assange is destined for in Virginia, USA, is a non-transparent, closed court. His defence lawyers will not be allowed in.

Decent people everywhere are saying: "NO EXTRADITION for Assange."

Entities that want to hide corruption will win if Assange is jailed.

If the USA sets a legal precedent – that it's right to reach across borders to extradite any foreign journalist – then no journalist in the world will be safe from US extra-territorial reach.

This precedent could be copied by China or Iran, for example.

South Africans have benefitted from fearless whistle-blowers, journalists and publishers who hold power to account. We can be proud of our investigative journalists and whistle-blowers who inter-alia brought us the Gupta Leaks and exposed State Capture. In a similar way, WikiLeaks has exposed corruption, state capture and



war crimes in Iraq.

WikiLeaks was designed by Assange as a safe place for whistle-blowers to expose corruption. He perfected the encrypted Dropbox, copied by others. WikiLeaks is a fact-based antidote to fake news.

Given that WikiLeaks has a 100% accuracy record, why is the US so keen to lock up Assange for “175 years”? Why has the USA leaned on the UK, Sweden and Ecuador to keep Assange in legal limbo – as the USA Secret Grand Jury prepared its indictment? Why did Ecuador’s new US-friendly president allow the CIA to spy on Assange in London from 2018, then illegally end his asylum? Why did Sweden on three occasions drop the case and never charge Assange, only to be told “don’t get cold feet” by the UK?

South Africans value proper judicial process, not closed kangaroo courts.

South Africans remember the apartheid era when the state silenced journalists, often by detention. Now we see Assange in solitary in a UK jail: sick, 30kg under-

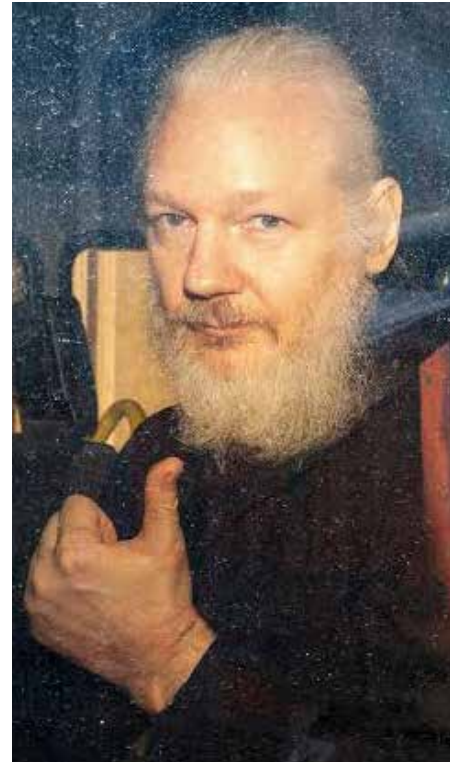
weight; not allowed access to the internet, a library or an international phone to call his US lawyer or family in Australia.

The powers-that-be in the UK contrived to appoint a judge for the extradition proceedings whose husband and son are both employed by UK security agencies to design programmes in response to WikiLeaks’ exposure of the misdeeds hidden in their systems. She refused to recuse herself when confronted with this conflict of interest – until shortly before *Noseweek* went to press, when the growing scandal finally overwhelmed her.

Who, one asks, will be appointed to succeed her? Why does the UK shamefully bend rules to lubricate Assange’s delivery into US hands?

Ordinary people who value free speech need to speak out – and have started to do so.

This editorial and our report on page 14 are based on material supplied by a group of South African WikiLeaks supporters who wish to remain anonymous. – **The Editor.** ■



Julian Assange

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Cyril's secret deal with 'rogue unit' executives

Nugent Commission suppressed affidavit that potentially compromised Ramaphosa

CYRIL RAMAPHOSA PLAYED A KEY role in a secret political intervention that allowed senior staff members at the South African Revenue Service involved with the infamous "rogue unit" to resign with millions in confidential settlements – and avoid exposure in disciplinary hearings.

Ivan Pillay, deputy commissioner and head of enforcement at SARS, walked away with around R4 million and a fat pension for life. Head of strategic planning and risk, Peter Richer, got R3.77m.

Ramaphosa's role in the settlements is revealed by Luther Malesela Lebelo who, in 2015, when the alleged intervention took place was de facto No2 to SARS's then-commissioner Tom Moyane. The details of Ramaphosa's involvement, unreported until now, lie buried in a 135-page supplementary affidavit filed by Lebelo last year with retired Judge Robert Nugent's Commission of Inquiry into tax administration and governance by the SA Revenue Service.



President Cyril Ramaphosa

Lebelo's affidavit, unlike all the other evidence presented to the commission, does not appear on the commission's website, on Judge Nugent's instruction. Here it is worth noting that the judge was appointed to the commission by President Ramaphosa.

Lebelo submitted the document to Nugent on 23 November 2018, stating that it supplemented evidence he had already presented to the commission, including official SARS documents. These, said Lebelo, had been ignored. He claimed that his evidence was being deliberately suppressed. (See box story.)

When Ramaphosa intervened to speed the departures of Pillay and Richer with generous settlement deals funded by the taxpayer, he was the dutiful deputy to then-president Jacob Zuma. Assisting Ramaphosa in the SARS intervention, according to Lebelo's affidavit, was then-deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas.

Why would then-deputy president Ramaphosa have got involved in securing the clean exit from SARS of two of the fingered accused in the "rogue unit" scandal?

The fact that Zuma's attorney Michael Hulley was also intimately involved in the negotiations is clue enough. The whole exercise assumes the hue of a carefully-orchestrated government hush-up operation, with Ramaphosa obediently doing Zuma's dirty work on a mission that certainly blurred the sensitive lines separating the roles of the Legislature, the Executive and the Courts. And at an acutely-sensitive moment in South Africa's history, when the country was reeling after a series of "rogue unit" exposés in the *Sunday Times*, followed by the Sikhakhane Report which concluded that SARS's (by then) infamous investigations unit was both rogue and unlawful.

The Nugent Commission took care of all of that.



Luther Malesela Lebelo

Zuma and Pillay were comrades from the intelligence world during the struggle days. Both were members of uMkhonto weSizwe (MK); Zuma was head of underground structures at ANC headquarters in Lusaka, and thereafter Chief of Intelligence. Pillay was head of Operation Vula, also based in Lusaka.

In May 2015 amaBhungane journalist Sam Sole wrote that the covert SARS "rogue unit" that in 2007 allegedly bugged the offices of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and secured sensitive video and audio footage from the Scorpions, had gathered information relating to two politically explosive Scorpions investigations – the Zuma corruption case and the probe into Police Commissioner Jackie Selebi.

Transcripts of recorded conversations of NPA officers, it was claimed, were provided to Ivan Pillay by then-leader of the rogue unit, Skollie van Rensburg. According to a source, reported Sam Sole in his amaBhungane report, "Pillay is understood to have passed the transcripts on to a state agency, believed to be the police crime intelligence division."

After the infamous "spy tapes" – the interceptions of telephone conversations of senior NPA members



Jacob Zuma

including Scorpions boss Leonard McCarthy – were leaked to Zuma’s attorney Michael Hulley, corruption charges against Zuma were withdrawn in 2009. Observed Sam Sole: “It is uncertain whether this was the same CCTV material obtained by members of the SARS ‘rogue unit’.”

Sole was apparently unaware of Ramaphosa’s role in smoothing Pillay’s profitable exit from the Revenue Service. The journalist merely wrote that Pillay’s resignation came “after a settlement brokered through high-level political intervention”.

This is how the detailed countdown on Pillay’s departure from SARS went: the deputy commissioner was suspended by new commissioner, Tom Moyane on 5 December 2014 in the aftermath of the Sikhakhane Report.

Lebelo’s affidavit describes how Pillay “declared his desire to resign rather than face a disciplinary hearing, albeit at the time [he] blew

hot and cold. However, the urgency started after the charges were drafted, the presiding officer (former Chief Justice Sandile Ngcobo) agreeing to chair the disciplinary hearing and the date being set [26 February 2015].”

Lebelo says that the previous month, on Moyane’s instructions, he attended a meeting arranged by then-president Zuma’s lawyer Michael Hulley at the chambers of Pillay’s counsel, Nazeer Cassim SC. “The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate a resignation for Mr Pillay,” goes Lebelo’s affidavit. “The meeting came to naught as Mr Pillay made a number of demands which were unacceptable.” The deputy commissioner, he says, was demanding an extra six months’ employment “to do a handover,” as well as payment for the remaining three years of his contract. In addition, his disciplinary hearing was to be cancelled.

On 2 February 2015 Pillay met Tom Moyane at the Kgosi Mampuru II Correctional Centre in Pretoria. Pillay refused to shift on his demands.

Enter Cyril Ramaphosa, vice-president at the time, and Mcebisi Jonas, then-deputy finance minister. Lebelo continues: “It was until after [sic] a series of other meetings and interventions by his Excellency Ramaphosa, as well as the then-deputy [Finance] minister Mcebisi Jonas, that Pillay managed to resign and secure himself and Mr Richer a settlement of 18 months’ pay, amount [sic] to approximately R4m for Mr Pillay, with Mr Richer getting little bit less [R3.77m]. At all material times Mr Pillay was legally represented by a reputable law firm, and as the facts validate, he voluntarily resigned.” (Rather than face a disciplinary hearing chaired by the former chief justice.)

In paragraph 303 of his affidavit

Lebelo returns to the secret deals. He writes: “Ultimately, through the intervention of Mrs [Messrs?] Hulley, Cyril Ramaphosa and Mcebisi Jonas, Richer resigned from SARS. Richer and SARS entered into a Confidential Separation and Settlement Agreement... I do not know what the parties discussed in order to arrive at the terms of the said Settlement Agreement.”

Pillay had been facing ten internal disciplinary charges, eight of which related to the establishment and conduct of the “rogue unit” and two, to his early pension benefit (see nose242 for the early retirement saga).

Peter Richer came to SARS from the National Intelligence Agency, where he had been deputy director-general for operations. Lebelo’s affidavit states that Richer was not “purged” from the Revenue Service as Nugent had proclaimed. “He resigned in the face of serious allegations against him”.



Ivan Pillay

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These, said Lebelo, included attempting to procure Megablue Technologies' equipment for the HRIU (the "rogue unit") that could provide the real-time location of cellphones or individuals being tracked.

Both Pillay and Richer left SARS in May 2015. Johann van Loggerenberg, the leader of the HRIU, official title of the "rogue unit", had already resigned that February rather than face nine disciplinary charges. Lebelo does not suggest that Cyril Ramaphosa was also involved in securing his goodbye settlement.

