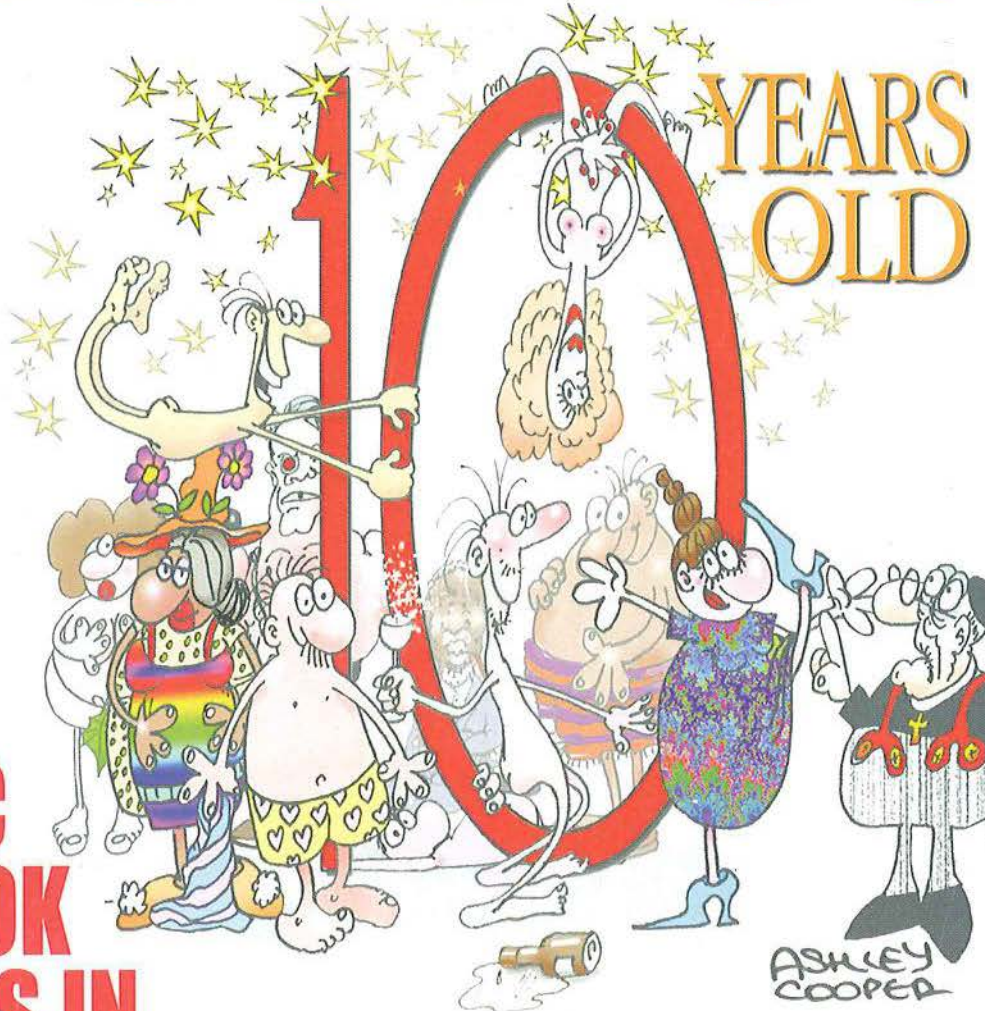


news you're not supposed to know

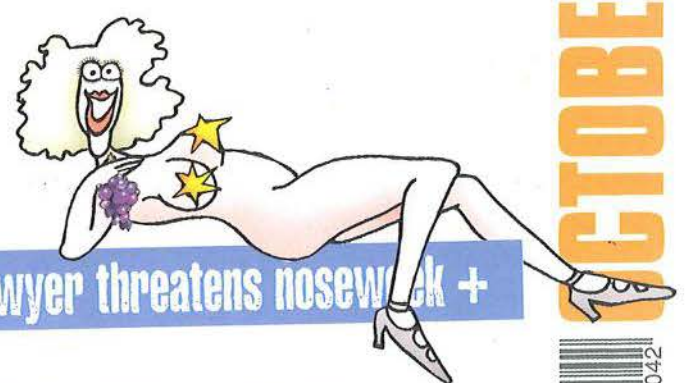
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noseweek



issue
50
OCTOBER 2003

**TOP ANC
MEN TOOK
MILLIONS IN
KICKBACKS
SAYS TYCOON**



+ Bill Venter — which fatcat is the copycat? + Lawyer threatens noseweek +

+ How much is that democracy in the window? + Not-so-lucky Lucan +

On the trail of Mugabe's millions + SAA gets into wein mess after another +



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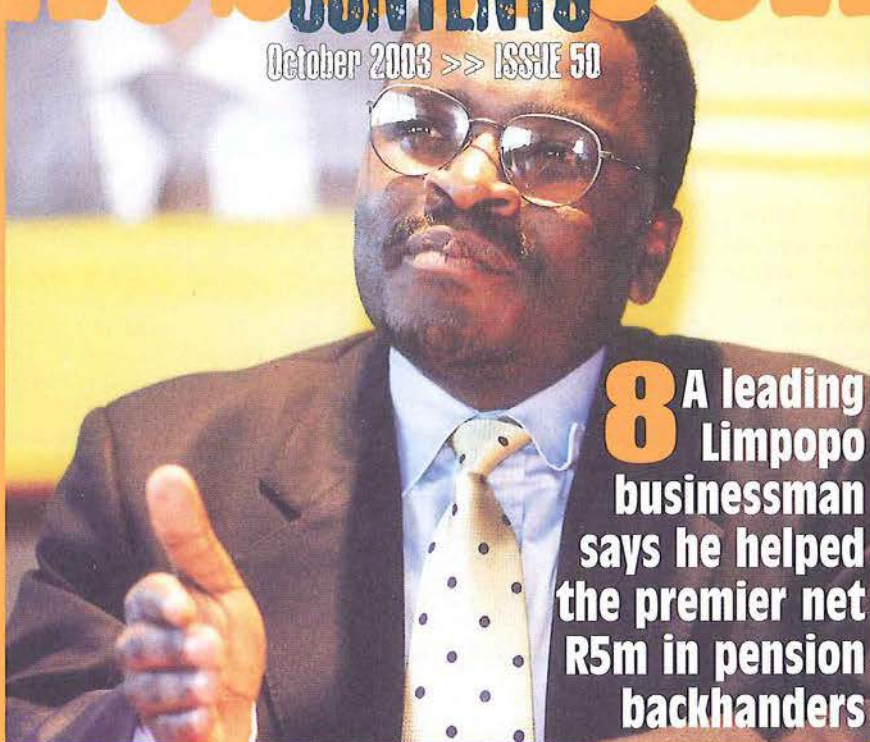
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Zuma 'rape' claim: correction

I am extremely aggrieved by your article "The sins of the children' (nose49), because I have had no discussion with any journalist from your newspaper concerning this matter.

The statement attributed to me [as attorney for the alleged rape victim] is not only a gross distortion of the truth but is calculated to suggest I am involved in criminal conduct. The

in your magazine with equal prominence to that given to the article in question.

Linda Mazibuko B Juris LLB
Durban

Our reporter had "discussions" with you on at least two occasions, and with your well-informed secretary on several occasions. We have an extremely good record of the interview with you which prompted the reference to you in our story. Which is fortunate because, on looking at it

copyright sense) and instantly adding immeasurably to the value of the works (noses48&49).

Was that a fraudulent claim on his part? Will he be burdened by having to live a lie for the rest of his life? Or was he just badly advised by his lawyer, who with his blessing had entered into the contract to implement the whole questionable scheme?

JL

Diep River, Cape Town
See page 28. - Ed.

■ I, for one, have no objection to the language you use, especially when telling the likes of Abe Swersky where to go.

George H
Durban

■ Regarding your reply to Abe Swersky: There are still a few "oldies" who recall the heyday of *Private Eye*. It might be the sincerest form of flattery, but is it appropriate for you to repeat that magazine's response to Sir James Goldsmith's solicitor, Lord Mischcon, when, in response to a particularly scurrilous article about "Goldenballs", he threatened to sue?

Guy Hoffman
Benmore

Indeed, the Eye echo was - we thought obviously - intended as extra relish for those oldies to savour. But you got the Eye reference wrong. The famous send-off pre-dated the Goldenballs saga by a few years. See Letters in nose6 for more about the famous case of Pressdram vs Arkell. - Ed.

Landmark Forum

I am concerned that a company called Landmark Forum is making inroads locally. It sounds very much like a pyramid scheme. Have you investigated this company and, if so, what have you discovered?

Sue Llewellyn
Durbanville

Your wish is our command. See the next noseweek. - Ed.

Less sleaze, pleez

I thought you might be interested in some constructive criticism from an old subscriber who has always admired your tenacity.

I find that my *noseweeks* are piling up next to my bed because reading about all these sleazeballs is, frankly, depressing.

Maybe you could have

I, for one, have no objection to the language you use, especially when telling Abe Swersky where to go"

suggestion is that I was party to an agreement in which the complainant in a rape case undertook for a reward not to pursue a prosecution.

This is defamatory of me and I am preparing a claim against *noseweek* and others connected with it.

I have at no stage been involved in any settlement negotiations with Mr Shaik or any other person regarding the matter reported in the article.

I call on you to publish a retraction and an apology

again, we find that the rest of your complaint has merit. In summarising what you said (in two lines), we - inadvertently - opened the way to a possible negative interpretation as you suggest. Which is not a fair reflection of what you in fact told us. See our story on page 28 for a correction. We apologise to Mr Mazibuko and to our readers for the error. - Ed.

Art scam

Mandela signed each sketch, thus claiming authorship (in the

Akritisdis

Nose49 is one of the best we have read since discovering *noseweek* (Issue 31). Your investigative powers are remarkable, and the effects are there for all to see.

Akritisdis reminds me strongly of Brian Arthur, who was also a chubby little crook, with the same sort of soggy face. He did a similar thing in Durban about 10 years ago. He only got away with his secretary and R80m, belonging mostly to elderly widows, including my mother-in-law. His luck ran out 18 months ago: the Feds arrested him in Miami and he was brought back in irons.

His last court hearing was attended by a number of vengeful old women who had to be restrained from attacking him with sticks. Akritisdis may yet come short!

Colin Bickle
Stompneusbaai, W Cape

Abe the Babe

I hope you've at last addressed Abe the Babe in language he can understand.

Angela
Kenilworth

Gus



[Now see page 13. Really. -Ed]

Could they be related?



Maria Ramos



Hugh Grant

I wonder if any of your superior readership have noticed, as I have, the uncanny resemblance between Maria Ramos, soon-to-be new group CEO of Transnet, and Hugh Grant of several weddings and a funeral fame?

Is it beyond the realms of possibility that they are related?
Logan McWatt
 Midrand

other articles interspersed with the sleazeballs?

Graham Barnett
 Cape Town

Your wish etc. See pages 13, 14, 16 and 26. – Ed.

What's theirs is mine

In January 2000 I invested R50,000 in a company called Union Mines. They were publicising with full-page newspaper ads a R250m foreign investment to revamp an old mine.

They listed on the JSE at 2c a share, only to skyrocket within months to around 20c. By the middle of the year the arse fell out of the whole story and shares plummeted to 5c where it was frozen by the directors to "protect their shareholders".

They are still listed, according to the "Sake"

section of *Die Burger*, at 5c per share. Meantime the directors seem simply to have vanished into oblivion with probably millions of rands. The only difference between this and an armed robbery is that a helluva lot more money got stolen, the thieves did not use force – and nobody seems to know or care about it.

Is it that simple to become a millionaire in this country? Hopefully you will investigate.

Jan van Zyl
 Langebaan

See page 10 – Ed.

Venter banter

Now, now. I note with amused disappointment the hearsay article on Bill Venter in *noseweek*. It appears the author has taken his key from

Gwen Gill, who is equally fascinated with Venter. Surely this sensationalist, anti-capitalist celebrity gossip is more suited to *You* magazine?

How likely is it that Venter, an MBA graduate with superior performance in the IR/HR module would put himself at risk of erring in labour law? So what if the man has interesting ways? No substance for a charge of "constructive dismissal" is noted in your story, but then every case has more than one side to it. Slipping in the "before and after" pictures was a nice try at leading character evidence.

Annelie Gildenhuys
 Industrial Relations Practitioner,
 Forest Town

Now turn to page 16 and let us know what you make of them. – Ed.

Voyager lifts off!

Since writing to SAA CEO André Viljoen (and copying the letter to *noseweek* – see *noseweek* 49), I have been contacted by an excellent customer care person named Bali, based in Johannesburg, where I met her on my last visit.

I was very impressed with her understanding of my serious complaints with Voyager's poor service. She not only listened attentively

but also speedily resolved the matter.

JE Pullen
 Rentokil, Claremont

Lawyer unto yourself

Being a small-town chap that tends to get to the truth, I am often drawn into messy confrontations.

Whom do you use for legal support? I'd also be interested to know how you handle the reactions emotionally. Telling the truth can be draining.