Lebelo's affidavit reads: "On the evening of 3 February 2015 Mr Van Loggerenberg called me and pleaded with me to talk to Mr Moyane so that he can resign instead of facing a disciplinary inquiry, and that he be given an eight-months' settlement. After pondering on the above proposal for a long while I called Mr Moyane and after his reservations, he agreed to meet Mr Van Loggerenberg at his offices in Hilton building.

"Mr Van Loggerenberg resigned from the SARS and a settlement agreement

of six months' salary and the R1m owed to SARS due to the legal assistance provided by Mr Pillay during Mr Van Loggerenberg's misconduct investigation [whatever that means –

'Van Loggerenberg pleaded with me to talk to Moyane so he can resign instead of facing a disciplinary inquiry'

Ed.] was concluded. Lebelo's affidavit continues: "I do not know what the two gentlemen said to each other. I only assisted them to clean up their draft media statement. It is noteworthy to state that Mr Van Loggerenberg apologised to the 13,000 SARS employees

for his conduct in his media statement which was sent to all employees."

While Ramaphosa was engaged doing Zuma's dirty work, Pravin Gordhan, Pillay's former SARS boss, had been deposed as finance minister and was languishing in the doldrums as Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. He was reappointed to Finance in December 2015.

Both President Ramaphosa and Pravin Gordhan (now Minister of Public Enterprises) have recently gone to law over reports by Public Protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane concerning Ivan Pillay's early pension and the SARS "rogue unit".

Gordhan in particular has become increasingly litigious, mobilising expensive lawyers in an aggressive campaign to neutralise and silence critics still harbouring thoughts that the "rogue unit" might have been unlawful.

Ramaphosa – doubtless anxious to keep under wraps his secret intervention on behalf of suspects Pillay and Richer – appears to be in full support of this most dubious of tactics.



"What I'd like, basically, is a temporary line of credit just to tide me over the rest of my life."

Last year Gordhan laid criminal charges against EFF leader Julius Malema for inter alia having described him as a “dog of white monopoly capital”, but came unstuck when the Equality Court ruled that Malema was not guilty of hate speech. Dismissing the case, Judge Roland Sutherland ordered Gordhan to pay the costs. And, the judge cautioned: “When politicians choose to utilise the courts to conduct their campaigns and draw on the resources of the courts, it should not be supposed that such resources can be utilised without consequences. All litigants must know that they risk an

adverse costs order if they fail.”

• Luther Lebelo joined SARS as Group Executive for Employment Relations in 2006. Previously he had worked in management at Telkom. He was grilled by Judge Nugent over a payment of R750,000 that the Revenue Service made to lawyers for helping him prepare his testimony. The judge then- recommended that he should face a disciplinary hearing for this. (See box story.)

Last October Lebelo stepped down from SARS which then- announced it would not proceed with any action against him. ■



Judge Robert Nugent

Judge Nugent on Lebelo in his final SARS report:

IN RESPONSE TO AN INVITATION FROM THE Commission to furnish submissions on why certain findings affecting him should not be made, Luther Lebelo forwarded the Commission an affidavit of some 135 pages [plus] voluminous annexures, almost all of which was devoted to airing, yet again, what he claimed to be proof of wrongdoing on the part of Ivan Pillay, Peter Richer and Johann van Loggerenberg, which he appears to have disseminated to a section of the media. He complained that an earlier affidavit he had submitted to the Commission was not placed on the Commission’s website.

“Certainly his documents have not been placed on the website of the Commission, nor will they be. The website was established to facilitate access to evidence that is material to its findings. It is not a medium for disseminating whatever might be dumped at its door. If Lebelo wants to disseminate his material, he is perfectly free to do so, but the Commission will not disseminate it for him.

“The Commission does not accept whatever might be foisted upon it. It has invited anyone to place evidence before it, and has considered everything that has been submitted, but that does not mean everything placed before it is material evidence.

“...Mr Lebelo’s documents are in large part not [material], as he was told so many times – and it is for the Commission, not Mr Lebelo, to determine what is material... the Commission will not be party to disseminating what is no more than malice.” ■

Lebelo on Judge Nugent:

The following extract is taken from a supplementary affidavit filed by Luther Lebelo on 23 November 2018. The full affidavit can be accessed on Noseweek’s website, where it is to be found in the online version of this issue, [nose243].

ON 27 AND 28 SEPTEMBER 2018, I appeared before the [Nugent] Commission where I presented oral evidence. Subsequent thereto, I sought and obtained legal advice and I was advised to submit further evidence by way of a sworn statement, which I did on 21 October 2018, when I again appeared before the Commission.

“I note with serious concern that the affidavits, presentations and any form of evidence presented by persons who appeared before the Commission have been uploaded on

the website of the Commission and [but] for whatever reason that the Commission deemed fit, my affidavit submitted on 21 October 2018 is still not uploaded. The said affidavit dealt with all the questions this Commission has now directed to me – but for Mr Richer’s issue, which I will advert to later herein.

“This conduct by the Commission leads me to conclude that my submissions are being deliberately suppressed hence, despite [my] submitting a number of files, the Commission still elected to ignore such files and proceeded with the narrative that seeks to lead to adverse findings against me.”

[The judge was particularly interested to establish why SARS had paid R750,000 in fees to lawyers who had assisted Lebelo in preparing his evidence. – Ed.] ■



Luther Lebelo



Peter Richer



Miyelani Holeni, Andisa Ramavhunga and Alex Ntiyiso Mabunda

New Wonderboom fixers hail from the realm of state capture

Airport has no budget for trio's R12 million consultancy fee

TSHWANE METRO IS SCRAMBLING TO find R12 million not budgeted for, to pay yet another consultant appointed to help Wonderboom National Airport “return to financial viability”.

Professional Aviation Services (Pty) Ltd (PAS), the private entity that had managed the airport for the past two years, parted company with Wonderboom at the end of last month.

This, after a last desperate, yet unsuccessful attempt to gain the backing of the airport tenants by asking them to write letters of support to the metro council. This, after a last desperate, yet unsuccessful attempt to gain the backing of the airport tenants by asking them to write letters of support to the metro council.

Tshwane appointed and subsequently renewed the contract of PAS three times, each time on the back of a request to deviate from supply chain management regulations. The Municipal Finance Management Act only allows a municipality to deviate in exceptional cases such as emergencies, where it is impractical or impossible for official procurement processes to take place.

With PAS in charge the once well-run airport on the outskirts of the capital was downgraded in November from Category 5 to Category 2 status because of non-compliance with aviation laws. This happened barely three months after PAS's fee was controversially increased by more than 300%.

On the very same day Wonderboom was downgraded, Tshwane Mayor, Steven Mokgalapa and MMC for Roads and Transport Sheila Senkubuge, announced that the airport would be commercialised, with Ntiyiso Consulting appointed as the transactional advisor. (Mokgalapa and Senkubuge recently made headlines when an audio clip of them allegedly having sex in her office, went viral on social media. Senkubuge has since resigned after it became known that she was not a South African citizen, when she became the MMC in 2016.)

Ntiyiso is the fifth “transactional advisor” appointed for Wonderboom since 2006. [*When you haven't a clue what to do, appoint another consultant/ advisor that will explain your inaction for another two years. – Ed.*] As reported in *nose241*, four companies had already submitted comprehensive reports on

the commercialisation of the airport. Despite having cost ratepayers millions of rands, none of the recommendations were ever implemented.

Asked about the process followed to appoint the new transactional advisor, the office of former MMC Senkubuge said that a panel of consultants, approved for a period of three years in 2015/16 for retention when needed by the municipality's finance department, was drawn on to obtain proposals for the Wonderboom project. The officials appear not to have noticed that the three-year approval period had long expired. And, had they done their due diligence, they might also have noticed that at least one of the 13 companies invited to tender had been continually in the news, for all the wrong reasons.

Regiments Capital, the Gupta-linked company and alleged kingpin of state capture, is still on the Tshwane panel and was invited to make a submission. The invitation was addressed to Eric Wood, a former director of Regiments Capital and, of late, the boss of Trillian, another Gupta-linked financial services firm. Since 2016 both Regiments and Wood have been fingered in the Gupta investigation. Wood could face charges

of fraud, corruption and money laundering.

In November *Daily Maverick* reported that “The stage is set for State Capture’s Battle Royale as the NPA tackles the ultra-deep pockets of Regiments Capital and its owners in a bid to safeguard more than R1bn identified as the alleged proceeds of crime linked to the company’s remarkable run of luck when dealing with state-owned entities.”

When Tshwane’s panel of experts was established four years ago its purpose was to render “advisory services” to the Finance Department. How Ntiyiso Consulting will also manage the limping Wonderboom Airport is a mystery. Nevertheless it was appointed for two years, reportedly being paid R2m a month.

Ntiyiso Consulting says on its website it has developed a wealth of experience in working with municipalities to help improve service delivery. But, as in the case of Professional Aviation Services’ disastrous appointment, Ntiyiso seems to have no experience in managing an airport. Its clients include several banks and municipalities, as well as SAA, Transnet and the SABC – hardly a recommendation.

Curiously, a new company, Ntiyiso Aviation Services (Pty) Ltd, was registered shortly before PAS’s contract ran out at the end of July. The company’s sole director is Alex Ntiyiso Mabunda and his two senior partners are Andisa Ramavhunga and Miyelani Holeni.

Fin24 reported in 2017 that Andisa Ramavhunga was the identical twin of Andile Ramavhunga, at the time, the flamboyant CEO of VBS Mutual Bank. He has since been implicated in the large-scale corruption that saw the bank lose almost R2bn.

In 2012 the *Sowetan* reported that Holeni was one of five top officials at Ekurhuleni Municipality accused of corruption amounting to millions

of rands over the installation of water meters. Holeni was suspended and then resigned from his job as the municipality’s director of revenue management. The Special Investigations Unit indicated that criminal charges would be laid, but it is not clear what became of that.

After resigning from Ekurhuleni, Holeni joined the South African Post Office as manager in the office of the then CEO Chris Hlekane. He apparently did not declare that he was facing a criminal investigation. Holeni is currently leading a Revenue Management and Enhancement Programme for Tshwane municipality.

Ntiyiso also seems to have no experience in managing an airport


“There is no way it could have been expected in 2015/16 when the finance advisory panel was established, that the scope should include a response on the management of an airport,” says a Tshwane insider. “And, the Finance Department’s panel is an advisory panel and not an operational panel that could manage specialist municipal functions like the airport.”

Lex Middelberg, chairperson of the Tshwane Money Matters Caucus, and former spokesperson for finance in the DA in Tshwane, pointed out that the council had never approved that a private entity should manage Wonderboom Airport. “This is not the first time ‘transactional advisors’ have been appointed by Tshwane and then unlawfully had their scope extended to actually manage projects on which they are supposed to only advise.

“The high court was clear in the R7bn PEU electricity meter fiasco that such an extension of scope is unwarrantable and illegal. The current DA administration should know better. The Auditor General will undoubtedly declare it as yet more irregular expenditure in Tshwane.”

Ntiyiso Consulting did not respond to questions submitted by *Noseweek* on its website.

– Susan Puren ■



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What is WikiLeaks?

Why you should care about its founder Julian Assange's threatened extradition to the US

WIKILEAKS (WL) IS A MEDIA organisation founded by Assange that specialises in document authentication and the publication of information involving corruption.

WL has published information pertaining to environmental issues, child trafficking, criminal and state capture. It also leaked video evidence of war crimes: soldiers laughing while shooting civilians (including children) from a helicopter in Iraq.

A US soldier (Chelsea Manning) released this video to WL, for her own moral reasons. Manning is currently jailed in the US with a \$1,000-per-day fine, to coerce her to testify against Assange. She refuses to do so.

Japanese academic Dr Nozome Hayase, author of *WikiLeaks, the Global Fourth Estate: History Is Happening*, writes: "WikiLeaks publications empowered people in many countries. Information has been used

to bring justice in courts and address numerous human rights abuses."

Australian journalist Gary Lord, currently writing a book on Assange, writes: "WikiLeaks has defied many high-profile bullies (banks, military, governments) and helped save lives with its quality journalism."

It does what mainstream US, UK and South African journalists do to solicit and publish information. Professor Jack Goldsmith of Harvard Law School thinks the US government wants to use Assange to send a chilling message in order to stifle inconvenient journalism: "It's hard to distinguish WikiLeaks from the *New York Times*".

South Africa has benefited from the type of transparency modelled by WikiLeaks: free flow of information fed by South African whistle-blowers, journalists and publishers has been helpful to decent citizens, in exposing corruption and state capture, for example.

Does WikiLeaks harm people?

Evidence that WL sticks to facts and aims not to harm arises from three sources:

■ *NewsGuard* TM reluctantly certified them for 100% factual accuracy: an achievement in an era of fake news;

■ Veteran journalist Mark Davis (of Australian Broadcasting Company) accompanied Assange in London, during his collaboration with *The Guardian*. Davis testified in August 2019 as to Assange's determination to redact and verify: for example (a) after *Guardian* journalists went home on a Friday afternoon, Assange sat up through the night to personally check hundreds of files (b) *New York Times* published leaks before WikiLeaks did, even though Assange asked them not to (c) *Guardian* journalist David Leigh published a password in his book, even though Assange asked him not

to. Mark Davis exposed the extent of the betrayal of Julian Assange by the *Guardian* and the *New York Times*, refuting the lies both publications have used to smear the WikiLeaks founder.

■ US Department of Defence Ret Brigadier Robert Carr said he found “zero” evidence at Chelsea Manning’s trial of any harm wrought by WikiLeaks. He said the US Defence Department task force that scoured WikiLeaks’ Iraq and Afghanistan war logs did not find any deaths of people identified in the leaked reports. Carr also reported no deaths in Iraq, linked to WikiLeaks publications.

More recently some of his followers have been less careful, and have been accused of publishing unredacted data that included details of individuals’ bank accounts and other private information, but Assange can hardly be held accountable for those – he has himself, as previously indicated, been very careful to remove information that might put individuals or genuine state security personnel at risk.

Why pay attention to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange?

Julian Assange has been instrumental in proposing a new journalism for the 21st century: “scientific journalism”. He says every piece of evidence should be linked to a source, for accuracy. This WikiLeaks model is the opposite of – and antidote to – fake news.

Assange is a penetrating thinker who analyses contradictions in democracy and its Fourth Estate. Author Sreko Horvat describes him as “a philosopher of technology”, who has contributed to global debate around media freedom.

Assange first conceived of an encrypted drop-box, allowing whistleblowers to safely upload documentation of crimes. His model is so successful that it is has been copied by various media houses: for example, *The Guardian*, *Forbes* and *The Intercept* now host their own drop-boxes.

Since about 2011, Assange has been legally hounded. Why? People are beginning to conclude he is hounded by the very people who do not want the spotlight of transparency shone on to their doings.

The US government is keen to tell

people: “If you’ve got nothing to hide, you’ve got nothing to fear”. What does it fear so much that it set up a special secret Grand Jury in Virginia so that the award-winning journalist-publisher Assange can be put on trial on charges that could see him jailed for “175 years”?

But isn’t Assange a rapist, or something? Surely not worthy of our support?

Assange was never “charged” with anything by Sweden.

The Swedish judiciary dropped this case three times, due to lack of evidence. The US is not interested in any sexual indiscretions he might have committed in Sweden nine years ago.

Women against Rape UK is the second women’s group to put out a strong statement lamenting the media smears around this case... and the weaponisation of the word “rape” to mask real issues.

Women Against Rape state: “The pursuit of Julian Assange is not driven by any concerns about rape but by US government pressure to punish him for his WikiLeaks exposés on war crimes. Nils Melzer, the UN Special Rapporteur on Cruel Treatment, is right to be alarmed.”

Swedish authorities wanted to drop an arrest warrant for Assange as early as 2013: a leaked email from UK Crown Prosecuting Services to Sweden reveals it was the British government which improperly insisted that the Swedes continue to harass him, as Italian journalist Stephania Maurizi reports.

Why did Assange seek asylum in the Ecuador Embassy?

Some accused Assange of “hiding from justice” in the Ecuador Embassy. Confidential emails obtained from the US private intelligence firm Stratfor show that the United States Government has been after Assange and working on a secret indictment against him since 2011 onwards. Many US figures have issued public death threats against him.

Assange heard that a Secret Grand Jury was preparing an indictment and fear of extradition led him to seek asylum: the Ecuador Embassy granted it to him.

It turns out Assange was vindicated in seeking asylum because this US grand jury eventually showed its face – with a bombshell 18 charges and a threat of 175 years in jail.

US Secret Grand Juries are kangaroo courts: no cameras allowed, no lawyers. Once Assange is delivered there in manacles, he will have to defend himself alone in a sealed courtroom because his defence lawyers will not be allowed in. This nontransparent, intelligence-linked court is known to have a “100% success rate” in jailing those who appear before it.

US soldier Chelsea Manning – who also faces this kangaroo court – says grand juries now function in a way opposite to their original function: they have become a tool of intimidation used by the US state.

Rather than “hiding from justice” the Swedes, in fact, investigated and finally, in 2017, formally dropped their cas. But the UK would not guarantee safe passage, so Nils Melzer says that

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Assange at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, February 2016

Assange's refuge was "but a rubber boat in a shark-pool". Ecuador got \$4bn from the US and a bank loan from the International Monetary Fund days after they illegally threw Assange out of their embassy, going against their own constitution.

Character Assassination and Trial By Media

Media smears have degraded Assange's humanity and robbed him of

support. *The Guardian* newspaper led the way, with its journalists launching extraordinary personal attacks: one called Assange "a massive turd" who "eats flattened hamsters". *MediaLens* media analysis has tracked these smears.

British authors Matt Kennard and Mark Curtis published an article in collaboration with *Daily Maverick* in September last year which explains *The Guardian's* smears of Assange. It appeared under the headline: "How The UK Security Services Neutralised The Guardian".

An Ecuadorian diplomat Fidel Narvaez has debunked 40 Assange smears.

Law professor Nils Melzer, once he applied his mind to this case, stated: "In the end it finally dawned on me that I had been blinded by propaganda, and that Assange had been systematically slandered to divert attention from the crimes he exposed."

Whether one likes someone or not, they are still entitled to due process.

A summary of some points:

■ In Belmarsh Prison, London, Assange is in a solitary cell and denied certain basic rights. He's not allowed to fraternise with others; not allowed access to the library or internet. He's denied overseas phone calls so cannot

contact his American lawyer or Australian family. Medical treatment is delayed.

Human rights lawyer Gareth Pierce reports that a complaint to the Head of Belmarsh Prison has never been answered. He was delivered a pair of spectacles with the wrong prescription lens, making it difficult to read documents.

■ Solitary detention longer than 15 days is against the Mandela Rules. United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (a.k.a. Mandela Rules) were adopted by the UN General Assembly on 17 December 2015.

■ With reference to Mandela, it's interesting to remember that – however evil the apartheid enforcers – Mandela was allowed out of prison to see private doctors, get X-rays and operations when necessary. That Assange has not been allowed this basic human right – though his latest visitors now report a 30kg weight loss, depression and inability to concentrate – does not sit well with compassionate South Africans.

■ South Africans are curious as to how a UK judge can refuse to recuse herself. Assange's judge, Lady Emma Arbuthnot, refused to step down, despite evidence of a major conflict of interest: her husband Lord James Arbuthnot is linked to UK defence and security and is mentioned 60 times in the WikiLeaks database: he could well be expected to bear a grudge against Assange. The fact that Arbuthnot accepted the appointment, let alone subsequently refused to recuse herself when confronted, does not do credit to the reputation of Britain's judiciary.

■ When Assange was arrested in London, US Senator Joe Manchin jubilantly declared: "He's our property" – which simply confirms that the US is driving this case.

The Assange case anomalies are not a good look for Sweden, the US and the UK

What is happening to the founder of WikiLeaks is not enhancing the image of the UK, the US or Sweden as just democratic societies. Westerners might traditionally expect dictatorships or places like Iran or North Korea to treat its journalists and whistle-blowers in this fashion.

Russian journalist Ivan Golunov

A promotional graphic for a book titled "Gifting Sorted: Biography of Tinus de Jongh". The cover features a landscape painting of a river and trees. Text on the cover includes: "Gifting Sorted Biography of Tinus de Jongh", "Extremely Interesting & Beautifully Illustrated", "TINUS DE JONGH His life and works", "One of SAs foremost artists who introduced original art to the general public at affordable prices.", and "Order online for direct delivery for R265 [RSA] www.tinusdejongh.co.za dejonghartgallery@gmail.com | +27 21 686 4141".

was arrested in Moscow in June 2019. Russian journalists rallied around for him and Golunov was released four weeks later. Russia came out of this looking good in terms of journalistic freedom. Imagine if North Korea requests the extradition of a British or American journalist exposing information about them? What extra-territorial, extra-legal precedent is being set by President Trump?

Does the UK – set to deliver Assange into Trump’s jail if they extradite – have an independent judiciary? The litmus test is the Assange case.

Who benefits from silencing Assange and jailing him for life on US soil?

Those who do not benefit: civil society, media and journalists, environmentalists, anti-corruption units, human rights groups, people who prefer truth to lies, democrats who value media freedom.