El Cid
 by email

Do you want to sue, or are you being sued? Are you rich? Whichever, my best all-purpose advice is: stay away from lawyers.

Talk/negotiate your way out of the mess yourself. You know the facts better than they do. You know what you can afford. Be humble. Even take a loss – it will be smaller and less humiliating than the loss you will most certainly suffer at the hands of your own, let alone your opponent's, lawyers.

You owe us a lunch. – Ed.

Master Bondage

October 2 was the 11th anniversary of the collapse of Masterbond. The plundering continues.

Don MacKenzie
 Durbanville

Radio you are ~~not~~ supposed to hear...



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Champions of Change

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The E-Boards outdoor network has been designed to blanket the Johannesburg's Northern Suburbs. While marketing agreements throughout the industry allow E-Boards to offer the full range of screens countrywide.

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- The programmable nature of these screens is such that specific broadcasts can be scheduled at specific times of the day or month as required.
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Screens are available in most major centres countrywide, examples of these screens can be seen at the following JHB northern suburb locations

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We're ten years old – and this is issue 50! That certainly calls for a celebration. If anyone's game for a party, please let us know. We'll be there.

Meanwhile, those who have found us troublesome, be warned: we are now entering our teens.

Like so many difficult children, we've had care and kindness from a great many people who somehow managed to suppress their natural impulse to throttle us. Among our founder minority shareholders – the ones who helped raise the R60,000 we needed to print our first issue – were Pierre du Toit (now retired senior tax partner at Arthur Andersen); Eberhard Bertelsmann (now judge of the Pretoria high court); and Mary Slack (who, besides being Harry O's daughter – international conspiracists, please note – has a sense of adventure only equalled by her tolerance for headstrong children). May they all be forgiven. I know they had no idea what they were doing.

Subscriber Number One on our database – still – is Brenda Voigt (née Roy), our FNB bank manager at the time. How she managed to hide the fact that she had given us an overdraft from Basil Hersov I never discovered.

Brenda was first in a line of notable women among our first 100 subscribers. Mary-Anne Hofman, our pro amico attorney, made sure we complied with the Companies Act, drafted our wills and laughed, and closed her eyes to the rest. Three of the very earliest – Post Office spokesperson Sannie Grobler, charity campaigner Adelle Searl and *Cape Times* stalwart Gertrude Cooper, sadly, are no more. Elizabeth Bradley and Judge Jeanette Traverso still have their fingers firmly on the pulse of life – which probably explains why they still subscribe.

In Pretoria, attorneys RM Brink and Marius Benade were early subscribers who gave us an undeserved respectability in the capital. In the Cape, advocates Peter Hodes, Deon Irish, Jeremy Muller and Selwyn (now Judge) Selikowitz were among those who did the same. When attorneys AP Muller of Potchefstroom and JM Loubser of Ermelo subscribed we called ourselves a national publication. (When Tiny Rowland and a mystery trust company in Jersey subscribed not long thereafter, we went international.)

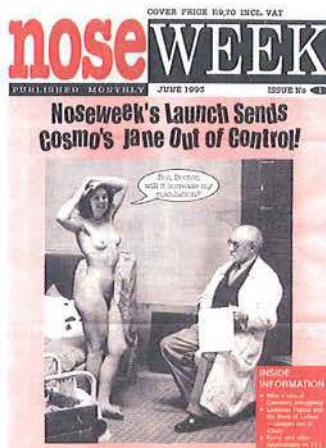
Among the first 100 who are still there: stockbroker Bobby Johnston, Ken Owen, Prof Jim Phelps (a contributor to this issue), P J Henderson (first PE subscriber), Michael Fridjhon, AH Rosholt, Geoff Budlender, Count Natalia Labia, Prof Kate Jowell and – from even earlier days – Llew Rood (now international marketer for Singita, where we launched our anniversary celebrations with a weekend of great luxury spent observing four-legged predators. Thank you, Llew!).

Just a little down the list, at No.145 we find ...oh-oh ... The Chief Revenue Inspector. And at 158, Abe Swersky. (Sorry, Abe, that it had to end this way.)

Finally, we raise our glasses to Maureen Barnes who played midwife and nurse for many years (she's since fled the madness for the English countryside); to Gus Ferguson who has provided his great cartoons, free, from first to last. We know no kinder: to Garth Walker in Durban who designed our first masthead and cover; to Jane Raphaelly, our first "victim" who took it on the nose, full-frontal, naked on that first, most memorable cover – and smiled.

Those were the pioneers. Thousands have followed in the path they cleared.

Thank you! To you all: bottoms up!



PARTY POOPERS

Attorneys Anthony Berlowitz and Associates, acting for Mercantile Bank, have written us a very, very long letter in response to our article in *nose49* about Dr Frank Carlisle's altercation with the bank about the R20m or so that disappeared from the good doctor's account at the bank. We had neither the space nor time to process the letter for this issue. We will deal with the matter in a forthcoming one.

Meantime we note that, despite the great

length of the letter, the attorneys avoid answering any of the questions we pertinently asked them to answer.

We also note that they succeeded in stopping the *Sunday Independent* from publishing anything about the matter by threatening the newspaper with an urgent court interdict, when that newspaper asked them for comment.

Watch this space.

The Editor

LIMPOPO PREMIER TOOK R5m PENSIONS BACKHANDER

SAYS LEADING BUSINESSMAN WHO CLAIMS HE FRONTED SECRET DEAL

BLACK EMPOWERMENT

deals can involve intrigues of Byzantine proportion. Here's one worth unravelling. In a recent interview with *noseweek*, one of South Africa's most established and respected black businessmen claimed to know – first hand – that the premier of Limpopo and one of his MECs each have a secret interest in a company involved in the distribution of monthly pension payments and social grants in the province. As a result, says the businessman, the two senior ANC politicians have for the past four years each had a secret, extra monthly income of R119,000 – a total of more than R5m – in addition to their official salaries.

The claims, made to us by South Africa's cane furniture king, Habakuk Shikoane – and subsequently corroborated by Brian van Rooyen, founder and chief executive of the JSE-listed venture capital company Labat Africa – will soon be tested in the Pretoria High Court.

Limpopo Premier Ngoako Ramatlhodi (official annual salary R517,785), did not reply to *noseweek's* request for comment. Thabo Mufamadi, Limpopo's MEC for finance and economic affairs, denies receiving anything.

Labat Africa was recently unsuccessful

in a bid to wrest the contract to distribute R4bn a year of central government's money in pensions and grants from the longstanding contract holder Cash Paymaster Services (Northern). Various Cash Paymaster (CPS) companies, including those that distribute pensions in four other provinces, are part of the JSE-listed technology group Aplitec.

The alleged secret payments to the premier and his MEC are said to have been made through a black empowerment company called Northern Corporate Investment Holdings, known as Nicho.

Nicho held a 30% stake in CPS. For not doing very much work since the first Limpopo pensions payout contract was won in 1996, CPS's parent company Aplitec has for at least the past four years shelled out R714,000 every month to Nicho "in lieu of dividends or profit share" – a pretty unusual arrangement.

So who are the shareholders of Nicho – the ultimate recipients of this generosity?

Aplitec's chief executive officer, Serge Belamant, claims that Nicho's 300 issued shares are held equally by just two men: Polokwane attorney Solomon ("Solly") Mohale and Gideon Serote, franchise owner of Polokwane's Academy of Learning.

But Shikoane, veteran ANC mem-

ber, old friend of Nelson Mandela and Black Businessman of the Year in 1981, claims he holds the minutes of a Nicho board meeting which record an agreement whereby the R714,000 monthly payments would be divided into six "shares": Shikoane (2 shares) – monthly payout R238,000; Mohale (2 shares) – monthly payout R238,000; Serote (1 share) – monthly payout R119,000; and Haroun Moti (1 share) – monthly payout R119,000.

Says Shikoane: "For the first two years we didn't get anything. We got that money [R119,000 for each share per month] for [only] four years. I owned two shares."

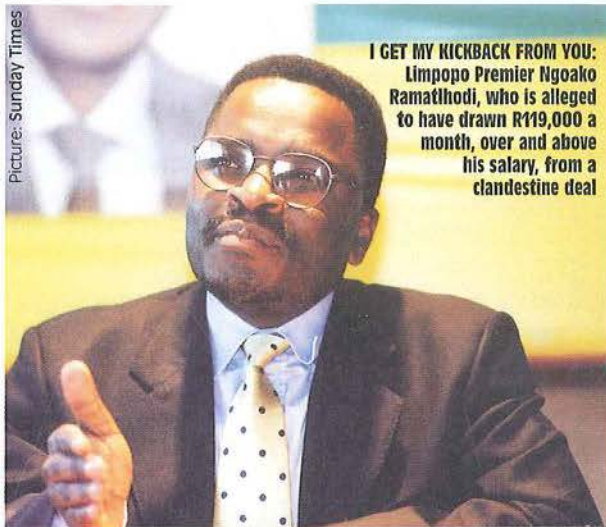
So he was getting R200,000-plus a month? "Exactly. In March I got the last one."

Shikoane then decided to modify his last statement. "I've been getting R119,000 a month, which is not exactly the full amount, for the years that have passed."

Noseweek suggested to Shikoane that he had held his second "share" on behalf of Premier Ramatlhodi. "How do you know things so deep?" asked Shikoane. "That is between me and the premier. I am holding those shares; they're mine. They're not the premier's. According to the books, the premier's got nothing."

So you would have got the premier's share of the money [R119,000/month] and paid it to him? "Yes," replied Shikoane. He added: "I think we can't talk it over the phone. Write your name and

Picture: Sunday Times



I GET MY KICKBACK FROM YOU:
Limpopo Premier Ngoako Ramatlhodi, who is alleged to have drawn R119,000 a month, over and above his salary, from a clandestine deal

phone number. Then we'll contact you in a secret mission where we can talk."

During the course of our conversation, Shikoane confirmed that the attorney Solomon Mohale held one of his two "shares" on behalf of MEC Mufamadi. "Exactly, you have got it exactly right," said Shikoane again. "But I don't want you to go further than that. You seem to know too much."

Lending credence to Shikoane's list, Haroun Moti, a wealthy Polokwane businessman, confirmed when we called him: "I was a shareholder of Nicoh, a very minority shareholder."

Cash Paymaster Service's existing pensions payout contract in Limpopo ends on November 30. Last year the provincial government invited tenders for a new three-year contract worth R250m-plus. Two companies made it for the final consideration: CPS and Labat Africa. Last November CPS was announced the winner.

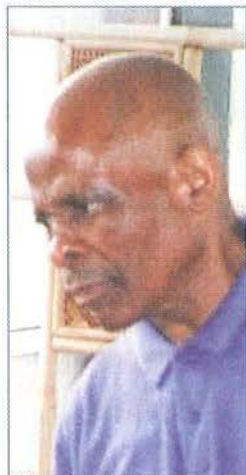
Labat CEO Van Rooyen cries foul. "We won it on the original tender criteria," he claims. "Then there was a meeting attended by two top officials at which the criteria were changed – and CPS won."

"We will also be seeking damages of

a new share structure of the company will come into being.

Ownership of CPS will be divided between four black empowerment companies, the lion's share of 40% to be held by a company called Micromatica 216, owned by just two of the old shareholders: Mohale and Serote.

To do the actual work of distributing the billions of rands to the province's needy, the new all-black shareholders will outsource the work to Aplitec. "Nothing is going to



KING CANE: Furniture tycoon Habakuk Shikoane, who claims to have fronted for Limpopo's premier in a deal involving pension payout tenders

owners of Micromatica 216, to finance their costs for the new contract.

The Aplitec boss knows about Shikoane's claim to own shares in Nicoh. "I don't know who this guy Habakuk [Shikoane] is," says Belamant. "I spoke to Solly [Mohale] who told me the whole story. Yes, seven or eight years ago [Shikoane] helped them on the tender."

"I told Solly I want to know who owns Nicoh. So he got the share certificates. The owners are Solly and Gideon Serote."

"So unless these guys are hiding something, this Habakuk does not legally own a thing. He was obviously involved at the beginning, and these guys were paying him. And when they came to renew the tender they said: 'why the hell do we have to carry this guy?' Habakuk thought he'd won the jackpot for the rest of his life."

After *noseweek* sent emails to the premier and Mufamadi, the denials began. Shikoane now denied he had ever told us that he held a share in Nicoh for the benefit of the premier and claimed he'd never said that Mohale held a share for the benefit of Mufamadi.

Shikoane repeated his earlier revised claim that although he held two shares

'They all know about the secret shares held by the premier and MEC Mufamadi'

about R300m," adds Van Rooyen. And he's a man who must be taken seriously. He is, after all, deputy president of Golden Lions and chairman of Eastern Province rugby. In December he's pitching for the top job – the presidency of the SA Rugby Football Union.

Van Rooyen reveals that he too has been told of alleged monthly payments to the premier and to MEC Mufamadi. His sources, he says, are "three or four" staff members of the Limpopo provincial government. "They all know about the secret shares held by the premier and MEC Mufamadi," says Van Rooyen. "I was told they each received R120,000 a month for four years."