Those who will benefit: those who WL exposed – multi-billion arms and warfare industries; corporates and politicians implicated in state capture; financial players in malfeasance; politicians who aren’t keen on scrutiny.

Who will also benefit is the US national security state that wants to string up Assange as an example to give a chilling message to the four million Americans who hold security clearance. As *La Republica* journalist Stephania Maurizi wrote in August 2019 “The US is terrified of more whistle-blowers releasing secrets. They fear 100 new Mannings, 100 new Snowdens.”

They need Assange’s body strung up in the town square to send a chilling message to domestic Americans and to the wider world.

Boomerang Effect or The Law Of Unintended Consequences

Despite states thinking “fear” and “chilling messages” are useful weapons, “deterrence or madman theory” has been shown in scholarly studies to be ineffective and dangerous.

Ultimately, heavy-handed bullying behaviour boomerangs back: instead of fear and obedience, it can lead to good people checking out and becoming

disillusioned, cynical and dismissive.

If US and its partners UK, Sweden and Australia act as if they don’t care about the moral high ground – even in the case of the West’s own political prisoner – increasing numbers of people will not buy in to the Western model.

Assange is a highly intelligent thinker and strategist who would be well suited to a professorship

The world is already in a parlous state: moral leadership is required.

Assange’s case erodes Western soft power, over the long term. Trust, once broken, is difficult to win back. Assange needs to be freed, sooner rather than later, to mitigate damage.

Assange is a highly intelligent thinker and strategist who would be well-suited to a professorship at a university. He is a good man, allowed no due process, who needs to be freed soon.

His mother Christine Assange is an activist and his fiercest supporter

(follow her on Twitter @AssangeMrs); his intellectual father John Shipton is a quietly-spoken gentleman; his brother Gabriel says he’s unable to explain to his five-year-old daughter why her uncle is in jail: a poignant point. Assange also has his own children, who wait silently out of sight, because he wants to protect them.

What happens when Australian society wakes up to full facts around this case? Have the US and UK given thought to how this human interest story will affect their public relations?

Have they considered what will happen in the event of Assange’s death, either in Belmarsh or in the US?

There has to be freedom of speech for there to be democracy. If we’re missing key information, intelligent decision making is impossible. Julian Assange has got to be free if we are to believe we have justice.

Have the US and UK studied how the Assange case appears to others around the world? South Africans, for example, who are part of the Commonwealth but who have strong memories of journalists and political prisoners thrown into detention (eg the once-detained South African head of Unesco, former journalism professor, Guy Berger)?

The South African authoritarian government battled to control narrative and message, via censorship and incarceration. It was an exercise that ultimately failed.

● *This essay was prepared by a group who wish to remain anonymous.* ■



Another Berrangé liquidation scandal

'Dishonest dealings' over sale of multi-million-rand property development

PIETERMARITZBURG LIQUIDATOR Pierre Berrangé is on the carpet, again. This time he is accused of having bungled, by professional neglect or worse, the sale of a multi-million-rand property development to a company in which the former CEO of BOE Bank, Bill McAdam, and cofounder of FirstRand Bank, GT Ferreira, were to be investors.

Following the intervention of the Chief Master of the High Court in Pretoria, Berrangé is now the subject of an inquiry in terms of Section 381 of the Companies Act with his accusers not only wanting him fired as liquidator of Halflyn (Pty) Ltd (in Liquidation), but also disbarred as a liquidator and lawyer, forever.

Section 381 reads: "The Master shall take cognisance of the conduct of liquidators and shall, if he has any reason to believe that a liquidator is not faithfully performing his duty... inquire into the matter and take such action as he may think expedient."



Pierre Berrangé

The inquiry is chaired by Assistant Master Billy Nteta, who began conducting interviews in September. He has yet to report his findings.

This challenge comes hot on the heels of another inquiry that was launched by the Pretoria Master's Office into Berrangé's handling of a "strategic" pig farm liquidation that went pear-shaped thanks to a resilient divorcee. (See *noses219;227&241*)

The latest Berrangé controversy relates to a property development on KwaZulu-Natal's South Coast initiated by businessman Tony Kay. In 2008 Kay "had a vision" to build some 360 houses on a 100ha plot with panoramic sea views along Shelly Beach's R620 Marine Drive. Named Sunrise Bay, it was to be an eco-estate with wildlife such as duiker, suni, porcupine, dassie and the large African mongoose as well as fantastic birdlife all roaming and flying free amongst indigenous flora.

Kay blames FirstRand Bank for the development's failure, claiming the bank wrongfully failed to advance funds to the company he had established to do the development, Halflyn (Pty) Ltd, in accordance with the draw-down provisions of the finance agreement they had concluded.

Despite his protestations recorded in court documents and his (failed) attempts to offload the property via an auction conducted by Auction Alliance in July 2013, the company was put into liquidation. Berrangé was appointed liquidator. Halflyn owed R48 million, including interest, to the liquidating creditor FirstRand.

At that stage almost all the service infrastructure and roads had been completed, with three houses already built on the site; although construction had stopped, it had all the ingredients of a good buy.

But by 2016 the property remained unsold, the creditors were getting twitchy and Kay was under pressure. When a group of investors who seemed to be the real deal popped

up on the radar offering a decent purchase price, Kay sighed with relief: he was out of the woods.

Or so he thought until a series of events took place, which saw the potential cash buyer pull out, charging liquidator Berrangé with "erratic behaviour" and "sabotage".

This complaint against Berrangé was initially laid at the KZN Master's Office by Cape Town businessman Michael MacCarthy and it is from the affidavits filed with that office where the story is told.

MacCarthy was responsible for roping in investors McAdam and Ferreira to purchase the property, along with veteran developer John Bezuidenhout. He accuses Berrangé of conduct "entirely unbecoming of someone entrusted with the duties of a liquidator", of a "lack of professionalism and competence", and of "deliberate and repeated falsehoods".

In affidavits submitted to the KZN Master, MacCarthy and Bezuidenhout set out a series of events where, they claim, Berrangé not only attempted to mislead the purchasers into what assets they were buying, but appeared to deliberately sabotage their three consecutive offers to purchase Sunrise Bay. Berrangé denies the charges in an answering affidavit.

MacCarthy wants Berrangé removed from the list of recognised liquidators, expelled from the South African Restructuring and Insolvency Practitioners Association (Saripa), and struck off the roll of attorneys. In his petition, MacCarthy lists a litany of ethical violations of the Saripa Code of Conduct, the Companies Act, the Insolvency Act and the Attorney's Act.

On 26 July 2016 MacCarthy, who at the time lived in nearby Margate, said he contacted Berrangé "to seek permission to find a buyer" for Sunrise Bay. The green light was given and a "contractual agreement was concluded that MacCarthy would receive a 2% commission on a bank-accepted sales price".

He lists as one of his major achievements having helped the Western Cape government set up the Cape Town film industry nearly 20 years ago. He also helped the KZN government establish its film studio industry. Following his agreement with Berrangé, MacCarthy recruited Bezuidenhout – known for building the upmarket Le Domaine estate in Hillcrest, Durban, – as well as Deloitte and Pam Golding to assist with financial structuring and marketing respectively. He roped in McAdam and Ferreira as financial backers, but the identity of these investors was never made known to Berrangé.

Bezuidenhout, representing the group through an SPV called Pablo Developments (Pty) Ltd, submitted a R40m offer to the liquidators in February 2017. Berrangé ignored the offer and all their calls to his office, his cell phone and his PA.

When that offer lapsed in April, Bezuidenhout put in a second offer, again for R40m, with a few differences in the smallprint. This too was ignored.

Bezuidenhout, with 50 years in the development game, noted in an email to MacCarthy that “Under the Saripa code of conduct 13.4 [it] is clear that Berrangé has failed in his duties to contact me following my previous 2 offers. Not even the courtesy of a phone call.”

That clause states “practitioners must within a reasonable time answer or appropriately respond to and deal with any correspondence or other communications which reasonably require a reply or any other response in a manner that is accurate, honest, open, clear and succinct”.

Berrangé denies this charge, claiming he had communicated with a member of Bezuidenhout’s team, Owen Greene. “I informed Greene that I was awaiting a reply from FNB. I admit that I did not call Bezuidenhout. I had nothing to convey to him in the absence of a response from FNB.”

Which is odd, since in his statement to the Master, Bezuidenhout relates how, at a meeting with FNB, he was assured that Berrangé was

the man authorised to decide the issue: “In desperation I set up a meeting with Corrie Verster, the FNB claims manager, with whom I had had prior dealings when I was first introduced to the property. The meeting took place on the 8th May 2017 in his offices in Johannesburg.

“The upshot of the meeting was that FNB would even consider a lesser offer than the R40,000,000 offered, provided it was a cash deal with no suspense conditions. However, we had to deal through Berrangé Inc., who had the delegated power to accept any offer.”

On 28 July 2017 a cash offer for R50.6m was submitted to Berrangé Inc with an undertaking that guarantees would be provided no later than 31 August. But still, despite having confirmed with his PA that Berrangé had received the offer – and MacCarthy’s confirming he stood to earn 2% – this offer too was ignored.

Finally on 8 August, Berrangé contacted Bezuidenhout and told him there had been another offer on the table, but it had flopped. He said



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they could step into the void – but only if he signed an indemnity over the 2% commission MacCarthy was to be paid. He suggested Bezuidenhout should instead make a private arrangement with MacCarthy. Bezuidenhout told Berrangé the commission that he had agreed to pay MacCarthy was not the buyer's concern, so they would not accede to signing any such indemnity.

That both MacCarthy and Bezuidenhout claim that same month, Berrangé became increasingly erratic. A flurry of emails, new terms and deadlines set with short notice periods, marked the month – along with the claim that there was another buyer, then no other buyer, then another buyer, making a bid.

With Bezuidenhout having sent through three serious offers-to-purchase over a six-month period, Berrangé advised him that he had received another conclusive offer, with deposits paid and guarantees issued. He told Bezuidenhout: “As you should know, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, end of story.”

But within 24 hours Berrangé called to tell Bezuidenhout to get their offer in by 9am on 21 August. They did. During the meeting two separate calls were conducted between Berrangé and McAdam, accompanied by Dave Warmback, acting for the purchasers. Bezuidenhout listened in on speaker phone. Terms of payment and clauses were discussed and agreed.

But three days later Bezuidenhout received yet another short notice demand. Now Berrangé was going to follow a bid process whereby the

two parties would submit sealed bids and have them opened on 28 August 2017 with the highest bid winning. He had also, according to MacCarthy, changed the conditions of the sale negotiated just days earlier.

On 28 August, McAdam wrote to Bezuidenhout and pulled out as an investor. In his email he said the dealings with Berrangé “have been a moving target” with “a number of deadlines thrown at us which have made things exceedingly difficult for us to complete our arrangements.”

Amongst the issues raised by McAdam: Berrangé had not been clear about the extent of the property being sold (at one point two valuable erven were for some reason not part of the deal); he had created confusion about the R5m deposit by inserting a non-refundable clause after the deposit had been paid; and he did not disclose that the company in liquidation had a subsidiary which may have held rights “prejudicial to us as the purchaser”.

“Notwithstanding tight deadlines, I have in my possession a letter from RMB and a guarantee from Nedbank for the full R45m. I feel uncomfortable with the manner in which we have been forced to rush this offer.”

On 28 August 2017, Bezuidenhout handed in McAdam's letter of withdrawal.

The other bidder, Linked Thoughts Consulting CC, was awarded the property. Their offer was R50.7m – just R100,000 more than Bezuidenhout's proposed offer.

“It remains a mystery as to why I was never given a fair opportunity to purchase the development, and that the goal posts were constantly moved,”

said Bezuidenhout. “Subsequently the purchaser has defaulted, the development remains unsold and I believe Berrangé Incorporated has a lot of explaining to do.”

MacCarthy and Bezuidenhout's statements reveal that Berrangé continually gave the competing bidder, Linked Thoughts, another chance to come up with a guarantee, failing each time.

In Berrangé's answering affidavit he denied any wrongdoing, adding: “I reserve my rights in respect of the defamatory allegations deposed by MacCarthy,” declaring that at all times he had “acted in a professional competent, proper, honourable and impartial manner”.

He said in 2017 there had been two other rival bidders until July, when only Linked Thoughts and Bezuidenhout remained.

He dismissed the claim that he had been erratic; he had simply had to deal with a sequence of events when two offers were on the table and decisions needed to be made.

He denied he “had an agenda... to sabotage” the deal or was untruthful or lacked integrity.

“To avoid a situation where I could possibly be accused of favouring either, I sought the advice of senior counsel Adv (Eddie) Lotz. Lotz advised me... to employ a tender process and give them an offer document... on identical terms.”

Readers might recall that Lotz gave Berrangé advice in the disastrous Vryheid pig farm liquidation too. (See *noses*219;227&241).

At time of *Noseweek's* going to press, the property had not yet been sold. – By Jonathan Erasmus ■



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Cape Town mayor urged to save precious aquifer and treasured Philippi farmland

An open letter to Mayor Dan Plato by Karen Morris who wants him to stop encroachment by developers on the horticultural area that for centuries has supplied the City with fresh vegetables

IN 2009, AT A FULL SITTING OF THE Cape Town City Council, it was decided that the Philippi Horticultural Area (PHA) was to be protected and preserved. If the DA and its local government in Cape Town had adhered to this directive, they would have had an immeasurably valuable opportunity of not only creating jobs (which can be transient) but sustainable livelihoods for the small scale farmers of Philippi and its surrounds. In addition, they would have been able to support poverty alleviation, agro-ecology and land reform, all in one fell swoop.

Instead, under former mayor Patricia de Lille and now under Mayor Dan Plato, the DA and certain councillors seemingly collude with certain property developers in allowing encroachment of the valuable, unique and fragile ecology of the Philippi Horticultural Area. The numerous rezones for retail and industry already allowed has depleted the scope and viability of this unique jewel in Cape Town's crown, and its irreplaceable agriculture-zoned land. This trend must be stopped in its tracks now before irreparable damage is done. The entire PHA must be preserved and protected as untouchable agricultural and horticultural zoned land.

To use the words of Professors Ben Cousins and Cherryl Walker (*Land Divided Land Restored*, 2016): "...the disappointing outcomes of post-apartheid land reform and rural development policies to date – and in particular their minimal impacts on poverty – are common knowledge. Dispossession of land is a powerfully charged symbol of historical injustice. More instrumentally, and in particular through its links with agriculture, land reform is seen as having the potential to create jobs and underpin improvement in rural livelihoods."

Sage words – and we would expect that the DA and City would recognise

a good opportunity to do right by the people of Cape Town when the opportunity presented itself via the need for visionary and ethical oversight of the Philippi Horticultural Area.

What is left of the PHA is already well below the threshold required for a thriving peri-urban farmland. Any further rezones would damage, possibly irreparably, the PHA and the Cape Town Aquifer which lies below it, by obliterating its last recharge zone.

This type of behaviour on the part of the DA, certain members of the City Council, its mayors and the relevant property developers is somewhat akin to land grabbing.

The DA repeatedly claims to be pro-poor yet for the past 10 years has been squandering opportunities to improve the lives of the poor and marginalised as well as all Capetonians. Instead they have been supporting certain property developers in their attempts to encroach on the Philippi Horticultural Area.

In so doing, the DA and the City have aligned themselves with these developers, rather than with the people and the ecology of Cape Town. Letting developers into this valuable yet fragile asset is not only nonsensical, inexplicable, unethical and irrational but also not thought through: other areas can be fair game – but not a green agricultural lung of Cape Town such as the PHA, which is unique in that it is:

- situated over the invaluable asset of the Cape Town Aquifer, (akin to a large underground lake);
- as a result of being over the aquifer, therefore a crucial recharge zone for this aquifer, and the last one left in Cape Town;
- an especially fragile and valuable area and resource in these times of climate change and water scarcity.

Imagine the outrage from the residents of Cape Town were the City Council to excise a piece of the

Rondebosch Common or Kirstenbosch Gardens, awarding rights to property developers. It is far more outrageous excising part of the PHA for the benefit of certain property developers, considering the (above) points regarding the aquifer lying below the PHA, and taking into account the potential for sustainable livelihoods in agro-ecology that the PHA holds for the community of Philippi and its surrounds – especially so in these times of water scarcity and poverty.

What lies between this encroachment by certain expedient property developers and "lawless" politicians? A small community based organisation, the Philippi Horticultural Area Food and Farming Campaign, with Nazeer Sunday, its chairperson. This organisation is embroiled in a David and Goliath battle which has been playing itself out in the Western Cape High Court in recent weeks – the culmination of a ten-year struggle.

To give some flesh to the idiom of a David and Goliath battle: there are eight-to-12 experienced, high powered advocates on the side of the would-be PHA property developers and the City of Cape Town, as opposed to one advocate for the PHA – a phenomenon known as "lawfaring".

The background to this battle:

- In 2009 a meeting of the City Council decided, with wisdom and foresight, to protect and preserve the PHA, located just 20 minutes from the city centre, so perfectly situated for growing locally produced food for Cape Town. In the PHA, lies an ideal opportunity for producing food in ways that have the lowest carbon footprint possible, by reducing the amount of food that needs to be transported into the city from further afield. At the same time, this provides livelihoods for locals, many of them previously – and currently – disadvantaged.

- Despite recommendations by the City Council that the PHA should be

protected, inexplicably in 2011, MEC Anton Bredell excised a section of the land from the PHA that was being eyed by certain property developers.

- In so doing, Bredell gave rights to these developers who want to replace farmland with gated houses, private prisons, private schools and shopping centres in a series of dubious and unethical decisions between 2011 and 2012. To recap: full development rights, which a full city council and the Minister of Agriculture had turned down, were awarded to the would-be

‘The DA and City have aligned themselves with these developers rather than with the people and the ecology of Cape Town’

PHA property developers by Bredell, under then-mayor Patricia de Lille – a move which current Mayor Dan Plato seems to continue to support.

- The decision to excise a section of the land is the “rotten peg on which the rest of the decisions hang” says Murray Bridgman, advocate (pro bono) for the PHA. It is this decision that the PHA Food and Farming Campaign wants nullified.

- In addition to the Minister of Agriculture’s support for the preservation of the PHA, the Department of Water and Sanitation saw fit, just last week, to choose ethics and vision over short-term expediency by rejecting the application by Consol Glass Mini for a Water Use Licence (WUL) for the PHA. Consol wanted this WUL to sand-mine in the PHA, an activity that will threaten the fragile ecosystem.

Safeguarding the whole of the PHA (not piecemeal scraps leftover after the feeding-at-the-trough has occurred by various self-interested property developers, businesses and expedient, aligned, power-hungry politicians), is part of safeguarding

the health and quality of life of all Capetonians and the ecology of Cape Town.

It would seem an unmissable opportunity for Mayor Dan Plato to be safeguarding the entire PHA as opposed to cosyng up with the developers and taking his cue from MEC Bredell and past mayor Patricia de Lille. This is Plato’s chance to distance himself from his predecessors and help save the image of the DA, which it really needs at present. Most importantly, it is the ethical and right thing to do for the people of Philippi. After all, it is the job of politicians and city officials to serve the electorate – whose tax revenue pays their salaries.

The South African Government has clear policies that municipalities and councillors should be sensitive to community views and responsive to local problems.

It has been a desperately felt let-down to see how DA politicians have been as misguided, short-sighted and self-interested as all the other parties. If anyone expected the DA to be different from the corrupt, short-sighted, uninformed money grabbing and self-interest pursuing politicians to the Left and the Right of them, they will have been bitterly disappointed and profoundly disillusioned.

Can the DA and the City Council and all economically (and politically) misguided people please just give up on the trickle-down pipe dreams and accept that developments such as proposed by the would-be property developers of the PHA is not progress but a slow march to a slow death for us all?

Rather than chasing developments such as these under the guise of “progress” – in this case a euphemism for exploitation – could they instead revere the steady state economy which holds up sustainability as the goal?

South Africa is now the most unequal country in the world, according to the World Bank in 2018. We need to stop the madness by not supporting



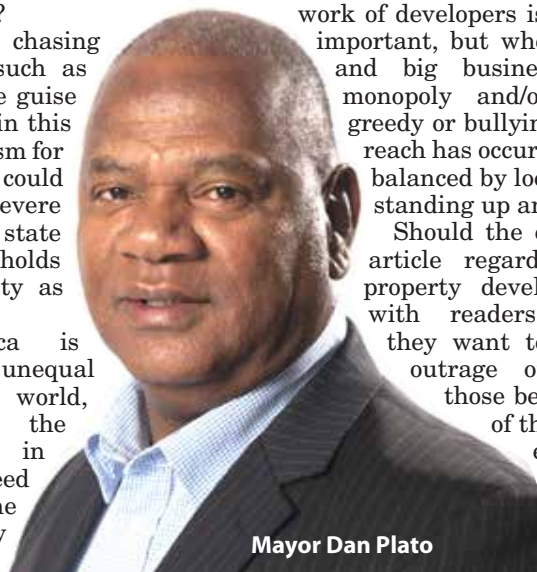
Philippi Horticultural Area

those who are widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

Those ethical scientists and thinkers who understand economic, environmental and political issues and social-ecological systems, are clear about what is needed for functional, healthy, sustainable communities: decentralised, localised, biodiversity promoting agriculture and small-scale local initiatives. More and more, industrial agriculture and industry in general needs to give way to a steady state economy so that we can all live sustainably and healthily.