Van Rooyen says his information is that Shikoane was the conduit for the premier's monthly payments, and Mohale was the conduit for Mufamadi's. The Labat CEO says that bank records of Nicoh and everyone involved will be subpoenaed to court.

When CPS's new contract to distribute pensions and social grants to Limpopo's needy starts on 1 December,

change," explains Aplitec's Belamant. "We will carry the risk and continue to oversee the whole lot until the money risk is transferred to them. The guys in Limpopo will do more of a management job, like sending messages to villagers."

Aplitec will still do nicely, picking up R20 every time a pension or grant is paid. With 800,000-plus elderly and needy in Limpopo, this will come to at least R192m a year.

For its minimal input, CPS's "new" shareholders will receive 80c per payment made – worth about R7.7m a year.

What about those R700,000-plus monthly handouts to Nicoh in the past? Belamant explains that around March this year these payments stopped, and the equivalent sum for the last eight months of the contract was paid to Mohale and Serote as the "official" shareholders of Nicoh. The amount, after being discounted by 25% because it was paid upfront, totalled some R4.2m.

Belamant says Aplitec also advanced a further R4m in a loan to Mohale and Serote, in their capacity as joint

he only received monthly payment of R119,000. "That is what I was getting. I can prove it."

Comments Aplitec's Belamant: "If he had two shares he should have got R119,000 times two. Where did the other R119,000 go?" That's, of course, the million dollar question.

Haroun Moti now maintains he'd never said he held any shares in Nicoh. "I never said that. I didn't confirm nothing with you." Pathetic, really.

In his denial of "some rather serious allegations" Mufamadi says: "For the record I wish to put it straight and to the point that I hold no interest in Nicoh and neither does anybody on my behalf. I have not received any payment from anybody involved in Nicoh or from Mr Mohale."

Last word from Aplitec's Belamant: "I really can't say if these guys have some sort of back end stupid agreement which we know nothing about. If we knew that any government people in Limpopo were involved, I would pull the blanket from underneath it." □

A MINE OF MISINFORMATION

FOUR HECTIC MONTHS

of trading, three years ago, in a resurrected old mining company continues to haunt investors who lost their shirts in the process.

Local and offshore punters bought shares in relisted Union Mines thinking they were onto a spectacular winner. Today they are still furious with those they see as the villains of the share price debacle that followed: advocate Wilhelm Smith and Johan van der Burgh.

The victims want to know whether the whole thing was perhaps an elaborate ruse to enable anonymous holders of worthless Union Mines stock to offload their shares and make a killing at their expense.

Van der Burgh is the son and heir of a once extremely well known – and wealthy – Cape Town radiologist. (His mother was Sir De Villiers Graaff's sister-in-law. *Pleez!*) Over the years he has become known as something of an expert at launching schemes on the venture capital market that quickly boom – and then invariably go horribly bust. (As the Union Mines saga was unfolding, in an unrelated incident, angry shareholders of software group Planit Holdings ousted Van der Burgh as its chairman and director after Planit's share price tumbled in less than a year from R1 to around 4c.)

Smith was a senior lecturer in the faculty of commerce and administration at Stellenbosch University for many years. Non-academic readers may remember Smith from his subsequent spell as chairman of Dalsig, a mining

Johan van der Burgh has a reputation as an expert at launching schemes that take off like a rocket before crashing horribly. Advocate Wilhelm Smith may be remembered for piloting Dalsig mining and exploration company into the ground. Three years ago the pair breathed life into moribund Union Mines, which they took on a white-knuckle kamikaze mission. Now punters who failed to bail out before the rig hit the dust are asking themselves whether Van der Burgh and Smith are just incompetent. Or is there more to the story?

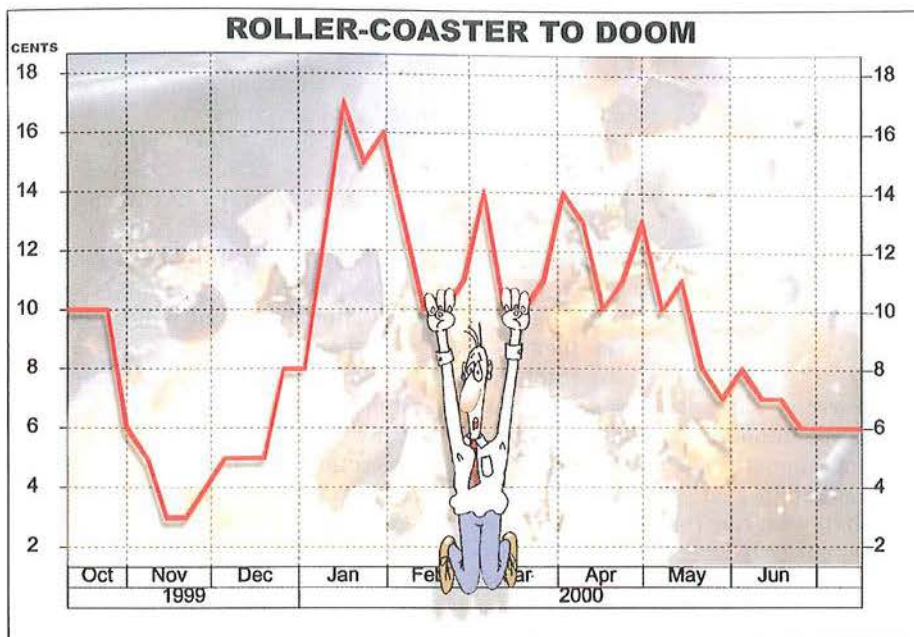
and exploration company that crashed spectacularly in 1993. These days Stellenbosch-based advocate Wilhelm Smith is generally best known as “adviser” to the legendary Gert Theron, most recently of Mouldmed notoriety. (Nuff said. See *noses30&35*, or speak to Norman Lowenthal. – Ed.)

Trading in Union's dormant shares re-started on 17 October 1999 at 10c. By the following January, hype in the business press was sending the share price upwards. On the 13th of that month one of the victims, small-time investor Jan van Zyl, bought 200,000 shares at 13c. “That was all that was available,” he recalls. The following day he managed to pick up 110,000 more, at 19c. Both purchases were handled by ABN Amro, and Van Zyl's total stake cost him R47,666.

“A friend of mine had just put in R5000 or R10,000,” says Van Zyl. “He told me, ‘man, this is the in thing’. So I put my savings into Union Mines. What bothers me more than the financial loss is how people like that can get away with it.”

Get away with it? Well, after the flurry of share trading, Union's shares were abruptly suspended again by the JSE in July 2000. They've remained suspended ever since. There was a further attempted rebirth last year, with an announced joint-venture purchase of Zaaiplaats Tin Mining, but it didn't come off and the JSE finally delisted Union on 14 July.

“Ever since the share was suspended I've been trying to find out what happened,” says Van Zyl. “The Union Mines guys don't respond to communications. I



UNION MINES CLOSING PRICE
CARTOON © NOSEWEEK BY ASHLEY COOPER

Source: I-NET BRIDGE

tried ABN Amro. I ended up speaking to somebody on the JSE. Nobody seemed to know – or care about – what the hell was going on. It was just a never ending buck-passing saga.”

This, then, is the puzzling story of the death, rebirth and second death of Union Mines.

FOUNDED IN 1949, THE

company listed in 1981, at which time it was Union Tin, a respectable mining operation owned by Gold Fields. Its tin mines came to the end of their useful life in 1995 and the company's shares were suspended – for the first time – on 12 June 1996. Application was made for its liquidation.

The Union shell was resurrected from

Medium Mining, B-Online and what was described as “the Hardrock licence” – into the moribund company.

Cape Town-based Johan van der Burgh became a director of Union, and a significant minority shareholder.

Union was now grandly described as “a holding company for various enterprises in the metal and mineral industry, with investments in diamond mining, base metals and exploration”. Trading in the shares, which in 1996 had been suspended at 18 cents, resumed in October 1999 at 10 cents, but after five weeks slumped to a miserable 3 cents.

Then, in January, excitement was boosted by the announcement of another reverse takeover, this time by a little-known Jersey-registered company called

‘I ended up speaking to the JSE. Nobody seemed to know – or care about – what the hell was going on’

liquidation and re-listed on 11 October 1999 after a reverse takeover by Medium Targets, a little-known mining company. Medium Target's controlling shareholder was Advocate Wilhelm Smith.

Medium Targets received more than 300 million newly issued Union shares, giving Smith 44% of Union, in return for injecting new assets – listed as Riverbend Diamonds, Transvaal Mining,

Spring Consultants. The scrip-funded deal was said to be valued at more than R250m. (Which, of course, meant that any profits that were subsequently to be made by Spring Consultants and its mystery shareholders when it sold its Union Mines shares would be headed straight offshore.)

Spring, it was announced, would take control of Union and transform it into a

strategy

Tony Manning/Strategist
www.tonymanning.com

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Marketing and communications strategy and coaching

base minerals beneficiation specialist through the acquisition of Sudfracht Operating and International Metal Processing. With export contracts in place, Union's earnings were projected at R180m for the year to 28 February 2001; R373m for the year after.

A refinery at Brakpan, owned by Wilhelm Smith's already mentioned Transvaal Mining, would be developed to produce copper, cobalt, zinc and nickel in metal form, plus associated chemicals. Once the main plants were completed, Union would soon produce up to 6000 tonnes of copper cathode, 10,000 tonnes of copper sulphate, 3600 tonnes of cobalt and 2000 tonnes of nickel a year, trumpeted the announcement. Taraa, taraa!

But wait, the clincher: a three-year contract had been entered into for the total production of the Brakpan plant to be sold to Thyssen SA, a subsidiary of the mighty German ThyssenKrupp conglomerate. Sales would be in US dollars and Union would become a significant world player in the metals processing and trading fields!

Heady stuff. On the strength of the

So bang went the projected sales in US dollars. And bang went the contract with Thyssen.

Mass resignations from the Union board followed – although Van der Burgh remained a director. David Sylvester, chairman of the shareholders' association, was brought in as caretaker chairman to try and structure a last-minute rescue deal.

It was reported at the time that Sylvester and the new directors had instituted an investigation into what had gone wrong. The results of their probe would be announced no later than the end of August 2000, it was promised. But no report ever emerged.

What was the result of Sylvester's investigation? "I can't tell you, because I threw out all my Union Mines stuff ages ago," the shareholders' champion now tells *noseweek*. "I was only chairman for just over a month, until I had the shares suspended.

"As chairman of the shareholders' association, I'd seen plenty of these flash-in-the-pan schemes. It became apparent that the Transvaal Mining shares were never, for some reason,

Van der Burgh – honest but trouble-blighted businessmen, incompetents, or worse? "I'm not going to respond to that," replies Sylvester.

From Union Mines' office in Bellville, Cape Town, Smith tells *noseweek*: "No steps have been taken to liquidate Union Mines. Negotiations are continuing to raise fresh capital and obtain additional assets. A public announcement will be made in October or November.

"I am not a director of Union Mines and have not been for some time. I am not involved in the management. I act as secretary and am responsible for the drafting of documentation.

"Mr Johan van der Burgh has been a non-executive director of Union Mines since 1998. He and his associates jointly hold 48 million shares or 14.5% of the issued equity. He is not involved in management and our relationship is limited to board meetings.

"According to our calculation, more than 90% of the Union Mines shareholders that have lost money, or more accurately will lose money if Union Mines is liquidated, acquired shares on the JSE

'I'd seen plenty of these flash-in-the-pan schemes. It became apparent that the Transvaal Mining shares were never, for some reason, transferred to Union Mines'

promised new assets, by 16 January 2000 the share price had soared to a high of 17 cents. Nice for the sellers, for by this time the hauling in of the suckers was well under way. As our graph shows, the four months from January to April 2000 saw heady trading as Union's share price see-sawed up and down. But in May doubts began to emerge and the share price dipped quickly.

On 9 July, Union's shares (then down to 5c) were suspended by the JSE. On 13 July a terse announcement by Sudfracht and IMP stated: "Due to the emergence of certain material issues in Union which were not disclosed at the time of the negotiations, Spring has cancelled the agreement and terminated further negotiations with Union."

What happened? It emerged that ownership of the key component in the Brakpan/Thyssen deal, Transvaal Mining (acquired by Smith's Medium Targets from Intercoal) had never actually been passed to Union. (Why not has never been explained.)

transferred to Union Mines.

"I was made chairman to see whether we could get Union going again, but it was a complete and utter mess. When I had access to the bank accounts there was never a brass farthing there. No cash, just loads of agreements. The only plausible part for me was Thyssen and Sudfracht. But they walked away.

"I'm not a corporate financier by any stretch of the imagination; it was a task greater than I was up to. I had wanted to have an investigation launched in terms of the Companies Act, but there was no money there to pay the lawyers.

"Anybody who bought Union Mines shares after the time it was owned by Gold Fields pretty much knew it wasn't a viable going concern. They bought in anticipation of things happening."

So was it all an "elaborate ruse" to enable worthless stock to be dumped on gullible investors, as some victims suggest? Were those at the helm of Union Mines – notably Smith and

in the 'boom' period from January to May 2000 after the acquisition of the cobalt operation from Spring Consultants.

"Due to the collapse of the relevant transaction (for reasons which are still strongly disputed) the listing of the shares was suspended."

On the delisting this July: "The announced acquisition of the Zaaip-laats tin project [last year] was a viable attempt to correct the situation. This transaction could not be finalised timeously – causing the delisting – due to problems with the supporting metallurgical reports. The directors are working hard to rectify the situation.

"If solved, the company will file a new application for listing based on the Zaaip-laats tin project. Alternatively, certain contracts are being negotiated to revive and expand Union Mines' diamond ventures in the Northern Cape. A public announcement will be made as soon as the negotiations have been completed."

You have been warned. ☐

IT'S ANOTHER WEIN MESS SAA'S GOT INTO



OVER THE YEARS,

SAA has spent a lot of time and money organising annual wine selection panels, including international judges, to select wines to serve on its flights. With the Jo'burg-Frankfurt route being one of the busiest, it was good to learn that two German judges, both with international reputations, were invited to join the panel this year.

Armin Diel, in particular, owner of a leading wine estate in the Nahe region in Germany, is well known as a show judge and journalist and writes several columns in leading wine magazines. He also co-authors the authoritative *Gault-Millau* wine guide for Germany. Count Neipperg is another well-known figure, with highly regarded estates in Germany and France.

What follows is a sad saga of good intentions and poor communication. With the judges due to fly off from Frankfurt on Friday 22 August, Armin Diel requested on 7 August, a fortnight before departure, that the status of his flights be confirmed. (He was on a waiting-list.) His correspondent at SAA, Nadia Chadwick (liaison officer, product development, Food & Beverage), promised to check this, and get back to him the next day.

On 13 August, with the flight now just more than a week away, Diel again sent a reminder that he was waiting to have his flights confirmed and informed Chadwick that being on a waiting-list at that advanced stage was not acceptable to him. On 14 August, she replied that she was trying to confirm the status with "the

lady responsible" as soon as possible.

On 18 August at 11.35am, with just four days to go, Diel set a deadline of 6pm that evening, by which time his flights should be confirmed. With no reply forthcoming by early the following morning, he sent an email to SAA, cancelling his participation in this year's wine judging panel.

Later that day, Owen Julies of SAA confirmed the flight schedules to Diel, although even at this stage several of the legs weren't technically confirmed. The same afternoon, Detlev Kohler of SAA phoned Diel to apologise for the "misunderstanding". He also sent an email, saying that at this stage the flights were confirmed. What it apparently boils down to (and what SAA's Voyager members have known for some time) is that SAA keeps "internal" tickets, even for VIP guests, on a standby basis, depending on how full a flight is. However, it is also understood internally that such reservations will be converted to confirmed "external" reservations "if and when necessary".

While Diel accepted the apology from Kohler, and kept the door open for a repeat invitation, he declined to retract his cancellation for this year.

Independently, Count Neipperg had had the same correspondence, and eventually reached the same decision.

It is a great pity that the system was not explained to the VIP guests until it was too late. With so much effort going into the promotion of both SAA and SA wines, it should be possible to set up clear communication lines with all participants. Another opportunity missed in marketing "Brand South Africa", and an unnecessary poor image for SAA.

■ Replacements were found at the last minute in the form of the German maker of great Saar rieslings, Egon Müller, and Christine Austin, wine editor of the *Yorkshire Post* in the United Kingdom. The judging panel was informed, (by Pinocchio we believe), that Mr Diel and Count Neipperg were "too busy with their harvest to make the journey".

by Peter Gebler

This story was offered to the establishment wine magazine, WineLand, but they were concerned about upsetting SAA and told the author they were "unlikely to use it". Thereafter it appeared in the Internet edition of Grape, an independent magazine for wine lovers and critical wine buyers, available by subscription only. We reprint it with their permission. (Grape carries no advertising! For more information, go to www.grape.org.za). □

LORD 'LUCKY' LUCAN
**Alive and...
 er... well**

In a new book, former Scotland Yard cop Duncan MacLaughlin claims he has "overwhelming evidence" that bearded hippy Barry Halpin, a pitiful drunk who would play backgammon with anyone for the price of a cheap brandy, and died in Goa (the Portuguese enclave on the coast of India) in 1996, was in fact the fugitive British peer, Lord "Lucky" Lucan. How odd.

We've always thought Lucky's been living quietly in our own South Africa for years.

the believers, by his old Clermont Club gambling host, the late John Aspinall. (A measure of Aspinall's loyalty: at the time of Lucan's disappearance, he told the press: "If I'd been married to Lady Lucan, I'd have murdered her by now myself.")

Aspinall was a fervent admirer of the Zulu nation and a close friend of our very own Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, a man of much influence and power in those rural pastures. (The raffish millionaire also owned two wildlife breeding grounds for gorillas and tigers at his country home in Britain. Five of his zookeepers died violent deaths as a result of his encouragement that they

Halpin was always... Barry Halpin. He spoke with a distinctive Lancashire accent, not unusual since he grew up at St Helens in that northern British county. The speech of Eton-educated Lucan, on the other hand, boomed forth in a confident la-di-da tone reflecting his aristocratic upbringing.

Several old friends of Halpin – nicknamed Lonnie – have tumbled out of the woodwork to debunk the copper's theory. One recalls Halpin's days as a youthful national service medic in the Royal Air Force (service number 5012619). Accomplished with the banjo, ukulele, guitar and penny whistle,

larger than life character whose name is synonymous with polygraphs - lie detector machines. The fortysomething Amanzimtoti resident has made himself famous – and reasonably wealthy – through the machine. Always keen on publicity, he has featured in dozens of newspaper articles which extoll his skills and the value of the polygraph.

At one stage he ran a dating service that relied on polygraphs to match people. The service was exclusive: Nothing always insisted plump women shed a few pounds before he would consider putting them on his books. No such demands were placed on male clients.

Nothing's other work came from a large Durban-based security company that, until recently, billed him on their Internet site as a top polygraph examiner who would provide clients with an invaluable service.

The internet has ruined the Nothling legend though.

An unknown Amanzimtoti resident came across an old court affidavit on the Net – in which Nothing claimed to have been a Special Forces soldier – and passed the document on to the SA Special Forces League.

The Special Forces league is the owner of what may be one of the most visited sites in the country – www.recce.co.za – recording nearly 200,000 visits since February.

A popular page on the site hosts their "wall of shame" - a list of pretenders who have falsely claimed to have been in the Special Forces.

In the court affidavit, which dates back to 1992, Nothing, then a member of the Church of Scientology, claimed he was asked by two members of the congregation to assassinate a vocal critic of the church. His refusal to do so apparently saw him expelled.

'If I'd been married to Lady Lucan, I'd have murdered her by now myself'

— John Aspinall

Former Coldstream Guards officer Lucan vanished in November 1974, the night he battered his children's nanny, Sandra Rivett, to death on the stairs of the family home in London. Always a gambler and always out of luck, in the dark Lucan had managed to murder the wrong woman: he had mistaken Rivett for his estranged wife.

Halpin used to claim he had arrived in Goa the following year, which former Yard man MacLaughlin considers significant.

The sleuth's book will amuse and delight Lucan, say a supposedly informed few, who insist the peer is alive and well and, after nearly 29 years, still under deep cover – in a remote corner of KwaZulu Natal. [What? I thought it was Fish Hoek. – Ed.] The rogue peer, now 68, was tucked away there, say

interact with the animals.)

Lucan, so the story goes, came near to scuppering his anonymous survival in Africa a decade or more ago when he succumbed to temptation and dropped in for a flutter at a casino in Maseru. There his unmistakable 6ft 4in figure was supposedly spotted by a London socialite named Louise Olivier, niece of the late British actor Lord Olivier.

"My God, there's Lucky!" gasped Louise to her Sloane Ranger touring companions. But by the time her blue-blooded but slow-to-react friends had gathered their wits, the supposed Seventh Earl had vanished. Again.

Certainly, the claim by one of Scotland Yard's finest that the squalid Goa hippy Barry Halpin was Lucan is a sad reflection on the current state of the art of detection in the late Sherlock's home town.

The Scotsman reports, Halpin would play in pubs all night for a free drink. "He was a good guy, but a bit of a scallywag," a former RAF comrade told the newspaper. "I heard that he had died as a hippy in India in the mid 1990s."

When Halpin's picture appeared in the British media "revealing" him as Lucan, this friend turned to his wife and said "That's Lonnie".

[Editor's note: Lucky, please phone again – your subscription needs renewing.]

WALL OF SHAME
**A whopper,
 no lies**

In an ironic twist of fate Durban's most celebrated lie detector has been exposed as a fibber.

Malcolm Nothling is a

As a result of his expulsion Nothling sued the Church - and put the affidavit up in the proceedings. At the end of the affidavit Nothling announced that he was prepared to take a polygraph test to verify his claims.

Andre Heidtman of the South African Special Forces League, acting as attorney for the organisation, told *noseweek* that upon reading the affidavit he had immediately checked Nothling's claim and discovered it was bogus. As a result Nothling's name was immediately posted on the "wall of shame".

Contacted for comment Nothling confirmed the affidavit was his, and said he had penned an apology to Heidtman. But, added Nothling bitterly, "For someone like Heidtman to pick a fight with me tells me he is simply looking for a scrap. I don't see why he needs to lower himself to that level."

■ Nothling's apology - received several weeks after he claimed to have posted it - has seen his name removed from the "wall of shame", but he has since lost his job with the security company.

WHO'S WHO?

Bye, soldier;
ello, sailor

Servamus, the official magazine of the police, includes a column in which cops are kept up to speed on the latest legal developments, including what has appeared in the latest Government Gazette.

According to a recent *Servamus*, in the June 2003 Government Gazette, the Department

of Home Affairs gives notice that it has allowed one Nozandleni Cynthia Soldaat of Thembalethu, George, to change her surname to Matroos. *Soldaat* is Afrikaans for soldier, *matroos* for sailor. The publication did not indicate whether this was as a result of a change of profession.

ESKOM

Nuclear family

The government appears to have pushed through its scheme for a nuclear pebble-bed modular reactor (PBMR) despite protests all round, in particular from people who will be living near to at least one of the sites earmarked to be the home of the nuclear energy generator - Koeberg in the Western Cape.

So if it is not popular demand, what is pushing the authorities back into nuclear power? A *noseweek* source says the story starts in the dark days of the 1980s, when the Atomic Energy Corporation was investigating a South African design for a pressurised water reactor and for a marine nuclear reactor. In 1989 those projects were terminated and some of the team of nuclear scientists moved to technology company IST, where they took up a project commissioned by Armscor to develop the marine reactor design.

The project was then changed to focus on small reactors for inland use, and ended in 1992. From 1993 onwards, IST looked for buyers for this technology.

They approached Eskom, who initially turned the project

down, due to the unconventionally small size and capacity of the reactors. (The technology has also not been applied anywhere else in the world.)

Eskom at that stage had surplus generator capacity for 15 years, and had little need for a costly and untried new technology. But the "nuclear club" and others inside the parastatals lobbied in favour of the PBMR design. In 1995, Kelvin Kemm (an engineer and lobbyist who is noted for his pro-nuclear views) advised the then-head of Eskom to include the PBMR in the line-up of alternative (non-coal) power sources under investigation.

(After all, for us adrenaline junkies, it's so much more exciting - and dangerous! - than dull old windmills, the Danish alternative technology.) Having secured the backing of Eskom, the PBMR project's future at IST was assured. From 1996, work on the project moved into high gear.

Enter Reuel Khoza in 1997 as chairman of Eskom. Khoza is a major player in the black economic empowerment arena, first through Co-ordinated Network Investments (CNI) and then later through AKA Capital.

A year after Khoza took the chair of Eskom, CNI bought 29% of nuclear energy company IST, just as IST was first listing on the JSE. The fact that Khoza now had a stake in a company which stood to benefit very directly from the PBMR project that Eskom was funding seemed to bother nobody, least of all the government. In 1999 Khoza was effectively securing his investment when Eskom gave the cabinet a favourable briefing on its reactor project.

In 2002 Khoza increased his stake in IST, through AKA Capital. In a 2002 agreement, voting rights to CNI's 29% share (now increased to 32%) are signed over to AKA Capital, and the company is granted a further option to buy 11 million shares of IST at 90 cents a share. In the contract this option can only be exercised over one third of the shares. Still, if it exercised its option today, AKA Capital would stand to make a sweet R2.1m in instant profit. This is in no small part due to the fact that Eskom recently awarded a R260m contract for PBMR design to IST Nuclear, causing the share price to jump 50% overnight.

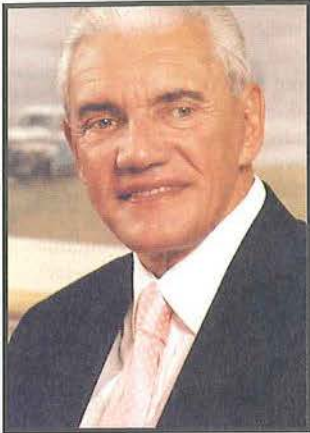
With the development cost of the demo model PBMR unit alone being estimated at R10bn, IST stands to make much more money and in turn line the pockets of its shareholders (including Khoza) very nicely, if this project goes ahead.