There is of course a place for big industry and big business, and the work of developers is necessary and important, but when big industry and big business becomes a monopoly and/or operates in greedy or bullying fashion, over-reach has occurred and must be balanced by local communities standing up and saying no.

Should the contents of this article regarding the PHA/property developers resonate with readers, and should they want to express their outrage or support for those bearing the brunt of the bullying leadership of the DA and the City Council in this matter, a couple of



Mayor Dan Plato

actions listed below are possible:

- Email or phone local DA councillors in Cape Town:
- Make it clear that support for using our tax revenue to govern in a bullying and shameless way will result in not being voted in again.
- Email the newspapers an open letter to the Mayor of Cape Town Dan Plato so that he hears from as many people as possible on this matter.
- Email Mayor Dan Plato directly: dan.plato@capetown.gov.za or phone him: 021 400 1322 / 400 1301 or write on the City of Cape Town's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/CityofCT/posts/>
- So that he may hear from many others on this matter via this method too, email the Premier of the Western Cape, Alan Winde: Premier.Winde@westerncape.gov.za or write on his Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/windealan/>
- Support the PHA and its campaign – whether it be financial, expert or moral support:
- They deserve all the support we can give them as they are up against

legal teams paid for by groups with deep pockets – the City of Cape Town (using our tax revenue) as well as the relevant property developers. Campaign manager Nazeer Sunday will be liable for costs and is likely to lose his farm if the court case is lost.

- Support the urban farmers of Cape Town and its surrounds by signing up for an organic veggie box, delivered to you, such as from the Umthunzi Farming Community or Edible – and others – who make an effort to source from local, sustainable farmers. Some of these farmers are previously unemployed and disadvantaged and from places such as the PHA and Lentegeur Hospital (produced by recovering psychiatric patients). Sustainably produced (and packaged) veggies support a lower carbon footprint: better than trucking food in for Capetonians from further afield
- Support the intrepid Carrot Comrades, the small scale farmers of the PHA community on the steps of the High Court in Cape Town at present.

If Mayor Dan Plato – instead of taking his cue from MEC Bredell and former mayor Patricia de Lille, – could find it within himself to lead, rather than following seemingly expedient and ethically dubious predecessors, what wonderful alternative developments could blossom. I want to believe that Mayor Plato does have the right, the ability and the will to join up with the PHA rather than the property developers. And I hope others in the DA and the City Council also have the will to do the right thing in this matter.

At the next by-election anyone not actively speaking out against such outrageous, elitist behaviour, as has been in evidence with the 10-year-long PHA battle with developers, will not have my vote.

Local government is sticking with the dodgy and outdated script of trickle-down economics. Because of this, and their masquerading of exploitation as progress, they are starting to look as ill-informed and medieval as flat earthers. – **Dr Karen Morris** ■



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Julia from Jakkalsfontein

Feisty octogenarian has driven the length of Africa – and documented her adventures in *My African Conquest: Cape to Cairo at 80*

IF YOU LOOK DOWN FROM AN aeroplane flying over Africa, you can see this road that looks like a silver ribbon and you think to yourself, I wonder what it's like? Well, let me tell you: you get on it and you don't ever want to get off it – even with all the trucks, road blockages and stops. You could just drive forever and ever.”

Sitting in her living room, Julia Albu, 81, roared with laughter as she related how, after deciding to drive from Cape Town to Cairo in her trusted old Toyota, she was advised by experienced overland travellers in Africa, to “follow the Great North Road”.

“I am clueless, I can't read a map or a GPS garmin. I have no idea. They told me to just stay on the road and not get off it.

“I'd never heard of this road, but actually you can't miss it, you get on it and drive and you're so free, it's such an escape! Anybody can do it and everybody should do it.”

We met at Albu's home in the Jakkalsfontein Nature Reserve on the Cape West Coast. To get there, you drive along dust roads, with acres of fynbos on either side. You might see a mother ostrich dashing

into the bush with a flock of chicks behind her.

On arrival at her house, the first thing I spotted was Tracy, Albu's very unassuming 1997, 1600 Toyota Conquest, standing in the garage, covered in sponsors' stickers.

Sitting in her living room overlooking a wild West Coast sea, Albu reminisced like an old Africa hand about her months exploring the continent.

“The roads out of Addis Ababa make Uganda's potholed tracks look like top-notch highways; between Francistown and Nata the potholes were the size of swimming pools; the local Ethiopian injera made out of the staple teff flour looks and tastes like a blanket...”

(Her adventure is humorously and informatively captured in her book, *My African Conquest*, published by Jonathan Ball.)

It's a cottagey home. On the settee there's a tapestry cushion with the words Grandmothers are Glorious on it.

But Albu was less interested in being a glorious grandmother than in showing off some of the mementoes of her trip: salt from the salt mines in Northern Ethiopia, a bottle

of water from the Blue Nile and one from the White Nile – “I went to the sources of both.”

Her trip, which she did with various different companions and sometimes alone, included having “ringside” seats watching elephants drinking at a waterhole at sunset in Botswana; queuing with 64 trucks at the Kazungulu Ferry to cross from Botswana into Zambia; visiting Victoria Falls on the Zambian side (“an absolute must – but don't leave it as late as I did, because the paths on the Zambian side are rustic.”)

She also camped on the side of the Luangwa River in Zambia; visited charity projects in Malawi; dived from a dhow in Dar es Salaam; and visited the huge Ol Njorowa rose farm in Kenya – “twenty one hectares of tunnels, each growing a different variety.”

She visited the disappearing island of Fungu Yasini in Tanzania – “it was unexpected and surreal”; as well as the Ngorongoro Crater; meeting Maasai people in the Serengeti – before driving from Ethiopia to Khartoum in Sudan on her own.

She crossed the “incredibly beautiful” Uganda, and visited the famous rock-hewn churches at Lalibela in Ethiopia. “The beauty of the two churches I visited was as awe-inspiring as anything I'd seen in the Vatican.”

She even visited the Danakil Depression in Ethiopia, one of the hottest, lowest and most hostile places on the planet. “Boy was it depressing!”

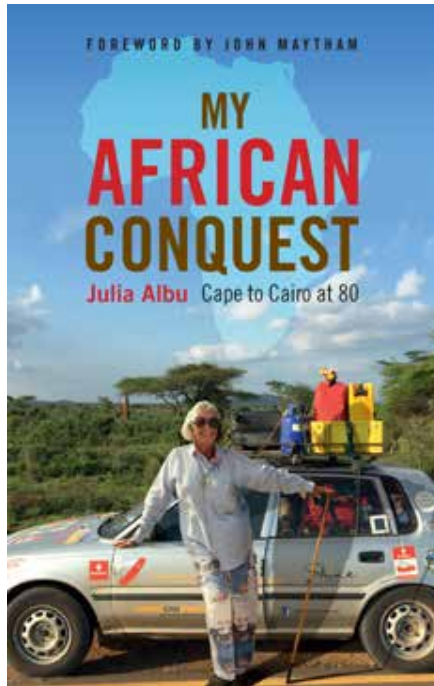
She stayed in tents at the side of the road, in guest houses and hotels, and travelled through deserts, mountains and tiny villages, as well as through many vibrant African cities.

Albu became a local sensation when, in 2016, she announced that she was going to do the trip from Cape Town to Cairo in Tracy.

She called into her favourite radio show, *Afternoon Drive with John*



Tracy and Julia on a ferry



Maytham, and told him: “Next year I am going to be 80 years old. My car will be 20 years old. Together we will be 100. We’re going to drive to Cairo.”

Albu said she had called into the radio programme on a whim. “I’d been in my kitchen in my house in Jakkalsfontein that had been my home for almost two decades. I’d been baking brownies, with the radio blaring and what had caught my ear was a snippet about how more than R8 million was being spent on cars for the wives of our then president Jacob Zuma. Incensed, I’d dialled the number of the radio station,” she recalls in the opening chapter of her book, *My African Conquest*, which is now in its second print run.

She realised what she’d “blurted out to him” only after ending the call – and hoped that nobody had heard her. But soon she was getting calls from family and friends, asking her if she was serious.

Having grown up in a family that regularly had holidays in the game reserves of South Africa and in Mozambique, she’d always longed to drive through Africa. Her pending 80th and Tracy’s 20th was a good milestone to celebrate.

Asked what route she was going to take, she replied: “I have no idea. I think I’ll keep to the right.”

Albu’s long-time partner Allan Brooke had died two years earlier.

And, being the mother of four children and grandmother of nine, she decided it was time for an adventure of her own.

People were horrified when she said she would be doing the trip in her car, Tracy, that already had about 400,000km on the clock.

“But who else would I choose as my partner in crime? For a quarter of my life, Tracy has been my trusty steed. Windows wound down, music playing, seatbelt clipped in, I could always roar off into the sunset when I needed to,” she wrote in her blog.

Albu and Tracy – which had had a service in the town of Darling and been reupholstered in high-end palm-patterned fabric donated by Albu’s friend, interior decorator Monique Lion-Cachet – left Jakkalsfontein in June, 2017. She had chosen to try and raise money through the trip for the charity Shine Literacy and promised to visit as many schools as possible to hand out books. There were also boxes of biscuits and sweets on Tracy’s roof rack as well as 2,000 Bic pens to hand out along the way.

After consulting with experts and mapping a route that followed the eastern part of the continent, she organised carnets (temporary import-export permits) for cross-continental driving as well as visas

and all the necessary medical and other equipment she needed.

They were followed out of Johannesburg “at breakneck speed” by a cavalcade of motorbikers – “the most thrilling experience” before hitting the long roads of Africa.

They made it to Egypt, via 11 African countries by January 2018. (Tracy then went by ferry across the Mediterranean to Greece, while Albu flew back to Cape Town on a short visit “to take care of admin”.)

In March 2018, Albu was reunited with Tracy and they drove through Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Germany and Belgium, before spending three weeks in Holland and then to London to celebrate her 81st birthday, followed by France, Switzerland and Italy.

Her plans to have tea with the queen did not materialise: her lady-in-waiting wrote back to say she was otherwise occupied.

Albu’s plans to drive back to Cape Town floundered when she became ill after contracting bilharzia in Ethiopia. She flew back to South Africa and a man she had met along the way, Ged Meechan volunteered to drive Tracy home from Alexandria.