PARAGON BOXES & GIFTS

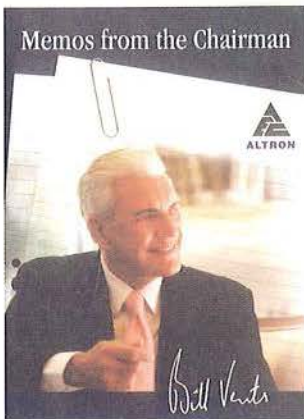
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DR BILL VENTER
FOUNDER OF ALTRON

Readers of nose49 will be familiar with Altron boss Dr Bill "stop lolling about" Venter. Earlier this year Venter published "Memos from the Chairman" in which the extract on the right appeared. The title bears a striking similarity to another book entitled "Memos from the Chairman" written by Alan C Greenberg, published seven years ago. The extract on the facing page is from Greenberg's book. We wonder whether readers are as struck as we are by the extent to which great minds think alike.



STAFF INFORMATION NOTICE NO. B.320/78

13th January, 1978

GETTING AHEAD

Thank you, Thank you. Thank you! The response to my memo on saving paper clips from incoming mail, as well as reusing envelopes as often as possible has been overwhelming. It seems that we already have a nice stockpile of paperclips. This excess will be collected soon by a designated "paper-clipper-picker-upper" and of course will be used by us to save costs.

I would urge you to continue using envelopes which you have received for internal mailing purposes, and because of your co-operation, I would like to extend this particular cost-cutting campaign to an even more important matter. Altech will no longer purchase rubber bands! If we can save paper clips and envelopes from incoming mail, we can save rubber bands, and my hope is that we can become awash in these little stretchies also.

Obviously, if we can handle the rubber band challenge, I have even something bigger in mind.

When you are a public enterprise, savings on expenses go to the bottom line, but they are in turn magnified by the price earnings multiple the share carries.

If you have any trouble in understanding the last paragraph, either trust me or call me at 52-4381 and I will enlighten you.

W.P. VENTER

Managing Director

SON-BOVEY OF THE EASE STAND UP

Memo

BEAR
STEARNS

To GENERAL & LIMITED PARTNERS Date August 15, 1985
From Alan C. Greenberg CC
Subject GETTING RICHER

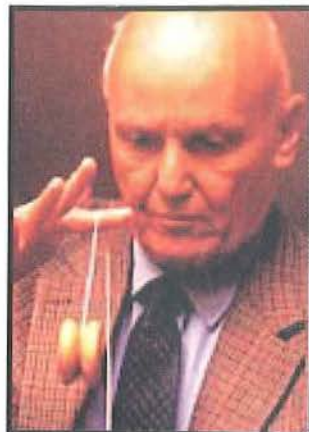
Thank you, thank you, thank you! The response to the memo on paper clips and envelopes has been overwhelming. It seems that we already have an excess of paper clips. This excess will be picked up shortly by a designated paper-clipper-picker-upper person and, of course, will be sold through competitive bidding.

Because of your cooperation, I would like to extend our cost-cutting efforts to a larger matter. Bear Stearns will no longer purchase rubber bands. If we can save paper clips from incoming mail, we can save rubber bands, and my hope is that we can become awash in those little stretchies also.

Obviously, if we can handle the rubber band challenge, I have something even bigger in mind.

When you are a private enterprise, savings on expenses go to the bottom line. When you are owned by the public, savings still go to the bottom line, but they are in turn magnified by the multiple the stock carries.

If you have trouble understanding the last paragraph, either trust me or call Haimchinkel Malintz Anaynikal directly.



ALAN C GREENBERG
CHAIRMAN OF BEAR STEARNS

Eighteen years ago Alan C Greenberg became the boss of US-based Bear Stearns, one of the biggest investment banks in the world. According to the jacket blurb of his book "Memos from the Chairman" (published in 1996 in the US), Greenberg "is known throughout the financial world for his biting, quirky, invariably wise memos." (Haimchinkel Malintz Anaynikal is Greenberg's fictional mentor and philosophical muse.)

MEMOS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

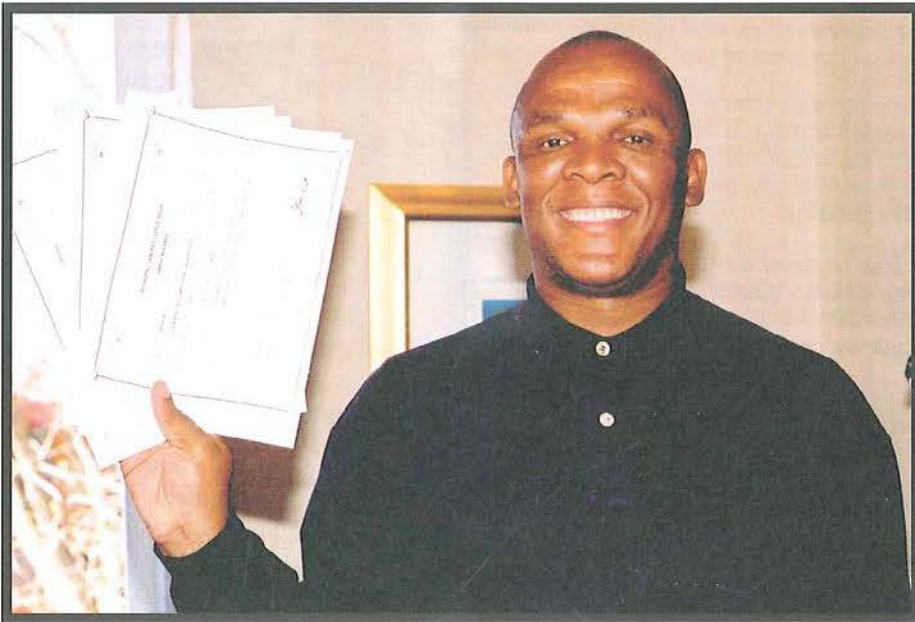


BY ALAN C. GREENBERG
WITH A FOREWORD BY
WARREN BUFFETT

The chairman of Bear Stearns is known throughout the financial world for his biting, quirky, invariably wise memos. And now, for the record, here is Al Greenberg on ethics, on telephone manners, on cycles and trends, on being a consultant, and on why he spends so much time worrying about paper clips.

TILL DEBT US DO PART

Billions of rands are owed to local councils in unpaid regional services council (RSC) levies. Collection of debt is a hidden, but highly lucrative, industry where politics, black empowerment and private enterprise come together – and sometimes get a touch rough



FAIR SHARE: Former Masakhane Campaign chief Dussy Molemela with the certificates that testify to his ownership of Skyprops

IN THE MURKY WORLD

of debt-collecting, things can get rough. But, my friend, there's gold in them thar mountains of uncollected municipal rates and levies – which explains why, when the ownership of a black empowerment company of "bounty hunters" chasing commissions of nearly R4m a year came into dispute, the gloves came off for a prize fight.

In one corner we have Dussy Molemela, former leader of the Masakhane Campaign (which encouraged the citizens to pay their rates and taxes). His team of directors include

ANC MP Mokabhe Ali Maziya; Thabo Kubu, lately strategic projects general manager at the National Intelligence Agency; and Elizabeth Modiakgotla, ANC activist formerly with Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's Federation of South African Women.

In the other corner we have Johan Erasmus, 45, a one-time theology student and member of the apartheid-era National Intelligence Service. Erasmus is a bulky figure habitually clad in hunting/fishing jerkin and armed, highwayman style, with a brace of pistols and a razor-sharp Special Forces dagger. His team of directors includes ANC MP Johnny Mohlala and New National Party MP Johan du Rand.

Now sworn enemies, Molemela and Erasmus were once business partners, looking to capitalise on lucrative debt-collecting contracts.

SA's 52 metropolitan and district councils' total revenue from RSC levies should be R9bn a year, but only R4.5bn is being paid in the normal course of events. Handsome commissions – as much as 20% of the shortfall – are being offered by private debt collectors if they can persuade defaulters to pay up.

In 2001 Molemela and Erasmus – the latter had been debt-collecting for five years – teamed up in a joint venture to collect unpaid RSC levies in Rustenburg. Erasmus had been well regarded but, according to Molemela in a subsequent court affidavit, he proceeded "through his litigious nature and bullish manner of dealing with people, to make himself totally unpopular with municipal councils."

The two partners agreed that Molemela would therefore be the principal in further tender bids and that Erasmus would stay in the background, transferring expertise to previously disadvantaged individuals in the tricky business of levy arrears collecting. The financial arrangement, said Molemela, was that Erasmus would receive the lion's share of commissions, to be "reduced accordingly" as Molemela's recruits developed their skills.

In November 2001 Germiston (now the Ekurhuleni metropolitan municipality), which is owed many millions in arrear RSC levies, invited tenders for their collection. Commissions of as

much as R300,000 a month are up for grabs for each of the three contracted debt collectors.

Molemela and Erasmus decided to bid and agreed that their Rustenburg deal would apply: Molemela would attend to the administration of the tender and Erasmus would manage the operation.

Molemela says he gave Erasmus R10,000 in cash to buy a shelf company to tender for the Ekurhuleni contract. Erasmus duly bought an entity called Skyprops 17 (Pty) Ltd.

The Ekurhuleni tender was advertised on 7 November 2001 and Skyprops submitted its proposal. The company didn't make the shortlist of preferred bidders, but after a meeting with the council's tender committee, attended by Molemela and his ex-NIA co-director Thabo Kubu, Skyprops surprised everyone by emerging top of the bidding list. On 20 February 2002 the council wrote to congratulate them on winning the tender for a third of the collection area.

The contract runs for two years. In a good month, Skyprops' commissions could be as much as R300,000.

Erasmus held the position of operations manager at Skyprops. He invoiced Skyprops for 70% to 90% of the monthly commissions received, through an entity named BIS/Pugubye Joint Venture – which also paid operating costs and the 20-odd staff of "inspectors".

It started off well. Molemela received the share certificates for Skyprops, signed by Erasmus on 1 March 2002. They showed the owners of the company as Molemela, Maziya, Kubu and Modiakgotla, and one Ephraim Nku.

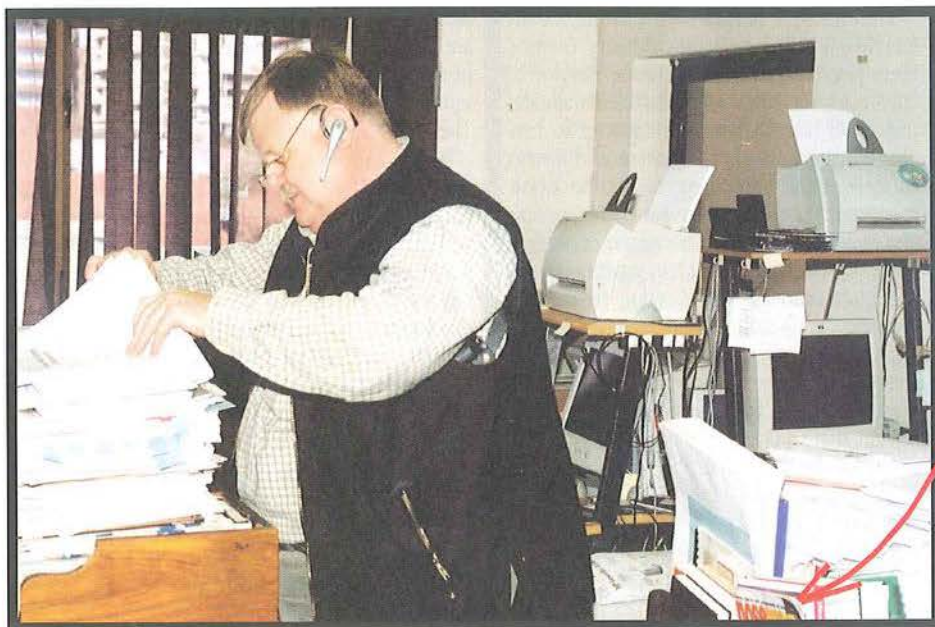
Around this time Molemela was busy moving in to a new house in Johannesburg. And in the confusion he lost those five share certificates.

Erasmus then amazed Molemela and his co-directors by informing them that they did not and had never owned Skyprops. The owner all along, he declared, had been the Pugubuye Trust, an entity whose trustees include Erasmus' wife Esther.

The share register should have confirmed ownership, but Erasmus issued an edict that nobody was allowed to see the register – and removed it from the offices of the company's auditors to the privacy of his own in Pretoria.

If Molemela and his team wished to share the benefits of the lucrative

Erasmus issued an edict that nobody was allowed to see the share register and then amazed Molemela by informing him that he did not own shares



PAPER TRAIL: Former theology student and ex-intelligence agent Johan Erasmus now wears a brace of pistols close to his heart

Ekurhuleni tender, Erasmus now announced, they could buy 25% of the company for R500,000!

Erasmus stripped Molemela and his team of their directorships and appointed his own directors. Molemela still had power of signature on Skyprops cheques, but on 5 September 2002 Erasmus had the account with Absa frozen. The following day an enraged Molemela changed the locks at the Skyprops office in Germiston. Erasmus changed them back again the day after.

"Erasmus had stolen control of Skyprops," declared Molemela in his affidavit.

"Skyprops' membership throughout has been in the hands of the Pugubuye Trust," countered Erasmus.

Several high court cases were launched relating to the affairs and ownership of Skyprops, each crammed

with disputes of fact by Erasmus and Molemela. Erasmus denied that Molemela had ever given him R10,000 to buy a shelf company. "I had never received anything from Molemela apart from a Coke he once bought me in Port Elizabeth when we travelled to Port Elizabeth to submit a tender," ran his affidavit. "I had to pay for everything we had to eat when we were together and he always asked that I give him some money as he had many commitments.

"The Pugubuye Trust became the sole shareholder of Skyprops as it would provide the infrastructure," swore Erasmus. Molemela "merely wanted to sit back and make as much

money as possible. The agreement that we had entered into suited him nicely because he merely needed to sign one cheque a month and for that he took between 10% and 30% of the total turnover without having to do anything."

Johan Du Rand MP, "appointed" by the Pugubuye Trust to the board of Skyprops, swore an affidavit denying that Erasmus was trying to take over the company.

Johnny Mohlala MP, another Erasmus-nominated director, said Erasmus was a card-carrying member of the ANC and claimed that Molemela's motives were "racially motivated and is [sic] biting the hand that is feeding it".

The various court cases were finally consolidated into one case, and both sides agreed to go to arbitration - before retired judge Piet van der Walt on July 21.

The interim award - there are still financial matters to be resolved - was a triumph for Molemela and a disaster for Erasmus. Documents secured by subpoena from Skyprops' auditors included:

■ Skyprops' application to register for VAT in April 2002, showing Molemela, Kubu Modiakgotla, Maziya as its shareholders;

■ The auditors' account in September 2002 to Skyprops for "changing the share register";

■ A note signed by Erasmus ordering that nobody should be shown the share register.

And in the meantime Molemela had found the original lost share certificates, tucked away in a cupboard at his new home.

Judge Van der Walt ordered that the share register be rectified to reflect Molemela and his team as the owners of Skyprops; that the contract between Skyprops and Erasmus and his entities end on 31 July 2003; and that only Skyprops may henceforth administer the contract with Ekurhuleni council.

Erasmus is out and Molemela is back as MD in Skyprops' Germiston office. "I'm running things and the Ekurhuleni contract's going fine," he tells *noseweek*.

Says Erasmus: "We've pulled out and they're proving they're incompetent, that's it, short and sweet," he says. "Molemela says I'm a f**ker who likes to fight. The point is I'm winning the fight because these bastards are corrupt and they're incorrect. That's why I go to court.

"We settled with them and we gave them the company and said f**k off. They have to pay us for our work. Molemela claims that we owe them R2.5m. We've got a counter-claim of approximately R2m. And we're going to enforce it."

Those share certificates? "They never paid for their shares in the first place," says Erasmus. "These bastards believed that business doesn't have a cost. They only get up at 11am.

"This guy Molemela goes to the police and lays criminal charges against me for pointing a pistol at him.

"Not the truth. But the f**king incompetent, fraudulent bunch the police are, they investigate his claim but don't investigate my claim of victimisation and intimidation. I'm off to the Human Rights Commission." □

WHO'S NEXT IN LINE?

Win some, lose some. Or, more accurately in the case of debt-collector and former NIA spook Johan Erasmus: Lose 1, win 2.

Our accompanying story deals with his loss of Skyprops to Dussy Molemela. Now, before Erasmus the feisty litigator adds *noseweek* to his list of pending defendants, let's trumpet the brace of his recent courtroom victories.

Erasmus sees himself as the arbiter of the lucrative RSC levy collection industry. Government says it wants the Revenue Service to take over this function. Erasmus maintains that SARS doesn't have the capacity to handle defaulters. The metropolitan and district councils aren't competent to do the whole job either, he says. His view is that people like him are essential to purge the country of those who welsh on their levy payments.

A plum among levy collection contracts is the one for Pretoria (Tshwane). At present the council pulls in around R380m a year in levies - but arrears are about the same, says Erasmus. With 9% commission on recovered arrears, that's a potential income of over R34m a year for the debt collection contract winner.

In August 2001 the Tshwane council awarded the contract to Matla Portfolios, and Crednet Inspection Service.

An unsuccessful tenderer for this contract was a company called Trust Resources Administration & Collections, which Erasmus describes as "a friendly competitor". Trust Resources holds one of the three RSC arrears collecting contracts with the Ekurhuleni metropolitan municipality (see main story) under the name of Metro Revenue Administration and Collection.

Erasmus encouraged Trust Resources to challenge the Tshwane tender award in the high court - he says he put up R10,000 of his own money as part of a war chest for the action.

In the Pretoria high court last November Judge Mynhardt agreed that Tshwane's tender evaluation procedure was flawed. He set aside the contracts. Trust Resources collected R77,000 in costs - and a jubilant Erasmus got his R10,000 back.

With the Tshwane contract up for grabs,

Erasmus pitched for it, along with 27 others, under the name of Madinoge Financial Specialists (Gauteng). He's listed as a director, but says the company is 100% owned by the two MPs featured in our Dussy Molemela saga - Johnny Mohlala and Johan Durant.

"I just work in the company," says Erasmus. "These two guys own it. There's always got to be a lot of political input, because these things are politically sensitive and there's no way I can just work on my own. They do a lot of political input during recess, as well as every weekend. They're in the office; they're networking."

With some success, apparently. A new tender was first advertised by the Tshwane council on January 31 this year, then twice withdrawn because it did not comply with statutory requirements. A third and final tender closed on May 15 and at a meeting on August 4 the council's procurement committee recommended that the contract be awarded to... Madinoge. Game, set and match to Johan Erasmus.

The portly bruiser's courtroom victory No. 2 is against a man he regards as his bitterest enemy - Peter Bruce, editor of *Business Day*. While editor of the *Financial Mail* in 1998, Bruce ran a less than flattering story in the *FM* about the outsourcing of the revenue collection process to the private sector. Erasmus got a mention.

He sued for libel, demanding R150,000 damages. This August, as a trial date loomed, Bruce and his employers, BDFM, lost their collective bottle and settled the action by paying Erasmus R20,000 and his costs (estimated at as much as R80,000).

Not satisfied with the civil process, Erasmus had also launched a private prosecution against Bruce, for criminal libel. A magistrate dismissed the case on a technicality after the court papers were filed one day late. Erasmus explains the late filing: "The public prosecuting authority's people were having a Christmas party and screw the country. We're going to appeal to the Supreme Court. There's no way I'm letting it go." □

UNDER WRAPS



LET MY CHEETAH GO:
Israel's Kfir fighter,
known in South Africa
as the Cheetah

An official report said SA's Cheetah fighters were aged aircraft on their last legs, yet many were in mint condition – still in their original greased packaging

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID

of late about the “editing” process that resulted in many embarrassing bits being removed from the joint report on the arms deal investigation tabled in parliament by the auditor general (AG). Until now most public attention has centered on those alterations and omissions that relate to the choice of contractors and subcontractors for the supply of submarines and corvettes.

Now a closer look at the public protector Selby Baqwa's draft report – which was absorbed into the final joint report compiled by the AG's office – has revealed that someone in Baqwa's office tried to insert false information in the report, in an apparent bid to justify the airforce's multi-billion rand purchase of Hawk and Gripen fighter jets.

The single most expensive purchases in the entire arms deal are the Hawk trainer and the Gripen light fighter. The R16bn contracts were awarded to the British-Swedish consortium headed by British Aerospace, who – hello! – also employ former Armscor director (and ANC treasurer in KwaZulu-Natal) Diliza Mji. (Compare his role in the tanks story on the opposite page.)

Mji took up his post with BAe and BAe subsidiary ATE with almost indecent haste after leaving Armscor.

Not only are the Hawk and Gripen expensive – they also do not meet the air-

force's original requirements. (For example, the airforce specified a “medium” fighter; the Gripen is a “light” fighter.) A rationale for buying the shiny new BAe products is provided on page 9 of the public protector's draft report.

In paragraph 8.1.1 it is stated: “The Cheetah C and D fighter systems have been in use since 1986. However the airframes of these aircraft have been in use since 1963/64. The ultimate life span of these aircraft cannot go beyond 2012.”

The clear implication is that the airframes of SA's Cheetahs are nearly 40 years old and about to collapse. But everyone in the SAAF must know that's a lie. So it must have been a deliberate lie aimed at misleading the public.

True, the original French Mirage did first appear in the 1960s. And SA did receive its first Mirage in March 1963. But it's not true – as someone on Baqwa's staff would have had us believe – that the Cheetah is a 1963 Mirage with racing stripes.

A few emails to Israel gave us proof.

An official inventory of the Israeli air force lists every military aircraft Israel has ever owned. One of the more modern fighter planes listed is the Kfir.

True enough, there next to the Kfirs on the list, it is noted that 38 were “sold to South Africa as Cheetah C.”

The inventory shows the Kfir was first produced in Israel in 1975, when Israel needed to replace its Mirages after the

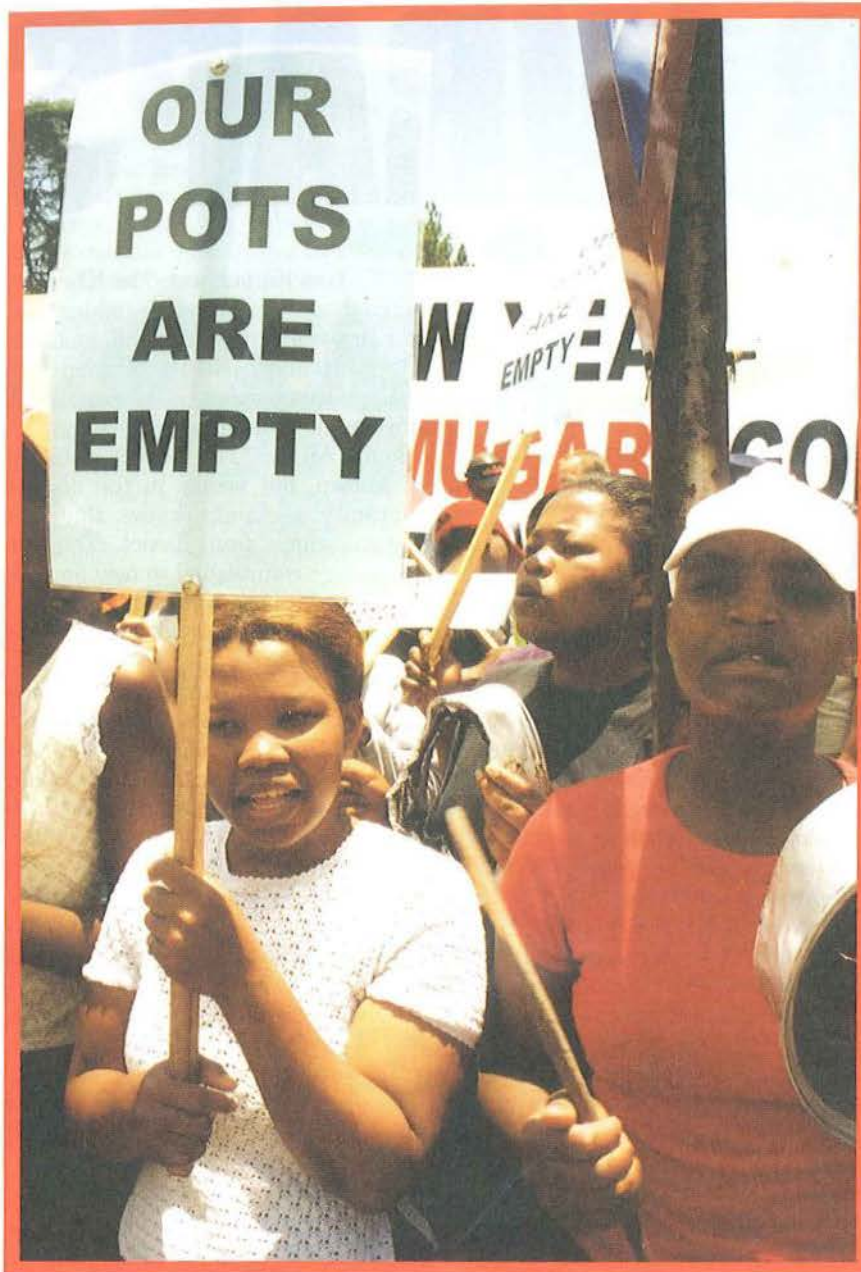
Yom Kippur war. The Kfir is by all accounts an outstanding fighter. The last Kfirs were manufactured in Israel in 1986. Helmuth Romer-Heitman, SA correspondent for *Jane's Defence Weekly* confirms the sale of Israeli jet fighters to South Africa: “The deal is not that well known, but people in the defence community certainly know that the Cheetahs came from Israel. The airframes were refurbished to new and the avionics and other systems replaced and upgraded. The plane could last for a very long time past 2012.”