Since her return in August 2018, Albu has been in poor health. Bilharzia was followed by double pneumonia and she was in hospital for five months. She’s also had two

knee replacements since her journey. “I’ve had a hell of a time, you have no idea how appalling some hospital staff are! I have taken a beating and so I haven’t been able to do anything.”

But her setbacks have not stopped Albu from plotting another trip. There are glimmerings of another journey from the south to the north of Africa.

“I want to go the other way!” she declared. “I am not saying how far I am going to get. I’m going to go as far as I can. I have friends all over who say, ‘come and stay’; I’ve got people in Lagos and one person rang the other day from a country I’ve never heard of. It’s on that side of Africa – the other side – and said, ‘come and stay’ and I said, ‘God, yes, I will. And Tracy is quite fit and ready to go.”

“I must just give myself to the end of the year to concentrate on my health and to get myself back to what I was, then I will put my trip together.”

Looking back on the journey, she describes it as ‘magical’. “When I started, I never thought it would be like this. I did it for me. I was going to the café, never realising the café was in Cairo. It was just a magic trip.”

Albu’s book abounds with stories and anecdotes about the people she travelled with and met along the way:

- Bryan Jones and his wife, Diana, both in their seventies - who had driven from Cape Agulhas to the northernmost tip of Norway and who “had more adventures under their belts than I could ever dream of” drew her a map and showed her every detail “and I do mean every detail”.

- Johan Badenhorst – presenter of *Voetspore*, an Afrikaans documentary series on travel “who arrived (to advise her ahead of the trip) in the biggest most luscious overlanding travel beast I’d ever seen – poor little Tracy must have blushed in embarrassment,” she laughed.

- The police officers at the security stops in Botswana – “we were pulled over every 15km-or-so by officers in starched Omo-white uniforms.

“I rolled down the window and said in my most charming voice, ‘Good

morning officer, you must be hungry, standing out in this heat. Have a biscuit. Would you like a lolly too and how about a Bic pen?’”

- Her youngest daughter Zambi, who joined her on the first leg in Zambia and Zimbabwe. “We dissected her childhood, worked through her adulthood, sighed with nostalgia and laughed together until we wet ourselves.”

- Albu relates with candour in the book the “volatile” time she had with her Australian-based son Giles, who was with her in Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania.

“A major problem became apparent



Julia at the equator in Kenya

immediately: he utterly refused to grasp the fact that Tracy isn’t just a car but is a person in her own right. This really got my hackles up. For Giles, Tracy was just a vehicle with four wheels to get us from point A to point B, with no time to stop and smell the roses along the way.”

The interactions with Giles – who had previously worked as an overland tour guide in Africa – are both hilarious and poignantly sad, ranging from long silences in the car – “Don’t talk to me, Mum, I have to concentrate” – to a description of arriving at Senga Bay in Malawi.

“Giles immediately started to set up his tent. Don’t worry about me! I thought. Everything he did irritated me and I know I drove him round the bend. I do have to say here that Giles has given me permission to write about our trip, warts and all, and, boy, were there a lot of warts.”

- There was the official at the border of Kenya and Uganda who proposed marriage to her, as long as Tracy was part of the deal.

- In Ethiopia, her Rasta driver-guide Lucky, with the bodybuilder’s physique and the “tightest of vests to show it off” who would stop in the small villages and leave her in the car while he had coffee with friends.

“Wafts of dagga drifted over me, giving me that giggle you get from sitting next to someone who starts his day with it. Thinking back I suspect we were both high for most of the time actually.”

- A young Ethiopian man, Henok, whom she met in a town called Woldia, and who, a few years later moved to Cape Town to do his Master’s degree in Maths. “We are firm friends. He comes to all my talks and spent last Christmas with us. He is doing so well in high mathematics.

- Her Sudanese guide and friend, Jamal, who took her to meet his family: “We are in contact nearly every day. With the war going on there, he sent me a note to say he’s going to join the army. I wrote back and said, ‘don’t for goodness sake, do that, you’ve got to get yourself into a good job’.”

The highlights of Albu’s trip include watching the Maasai games in Kenya. “There was a full moon and they had candles on the ground. They stand for hours and jump and jump in a circle and they have a hum and it’s totally hypnotic, you go into another sphere. Oh, God, we were privileged, as not everybody sees that.

“It was the sort of place you wanted to stay forever and ever, you know how you have things that enter your life and you think, oh God that must not stop.”

Another highlight was spending a

day among a troop of Gelada baboons in the Simian mountains.

Albu fell in love with Uganda: “an incredibly beautiful country, where the air was cleaner, the trees bigger, the rain more abundant, the smells strong and the whole experience less commercialised or spoilt by tourists.”

She also “adored” Sudan and Ethiopia.

“Driving through the desert from Ethiopia to Khartoum on my own, I had my music playing loud and the windows rolled down. These little herd boys with their goats were fascinated at this little old lady, singing her way along the road, not knowing where the hell I was going or where I was going to sleep.”

Albu loved the desert as well as Khartoum, the capital of Sudan and the confluence of the White and

Blue Niles. “The city is huge, with a few beautiful new buildings, lovely trees along the Nile and gorgeous government buildings.”

Albu spent about ten days in the city. “You cross the river from the new side of the city and you hit the old side with its covered souks. It is fascinating.”

Ethiopia was another highlight. “The minute you walk over the border coming from Kenya, you’re walking into the Bible. It’s so Biblical. If Jesus walked past, I’d say, ‘Morning Jesus’ and go on m.”

Albu has found herself becoming increasingly detached from material things since her return.

“As you travel and see how some people live, often very happily, worldly possessions and things become less important.” – By Sue Segar ■



Julia preparing dinner at camp

Scatterlings of Africa

JULIA ALBU’S LOVE OF AFRICA GOES back to her childhood. “My parents adored Africa. We spent most holidays in the game reserves, if not, we went to the Wild Coast as Daddy loved fishing.

“My husband and I often took our children camping in Mozambique.”

Albu was born in Johannesburg, went to Kingsmead College and then to finishing school in Switzerland.

“I was one of five children and very spoilt. I had two older sisters, a younger sister and a brother, George, who lives in Richmond, KwaZulu-Natal.

I was in the middle, my two older sisters died and there are three of us left. We had a wonderful childhood, had Basuto ponies at home and were free to create our own amusements.

Being the middle child, with my elder sister six years older and the youngest five years younger, I was like an only child. My companion at home was a baboon called Tong who swam and rode with me and who I loved frantically.

Albu’s father, George, “came from a mining family and “had a big job in gold mining”.

Her mother, Bessie, who hailed from Barberton, “rode beautifully and was the most wonderful shot with a gun”.

Her mother died when Albu was 16, which was “absolutely shattering”.

“I fled to London and did a bit of floor walking in Fortnum & Mason.” She met her husband, Michael Grimstone in the UK and the pair married and moved to South Africa where he had been sent on business.

The couple lived in Witkoppen, Johannesburg which in those days, was “absolute veld”. They had four children, two boys and two girls, who had a “wild and wonderful childhood”.

The pair divorced after 22 years and Albu moved to Diepsloot where a friend had converted a stable into a cottage, with her two girls, as her sons were at school and in the army.

She had to start working at the age of 40 and started a job with PR practitioner Adele Lucas, who taught her everything about PR – “but, my God, she was tough.”

Albu moved to the Cape about 20 years ago and lived at Jakkalsfontein with her partner Alan Brooke, who died two years before she embarked on her African trip.

Before that, she was active in the community, including starting a community garden in the nearby town of Darling.

Her role models include Nelson Mandela – “how he came out and forgave, and got on with everything” – and one of her favourite books at the moment is *Dark Continent, My Black*

Arse by Sihle Khumalo, who gave up his job to travel through Africa.

She is a huge fan of “the boys in green,” South Africa’s rugby team who recently brought back the World Cup trophy, “because they are a bunch of South Africans all playing together. I was hysterical watching them play.”

A patriotic South African, she said: “I am fed up with people moaning about South Africa. If you’re going to be negative, then I think you must just bugger off. We do not want any negativity here. It’s a wonderful country. I believe that if we can all be kind to each other, we could go a long way. God knows, I wouldn’t live anywhere else. Australia is lovely, but it’s not for me. I am hysterical about this country.”

Albu is fascinated by the common humanity that can be found among different cultures. Her philosophy is that “life is the most wonderful gift and we must live every second.

“I found a saying from the chapel in Maatjiesfontein. It said ‘Live for the present, look forward to the future and be grateful for the past’. I also believe kindness is vital. If you are kind, you will receive. Always try to be kind and interested in what people have to say.

“I tell my children and grandchildren, take every opportunity that comes your way – and when you take it, do it with an open mind.” ■



Ian McEwan: *The Cockroach* (Jonathan Cape)

THE PREAMBLE TO THIS BOOK reassures us that “any resemblance to actual cockroaches, living or dead, is entirely coincidental”. This is not entirely candid: yes, as a cockroach, the book’s main character, one Jim Sams, is unique; but, reconstituted as a human being, he bears an unmistakable resemblance to an actual living Prime Minister of Britain. He is, in the first line of the novel, described as “clever but by no means profound”, which admittedly could describe any number of people, but once the idea has lodged in one’s brain, is difficult not to see as entirely appropriate to the present incumbent of No 10.

The cockroach of the title, then, is an actual insect that has scrambled from the Houses of Parliament into No 10, to wake up as Prime Minister. Readers of Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* will recognise here a variant of Kafka’s fable, in which one Gregor Samsa wakes up to find himself, not exactly a cockroach, but *einem ungeheuren Ungeziefer*, that is, a monstrous vermin; but McEwan presumably wanted his protagonist to have a more specifically dislikeable identity. Rightly or wrongly, we think of cockroaches as not only dirty but also somehow slithery and underhand. In short, if politicians are insects they’d probably be cockroaches.

These cockroach-like qualities McEwan recreates not only in Prime Minister Sams, but in almost all of his cabinet: it is a moment of real joy to the newly incarnated PM to realise his whole Cabinet consists of transmogrified cockroaches – except the Foreign Secretary, whom he recognises as an unreconstructed human being, and ousts by a trumped-up sexual molestation charge. (McEwan uses the opportunity to take aim at the excesses of the #MeToo movement and its proponents: “On the opinion page a younger member of *The Guardian* staff decreed that a victim was not only always right, but had a right to be believed.”)

The central concern, indeed obsession, of Sams is called Reversalism, which a gullible nation has just voted in favour of: a proposal that Britain will reverse the flow of money, so that people will pay to work and be paid to shop. Passionately opposed to this, and much reviled by the Reversalists, are the Clockwisers, who want to remain in synch with the rest of the world. (Although Archie Tupper, the President of the United States, believes Reversalism to be a grand idea, and regularly tweets his support.)