At the time South Africa's Cheetah's were first unveiled to the public, the SAAF maintained they were locally made by upgrading its 1963 Mirage airframes. They had to do so to conceal the fact that the aircraft had been supplied by Israel in contravention of the international arms embargo against SA. In fact the Cheetahs – all imported in the late 1980s and early 1990s – were to all intents and purposes brand new.

Although the Kfir was recently relegated to reserve duties in Israel, Romer-Heitman still sings its praises: “It has an outstanding radar. It has tremendous bombing accuracy and an exceptionally good armament system. I would like to have seen the SAAF keep them.”

According to *noseweek's* informants, Israel sold the planes to South Africa at more than R200m each. “It could not have been much less than that,” agrees Romer-Heitman. That means that South Africa spent almost R8bn – in 1990 rands – on the Cheetah. They have seen almost no use. The SAAF has not been able to afford to keep enough pilots in training or the cost of the fuel needed to keep them in the air. Many are warehoused still in the greased wrappings they arrived in from Israel.

The SAAF has now put the Cheetah's up for sale. The *Sunday Times* reports that Armscor is asking less than half the original purchase price and Brazil is keen to buy – having shelved their own plans to buy new F-16's so as to be able to spend more on poverty alleviation. ▣



WHAT'S COOKING WITH MUGABE'S MILLIONS?

In August, the *Sunday Times* revealed that, far from preparing to leave Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe is building himself an amazing new R40m palace in the countryside. Now a book is about to appear which explains how it is possible for Zimbabwe's elite to be quite so rich while their country's economy falls apart, and most of their people are unemployed and starving.

In 'The Battle for Zimbabwe', *Washington Times* correspondent and author **Geoff Hill** unravels the deals that have enriched the rulers of Zimbabwe and left the country in ruins. Here's a short extract from an extensive chapter in the book devoted to the Zanu-PF leadership's dirty financial wheelings and dealings

WHEN ZIMBABWE GETS

a truly democratic government, one of the hardest jobs will be tracking down the millions – some say billions – embezzled by the current regime. In February 2002, the London *Financial Times* estimated that Mugabe alone could be worth R700m. However much the president has pocketed, his ruling Zanu-PF party and his colleagues in the party have taken more, according to documents now in the hands of the United Nations (UN).

In a UN report that documents the plunder of resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is claimed that more than R35bn has slipped into well connected pockets in both Harare and Kinshasa. The documents reveal an elaborate network of companies and trusts set up by Zanu-PF men in order to siphon off and hide their share of the loot. So, where did the money come from and where is it now?

When the first Mugabe government came to power in 1980, it was not overtly corrupt though there were some noticeable changes to the way things had been done before.

A system of patronage developed. Major contracts were awarded to friends or to companies in which ministers and party chiefs held shares and government funds were siphoned into Zanu-PF to help build the party office block which stands next to the Harare Sheraton hotel. But, once the press had been nationalised in 1982 and there was no one to monitor those in power, it rapidly turned into a free-for-all. In no time Zanu-PF had an interest in more than 100 local companies. But the Zimbabwe economy was small pickings compared with the wealth locked up in the region. In 1982 Mugabe sent troops to Mozambique to prevent the ruling Frelimo party – led by his close friend President Samora Machel – from being toppled by South African backed Renamo guerrillas.

intelligence in Harare helped plan it. In May 1997 what was left of Mobutu's army deserted, the aging dictator went into exile, and Laurent-Desire Kabila was sworn in as president. In the same month Zimbabwe Defence Industries was given a contract to supply R350m-worth of dried fish, corn meal, uniforms and boots to the new government. Zvinavashe Transport, owned by Mugabe's army chief, General Vitalis Zvinavashe, was commissioned to carry the goods from Harare to Kinshasa. It was the start of a multi-billion rand venture that would bankrupt Zimbabwe and enrich the ruling elite to a degree even they had never thought possible. In 1998 a new company, Congo-Duka was formed in Harare and established a joint venture with ZDI and a Congolese firm to supply consumer goods

to Kinshasa. The directors of the new enterprise included Charles Kuwasa, permanent secretary in Mugabe's ministry of finance, Zvinavashe, and Air Marshall Perence Shiri. Shiri was already notorious for leading the massacres in the southern province of Matabeleland in the mid-1980s when Mugabe dispatched the Fifth Brigade to stamp out political and military opposition in the region.

In the Congo deal, the main liaison between Kinshasa and Harare was the then minister of justice [and Tony Yengeni's friend] Emerson Mnangagwa. The government underwrote guarantees of Z\$1.6 billion (then R630m) against political risk, and Zimbabwe became the Congo's major supplier with the majority of goods being sourced from companies in Harare that were owned by well-placed business people, ministers or the military.

Once the press had been nationalised in 1982 and there was nobody to monitor those in power, it rapidly turned into a free-for-all

The next year, the government in Harare set up a company called Zimbabwe Defence Industries (ZDI) whose purpose would be to procure supplies for the army. Through ZDI, goods could be purchased from companies owned by ministers and their families. By 1985 the war in Mozambique was costing Zimbabwe R7m a day, and was eating into funds that should have been used to build infrastructure, create jobs and pay for land redistribution. Instead the money was spent on rifles, bullets, landmines and jet fuel – sourced largely through ZDI. But when war ended in 1992 and investment dollars poured into Mozambique, it was South African and Portuguese firms that snapped up the deals in tourism, construction and farming. The Zimbabweans learned from their mistake and, in 1996, when a request for help came from Congo's rebel leader Laurent Kabila, they were prepared. The Cold War and US support for Congolese dictator Mobutu Sese Seko had ended and Kabila saw his chance. With luck and some good backers, it would be possible to take the capital, Kinshasa. Mugabe allegedly provided R35m towards the assault, and military



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In 1999, when the Congo slipped back into civil war, Mugabe sent more than 10,000 troops and military advisors to shore up Kabila's position and protect Zanu-PF's investments. Kabila agreed to pay the bill, but the DRC was bankrupt so, instead, he offered an equivalent value in farms and concessions to exploit timber, cobalt and the Congo's extensive diamond reserves. Within three years of Kabila taking power, the Belgian Diamond Office which monitors international trade in the stones estimated nearly 85% of the Congo's annual diamond production – worth more than a R7bn – was being smuggled out of the country with

and defend, support logistically, and assist generally in the development of commercial ventures to explore, research, exploit and market the mineral, timber, and other resources held by the state of the Democratic Republic of the Congo". The bonding of Osleg and Comiex-Congo produced a firm called Cosleg which was granted mining rights to a state-owned diamond deposit in Kabila's home region of Katanga. A forestry arm of Cosleg was established on 6 January, 2000 and named Socebo, an abbreviation for Societe Congolaise d'exploitation du bois with its headquarters in Kinshasa. In January 2000 Zimbabwe's finance

out of all but the most basic drugs. On 16 January 2001 Laurent Kabila was assassinated and his 30-year-old son, Joseph, took over.

The change did not stop the rebels backed by Uganda and Rwanda, who redoubled their efforts to take the country. As a result the new president found himself hostage to military help from Zimbabwe. Kabila asked South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki to broker a peace deal with the rebels and, after repeated attempts, an agreement was hammered out in which all foreign troops would withdraw from the Congo. And, as efforts to build lasting peace intensified, international agen-

Mugabe is a regular visitor to Malaysia and there have been rumours that he and senior members of Zanu-PF keep their wealth in banks in Kuala Lumpur



some of the gems going via Harare. In Zimbabwe, another company, Osleg Pvt Ltd, was formed with a board that included Zvinavashe, Job Whabara (who was permanent secretary in the defence ministry) and Onesimo Moto, director of the Minerals Marketing Corporation of Zimbabwe.

Osleg proposed a joint venture with Comiex-Congo, a company in which Laurent Kabila was the majority shareholder. According to the documents in which the Zimbabwean firm made the offer, Osleg would "protect

minister, Dr Simba Makoni, admitted in parliament that the country's military costs in the Congo had exceeded Z\$10bn (then about R1.7bn). But Michael Quintana of the *Africa Defence Journal* disputed Makoni's figures and estimated that a further Z\$14 billion (R2bn) had been poured into maintaining a virtual airbridge to ferry supplies between Harare and Kinshasa, pushing the total figure to more than R3.5bn. This at a time when Zimbabwe's health budget had been slashed to the point where hospitals and clinics had run

cies began to unravel the activities of Osleg, Cosleg, Socebo and a dozen other companies that had been set up to cover the money trail. At the end of 2002, the United Nations published a report on the looting that had taken place in the DRC. The document alleges that, between them, politicians and their cohorts in Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and the DRC itself had stolen billions-worth of diamonds, minerals and timber. The UN report claims that, on the Zimbabwe side alone, ministers and their allies in Harare

and Kinshasa, had set up a string of companies that virtually controlled the extraction of diamonds, cobalt, copper and germanium.

According to the report; "This network has transferred ownership of at least US\$5bn [R35bn] of assets from the state mining sector to private companies under its control in the past three years with no compensation or benefit for the state treasury of the Democratic Republic of the Congo." The UN claims, the key strategist in the network is Zimbabwe's speaker of parliament, Emerson Mnangagwa –

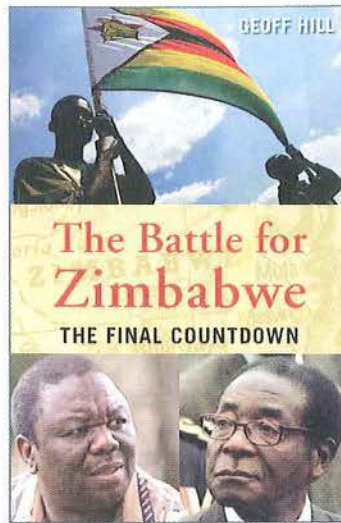
the man widely tipped to take over as president when Mugabe retires. His partners in the venture include General Vitalis Zvinavashe, executive chairman of Cosleg; Air Marshal Perence Shiri; and, on the mining side, prominent businessman John Bredenkamp. The UN dossier alleges that Tremalt Ltd (see *noses* 9, 13 & 30), a company represented by Bredenkamp, holds the rights to exploit six mining concessions containing over 2.7 million tons of copper and 325,000 tons of cobalt. Tremalt paid the Congo government about R3bn, but the estimated worth of the six concessions exceeds R7bn.

Bredenkamp insists that Tremalt's operations are not linked to the government of Zimbabwe, but the authors of the UN report say they hold a copy of a confidential profit-sharing agreement under which Tremalt retains 32% of net profits, and undertakes to pay 34% to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 34% to Zimbabwe. The plunder of the Congo extends beyond its mineral wealth. According to the British-based NGO, Global Witness, Cosleg and Socebo now control "the world's largest logging concession by gaining rights to exploit 33 million hectares of forests in the DRC".

The UN and Global Witness reports also claim that Harare International Airport has become a transit zone for smuggled loot, creating a potential conduit for the movement of other goods from sources beyond the DRC. In November 2002, South African police discovered a racket in which perlemoen, poached off the coast near Cape Town, was trucked to Manzini in Swaziland and then flown to Harare from where the seafood was freighted to clients in the Far East. The racket was exposed when a light plane en-route from Manzini to Harare crashed on the South African side of the Limpopo River. The aircraft had been overloaded with 800kg of the shellfish, worth close to R1.5 million.

Further investigations led to a spate of arrests in South Africa, but some analysts believe the movement of perlemoen is only one part of a regional smuggling racket that operates out of Harare.

The ultimate question: where are the Zimbabwean elite banking their ill-gotten fortunes?



Last year, the European Union imposed financial sanctions on leading members of Zanu-PF and British banks located and froze a total of 28 accounts held by named leaders of the Zimbabwe government, but the total sum identified comes to less than a million pounds. Mugabe is a regular visitor to Malaysia and there have been rumours that both he and other senior members of Zanu-PF keep their wealth in government-owned banks in Kuala Lumpur. Senior party figures make regular shopping trips to Johannesburg and some pay their bills with money transferred from accounts in Windhoek. (Namibian President Sam Nujoma is Mugabe's staunchest ally in the region.)

The UN and other agencies have collected substantial evidence and a new Zimbabwean government will have a lot to go on if they decide to investigate the crimes, prosecute the culprits and recover the money. Just one more reason why Mugabe and his Zanu-PF party [*and their friends in SA? - Ed*] are determined not to risk a free election that could see them toppled from power.

■ *Geoff Hill is southern Africa correspondent for The Washington Times. His book, The Battle for Zimbabwe (Zebra-New Holland), is released in South Africa this month and, globally, in November.* □

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HOW BUSH TOOK AMERICA

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of *noseweek's* high level South African investigations conducted in the global arena of corporate mega-scams and government corruption, and you have a good idea of the depth-charge explosiveness of the new, updated edition of Greg Palast's *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*. His main targets are corporate manipulations of the American and British governments under Clinton, Blair, and especially, George W Bush. Considering the efforts to close Palast out, it is surprising this book is a bestseller with 200,000 copies already sold worldwide.