Yes, it’s Brexit, and no, it’s not subtle. *The Cockroach* is a bit of a *jeu d’esprit* on McEwan’s part, a fairly slight, 100-page volume that offers an amusing footnote to his heftier productions like *Atonement* and *Saturday*. Which is not to say it’s not serious. It is, of course, satire – as defined by my Glossary of Literary terms: “the literary art of diminishing a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking towards it attitudes of amusement, contempt, indignation, or scorn.”

And there is no doubting that McEwan is in absolute earnest in sending up what he clearly regards as the monumental stupidity and dishonesty of Brexit. An uncomprehending Sams is confronted with the German Chancellor’s “simple, plaintive, *Warum?*”: “Why are you doing this? Why, to what end, are you tearing your nation apart? Why?”

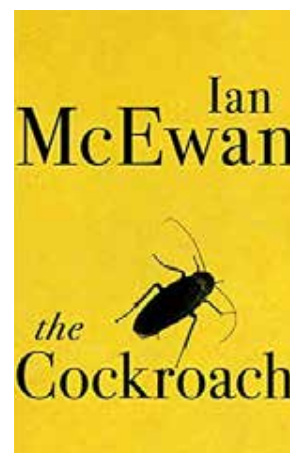
But more damning than the Chancellor’s *Warum* is Sams’ own summation, not only of Brexit but of its intellectual and ideological roots, in a eulogy on the wisdom of cockroaches: “We understand and love the dark. In recent times, these past two hundred thousand years, we have lived alongside humans and have learned their

particular taste for that darkness to which they are not as fully committed as we are. But whenever it is predominant in them we have flourished. [...]When that peculiar madness, Reversalism, makes the general human population poorer, which it must, we are bound to thrive. If decent, good-hearted, ordinary people have been duped and must suffer, they will be much consoled to know that other decent, good-hearted, ordinary types like ourselves will enjoy greater happiness even as our numbers grow.”

So we are making the world safe for cockroaches. After all, we know that cockroaches are one of the oldest species on earth, and will probably survive us by millennia.

The novel ends (spoiler alert) with the whole cabinet reverting to their cockroach personae and bodies for the Christmas break and returning to the Palace of Westminster to spend the festive season with friends and relatives. Crossing Whitehall, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Trevor Gott, “got ahead of himself, as he sometimes did, and ran out too soon and disappeared under the wheel of a rubbish truck.”

Satire is often savage, and one of its pleasures, it would seem, is to skewer your enemies: clearly Ian McEwan would relish seeing Michael Gove disappearing (“truly two-dimensional”) under the wheel of a rubbish truck. He is not alone in this uncharitable fantasy. But is it a consolation? We derive an unholy pleasure from the cartoons of Zapiro; but did they help to bring down Zuma? Will McEwan’s book in any way disrupt the careers of the likes of Johnson, Gove and the rest of the cockroaches? Probably not, on both counts; but we can laugh, so as not to cry. ■



THE COCKROACH
by Ian McEwan
(Jonathan Cape)



Letter from Umjindi

My 2020 revolution

AH YES, ANOTHER YEAR HAS GONE and another has come and, of course, with this we can expect as always much talk of going into the new year with some sort of newly found oomff. This of course is called a New Year Resolution but for realists, well, it's going to be, as always, same ****, different year.

Realists? really? No, these people are actually called pessimists, hum-drummers, party poopers, killjoys and I am glad I am not one of them. And nosey ones, I trust – or rather hope – that you are not one of them as well. Because the “reality” is that just to be alive as we go into a new year is reason enough to be optimistic. Unless you're doing life without the possibility of parole. Then yes, indeed, your new year can rightfully be described as same s*** different year, to say the least!

But there is one person who is most probably not looking forward to ringing in the New Year and that is the *Umshini Wami* crooner. Yes currently he is only facing allegations surrounding the arms deal, but heck Al Capone was only nailed when he was slammed with tax evasion. So we'll take what we can get. Besides, it was such a joy – not to mention funny as hell – to see Msholozzi in the dock

And man oh man, nosey ones, if Mr Zuma could postpone the ringing in of 2020 he certainly would. I mean after all, would you welcome it knowing that once again you are going to be sitting in the dock with that obnoxious, sarcastic, up-yours-South Africa grin smacked on your face? Remember that grin? The one he displayed when he mocked how “some people” pronounce Nkandla as ingkaandlaaa.

Now before I get to my revolution please allow me to share a little song I

have penned, inspired by the crooner.

This little number, min you, is written in the hip hop genre (rap if you like) and uses a sampling of the late Lucky Dube's song *Prisoner* for the backing track.

Backing track: “*I'm a prisoner yeah I'm a prisoner yeah*”

Verse: “*Jammed jammed jammed umshini wami*

Jammed jammed umshini wami”

Backing vocals: *And the Zulu girls go doo doo doo doo doo doo ingkaandlaaa*”



Alrighty then, enough about the Gupta puppet. New Year resolutions? Argh! Weak weak weak, even the word resolution itself is weak. Think about it, did you ever get excited at hearing that your municipal council took a resolution? No.

Well as for me nosey ones, and I suggest you might want to take my lead on this, going into the new year I am embarking on a revolution of sorts. Yes indeed an aggressive, non-negotiable stance on things I want to turn around.

My number one priority is to introduce, or rather insist, that my right-hand man on the farm embrace the culture of loose joints. Yes, loose joints, you know those pencil thin marijuana cigarette sticks. Why? Because I am fed up with him working for ten minutes and then stopping for 30 minutes to roll a spliff.

Simple logic here: if he had a cigarette pack full of loose joints I wouldn't lose out on hours of labour.

Call this my employer revolution. Yes, we *baases* need to stand up for our rights.

However, as determined as I am to insist on this, I doubt I will succeed since the bugger smokes those Bob Marley cigar size spliffs. And I think he gets as much joy rolling them as he does from smoking them, so yes, I'm afraid this call in my revolution is doomed to failure.

But, failure or not, my revolutionary stance will have made a strong point and I will have addressed an issue that is highly irritating to me. Of course the “aggressive” revolutionary stance will have been better than the weaker approach.

I resolve to talk to my man about wasting time rolling his spliffs, talk to my man? No, what is he, my son? No I must insist, *Viva la revolution!*

Let's face it, all in all we need to be realistic about the fact that the ringing in of the New Year will not erase the challenges we had as of midnight December 31, 2019. Sorry to be a killjoy but come 1 January, the party is over and those challenges will still exist.

But, hey, don't be a pessimist. Rather capitalise on that renewed spirit and oomff we all get from a new beginning and launch your revolution with oomff and gusto. If you can't do that then roll a cigar-size spliff, take a toke and think about Zuma in the dock. Happy New Year Nosey Ones. ■



Christmas rum

AQUINAS, KANT, DAWKINS, SAMSON – all great philosophers who have grappled with the nature and essence of “a higher power”.

Samson (the local hobo) walked into the pub, wearing two pairs of oversized tracksuit pants, a T-shirt, a buttoned-up shirt, a waistcoat, a very large, red lady’s jacket and a green umbrella. He looked like a garden gnome ready for Christmas.

“Shorty!” we all cheer. We were already full of festive spirits. “Who’s turn is it to buy Samson a drink?” Jan asked Zama behind the bar. “It’s the Professor’s turn,” said Zama. “Dammit!” Piet complained. “That client I did that roof leaking job for never paid me. Eish, fair is fair. What are you having, Samson, your normal Zamalek?” Piet asked.

“It’s Christmas, I want rum,” Samson said. “What?!” cried the Professor. “It’s double the price!”

“I’ll pay half”, Jan offered, “but then I want a story, Shorty.”

Samson is a very good storyteller. He’s especially good at re-enacting Bible stories in a unique way. He has the capacity to play the roles of many characters at the same time. People say it is because he, himself has many personalities.

Samson waited till he had his rum in his arthritic hands before announcing that he was going to tell us

the story of Abraham and Isaac of the Old Testament. As he spoke, he assumed the roles of both Abraham and God. His body language and tone shifted between a small and ensnared Abraham, looking up towards God, who hovered somewhere above the ceiling fan. The role of Isaac didn’t need interpretation, I guess because all he had to do was lie there.

God was a menacing character, pointing fingers and speaking loudly, like a “baas” who himself might have been on his third round of rum.

“God said to Abraham: ‘*Hey wena! Woza lapa.* We are going to braai tonight. I want lamb tjops!’” Samson hollered, holding his arms out, like the Jesus statue in Rio. Jan and Piet applauded. “He’s good, hey?” said Piet. “What did Abraham do?”

Samson shook his head as a shocked Abraham and then carefully took a sip of rum, as himself, partly for dramatic effect and partly because he was shaking and didn’t want to spill anything:

“Abraham said: ‘I don’t have a lamb.’ God was angry.

‘*Ek is nie geworry met joune nie!*

I want a lamb. *Ons gaan nou braai!*”

Jan whistled: “*Hier kom moeilikheid.*”

Scowling at the ceiling fan, Samson (as Abraham) said: “I don’t have a lamb to braai, I don’t know what you expect me to braai.”

Samson took another sip of rum, this time as God: “Not a problem,” said God, wiping

the rum from his lips. “Take that son Isaac of yours, bind his legs like a lamb and put him on the fire. I am God!” God pointed a final devastating finger, Abraham sighed and lit the pyre.”

Samson bowed dramatically: “Don’t you see, my friends, *imihlobo yami*, it was all a trap? Abraham never had a choice.”

People frowned and laughed and moved on to other conversations, but Jan wanted to understand the moral of the story. “Shorty, tell me something, what do you mean ‘it was a trap’? Are you saying God talks in riddles? Why did he do that?”

Samson shrugged. He took a deep draught of his Christmas rum and said: “He is God. He can surely do as he wants?”

And with that axiomatic statement, Samson cracked the conundrum of pre-destiny, determinism, free will and the nature of God – there is no riddle to be solved, just a reality to be accepted. We might amuse ourselves, arguing that theories of evolution are more accurate and superior in understanding when compared to the mythical versions that the Bible or Quran teaches.

The truth is, they are all as equally outrageous and incomprehensible as each other. And whatever free choice we think we have, which is likely to be very little, is ultimately of no consequence. We are at the mercy of a merciless “universe/god/nothing” we cannot possibly understand.

Jan came up to me and addressed me in a reverent tone: “You know people say Samson is a prophet. Can I tell you what I understood from his latest teaching?”

“Please,” I replied.

“To enjoy the rum whenever it is offered,” said Jan, “And always try to keep a lamb handy, just in case.”

More than that none of us can do, really.

Blessed holidays, everyone. ■



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