Palast has the right qualifications for his investigative work. His MBA from the prestigious University of Chicago – he was a scholarship student working under cover for the United Electrical Workers Union at the time, and studied under Milton Friedman, rightwing ideologue of the “free” market – gives him the economic and financial insight to cut to the fatty heart of corporate accounting fraud. Coming, as he puts it, from “the scum end of LA between the power plant and the city garbage dump”, he has the inside knowledge of what this means for the ordinary people who suffer the consequences.

Immediately relevant, with the 2004 US presidential election just ahead, is the first chapter exposing how Bush pulled off his electoral coup d'état in 2000. Palast reveals the facts. George W's brother, Governor Jeb Bush, and Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris purged 57,700 mainly African American voters from the Florida voters' roll. The ostensible grounds for



'The Best Democracy Money Can Buy: An Investigative Reporter Exposes the Truth about Globalization, Corporate Cons, and High Finance Fraudsters' by Greg Palast (London: Robinson, 2003) is priced at R115.

this were that they were convicted felons, who have no right to vote in Florida. Trouble was, 90.2% were innocent, and, overwhelmingly Democrats. (Makes you think about the current debate whether South Africa should deny the vote to prisoners.) Not only are the hard details presented – copies of official statements, letters, lists – but the story is dramatically told so you follow in the investigator's footsteps from clue to clue.

Palast asks how the many US journalists sent to cover the election failed “to get the vote theft story?” He explains why: “Investigative reports ... are risky, they upset the wisdom of the established order and they are very expensive to produce.” Noting how the profit motive drives the mainstream media industry, he points out that “Britain's *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers [for whom he often writes], the only papers to report this scandal when it broke just weeks after the 2000 election, are the world's only major newspapers owned by a not-for-profit corporation.”

What are the prospects for 2004? With talk that the mess in Florida must not happen again, at least that state has come up with a cyberspace solution. Palast reports that in Florida, “This time, it's ‘touch screen’ voting. No paper trail, no audit path, no fights over recounts: recounts are impossible.” But, the data control corporations with the contract – Accenture and iVotronic – have close associations with the regime that did the purging last time.

When you read the chapter on how state-owned public utilities in Britain, America and elsewhere were delivered into the hands of voracious, mainly US-based corporations, then you realise why it's not only Cosatu that should be fighting against the sale of Eskom and Telkom in South Africa.

Palast traces how Britain under Thatcher started the corporate takeover of public utilities, and how US corporations conducted a systematic assault on the regulatory legislation in place since the 1930s

to protect US citizens from electricity rate gouging.

They accomplished this largely by buying up state and federal politicians. Well, that's to put it bluntly. The way it mainly works is by corporate donations to political parties, with special targeting for those in close election races and where corporate favourites can give the most needed support. Again, the current South African concern to have political party donations disclosed has reference. The extent of the cynical manipulation in the US, however, can be measured by the fact that although such disclosure already applies there, both main political parties are eager takers and the citizenry is either bemused or alienated.

The way public utility takeovers work internationally is through the conjunction of the World Bank, IMF policies, and government strong-arming on behalf of the corporations who have paid the politicians back home. Palast takes the reader through takeovers in Pakistan, India and Argentina as examples. When the deal between a UK-US consortium of power companies and the Benazir Bhutto government that had driven up electricity prices was subsequently pursued by Pakistani prosecutors, based on the "internationally accepted rule of law that contracts ... obtained by bribery are unenforceable," the prosecution was suddenly scuppered. "The IMF and the World Bank, at the request of Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, threatened to cut off Pakistan's access to international finance." [Here *noseweek* readers might wish to have another look at the secret loan agreement Trevor Manuel signed with the British government to finance the arms deal in *nose43*.] Clinton even flew to Pakistan, and the army, "under the direction of General Pervez Musharraf, sent 30,000 troops into the nation's power stations."

Want more background on 9/11?

If the US intelligence agencies did not see the attack coming it was because they were told not to look. Why? Statements and documents uncovered by Palast from inside the agencies indicate that the Bush administration blocked key investigations into allegations that top Saudi Arabian royals

and some members of the bin Laden family, not just Osama, funded and supported Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organisations. The Bush and bin Laden families' business connections are traced in the book.

There are chapters on globalisation and corporate America that expose the hidden nature of power relations, and the actions by which these are implemented. The Blair government gets two chapters explaining the involvement of

ism's role in human and environmental exploitation.

In case you think *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy* is merely grist to cynical spectators of the crisis of democratic governance today, a constant theme is the part played by those in unobtrusive positions who bravely leak the "confidential" information that starts the stories on corruption, greed and self-serving power. There is a section on how ordinary people can help

George W's brother, Governor Jeb Bush, purged 57,700 mainly African American voters from the Florida voters' role

British and American companies in government decisions. Pat Robertson, the rightwing Christian fundamentalist who owns US radio and TV stations, is fascinatingly revealed for the political operator he is. The way the real costs for cleaning up the first monster oil spill – the Exxon Valdez wreck in Alaska in 1989 – were avoided and the local people shafted, gets its place.

Added together, this book is a practical primer on contemporary capital-

supply vital information for investigative journalists who equip us with the knowledge to steer democracy back on track. Check out www.GregPalast.com, which is the website for Palast's current writing. There you'll find the issues currently on the boil. There's also a list of useful websites doing similar work around the world.

noseweek readers will want this book.

– Jim Phelps



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SHEIK AIRS HIS VIEWS



DEPUTY PRESIDENT JACOB

Zuma's financial manager, Schabir Shaik had some therapeutic interviews on Radio 702 and Cape Talk about *noseweek* and our report that he had allegedly "paid-off" a young lady to withdraw a rape charge against the deputy president's son Mziwoxolo (*nose49*).

In the course of the interviews he unburdened himself of some of his deepest fears and feelings about "whiteys" and *noseweek* in language that had drive-time listeners pulling up on the pavement.

(Sensitive readers are asked to please skip the next paragraph rather than cancel

their subscriptions.)

noseweek is f**king racist, Shaik told listeners to Chris Gibbon's show on 702; *noseweek* is a f**king trash publication, connected to "certain structures". Best of all, having himself just been ordered by the high court to pay defence software expert Richard Young R150,000 in defamation damages, plus even more in legal costs, Shaik told Gibbon he is going to get rich suing *noseweek*. Radio listeners haven't been so entertained for months. A recording of the interview was replayed half a dozen times by popular demand.

Next day Shaik and *noseweek* editor Martin Welz met on Tim

noseweek* is fing racist... trash**

Modise's show. Now Shaik's calm and considered demeanour prompted Welz to ask him if he'd taken a pill to calm himself. Yes, he said.

And, said Welz, Shaik looked "pretty white" himself. Yes, admitted Shaik, his grandmother was an Afrikaner. In the course of the discussion, it emerged that *noseweek's* reporter had sent Shaik three emails setting out the gist of our proposed "rape payoff" report and asking him for comment. He had responded to none.

On radio Shaik now declared he had never met the alleged rape victim, and neither he nor any of his companies had ever employed or paid her anything. He offered to pay for a forensic audit of his books to prove it. In response Welz assured him that had he given our reporter these denials, they would have been included in our report.

Shaik then went on to claim that his former co-director Sabeer Sheik – one

of the major sources quoted in our story – had been fired from their company for dishonesty when a forensic audit revealed that he had "inflated" invoices. Shaik claimed Sheik had also been fired from his previous job in the department of transport for insubordination, but that the director general of transport had still recommended him for the job with Shaik's company, which was poised to get major toll road contracts from the department.

Welz assured Shaik that *noseweek* would most certainly have investigated these claims before publishing its report – if he had told us about them. Shaik is

abroad, but is expected back in SA soon. (We will canvass these issues with him on his return.)

In the radio interviews Shaik made no mention of another former employee quoted in our story, his former personal assistant Bianca Singh. We will follow that up soon. Meantime all is forgiven. Shaik says he may yet subscribe to *noseweek*.

The truth remains elusive. A minor role player in our story may yet, it now emerges, have the most legitimate complaint. Attorney Linda Mazibuko represented the alleged rape victim at the time of the incident and for some months thereafter. He communicated the girl's change of heart about the complaint she had laid, to the prosecutor, so persuading him to withdraw the charge. On checking our reporter's records, we find that Mazibuko told us, when we asked him if he was aware of a settlement agreement that had been reached between Zuma's son and the alleged rape victim:

"Yes, I am only aware of it, I have no knowledge [of its content]. I'm not sure how it was settled, but it was."

Was there any payment by Schabir Shaik to the girl? we asked.

"I'm not aware, only know there was an agreement, not what it was. Maybe, but I'm not sure," replied Mazibuko. He was aware she had found a job in Durban.

Finally we asked him if he had handled any money for the girl. His answer was a very emphatic "No!".

Our report that he was unwilling to divulge details of a settlement agreement reached with Schabir Shaik – implying he might know such details – was, therefore incorrect. We regret the error. ☐

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ASHLEY COOPER



TOBROEK

BEWARE GENERALISATIONS.

There's many a politician who is not in it for graft. Well, not in the financial sense.

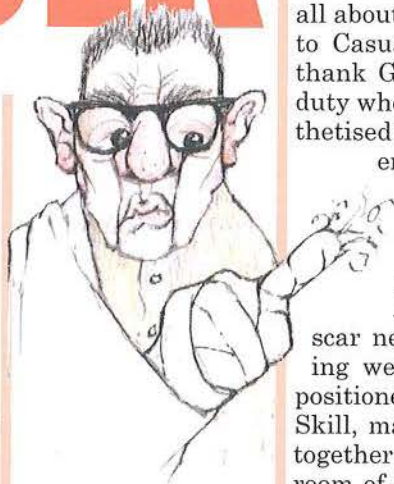
Cde Ben Turok and I pushed many a year together, played the piano in many a police station and prison together, which is to say left our greasy finger- and thumbprints on many an official form for the archival record of the Department of Justice; racked up dreadful criminal records too: conspiring to overthrow the State with bombs, furthering the aims of Communism. You name it, we did it. Yet he became a member of parliament able to look upon a great big pile of public money without any idea whatsoever entering his head for a moment that he might arf-inch it, pinch it, fly it off.

Furthermore, I believe he was dead against buying an aircraft carrier for defence against a Pearl-Harbor attack on Durban by the Sri Lankan navy, this in his opinion being a dead waste of money so desperately needed by the poor.

Yet it is not for such nobility of purpose that I remember him. I remember him for sticking out his little finger whilst eating his porridge, like Queenie Windsor taking tea with small biscuits from Fortnum & Mason's. This behaviour I had seen often enough in the Midlands of Natal over many years, but then Natal was, after all, you know ... another county of, you know... *ngl*nd, but Ben was from Cape Town, where the colonies started.

And curiously, the second most vivid image I have of the man has also to do with the fingers of his right hand.

You see, Ben was tanning himself on one of the Cape Town beaches one sunshiny day when he decided the hair follicles on top of his head were getting a bit cooked by the UV so he might go bald, and he should make himself more horizontal, like, and reached behind him to unhook the back member of his deck chair from that other member with the kind of ratchet on it, so it could kind of flatten out, as it were. But somehow the two parts didn't engage, and in one horrible instant the metal hinge acted as a pair of scissors and sheared off



**Conspiring
to overthrow
the State
with bombs,
furthering
the aims of
Communism.
You name it,
we did it**



the fleshy tip of his middle finger, entirely. It gives me the chicken skin to write about it. It doesn't bear thinking about.

But thank God for modern science! Modern surgery to the rescue! With the chopped-off bit in a handy envelope and the stump squirting all about he was driven pell mell helter skelter to Casualty with a traffic cop up front, and thank God there was a specialist surgeon on duty who in a trice laid him out flat and anaesthetised him here and there, and dumped the envelope in the used-parts bin and set about something much more sophisticated: he strapped Ben's hand to his abdomen and grafted the finger to the flesh of his belly.

And very cosmetically avoiding a later scar near the belly-button, swimwear starting well below that feature these days, he positioned the graft at about underpants level. Skill, man, skill; when all was neatly knitted together, he cut it away, leaving a small mushroom of flesh on the fingertip, and when that was all healthy and happy he trimmed it down and pulled the skin across so as to make a surprisingly normal finger-tip. Phew! Great! But.

BUT! Every Sunday in preparation for the Great Inspection by the Main Ou of the Tronk, the Superintendent, the beampite of our section handed us a pair of scissors for cutting hair and fingernails and trimming the pubic hairs on Cde Ben's fingertip. No bullshit! Die ware Jakob short and curlies! The beamptes called it Tobroek se Baaiskoup Finger.

Low-class bandiete like Evans and Lewin of the unMarxist African Resistance Movement without ideological guidance thought he should leave these wild and free so when the Super came by and we were all standing there with our prison cards held to our chins he should perceive this crop, and make a ruling on it, since the regulasies ruled only on haircuts to the head and face. We took the matter to our secret sangomas called the Yard Committee.

Bram Fischer was of such majesty he should have been a judge rather than a tronkvoel, if history had been a little bit otherwise. Come to think of it, he could have been President of the Free State Republic. But this one was too much. Democratic Centralism dictated that Tobroek should make his own democratic choice, said Bram.

If Evans or Lewin or any other low-rent bandiet is out there yet could they please let me know what happened? My stretch ended right in the middle of this ideological quandary. ☐



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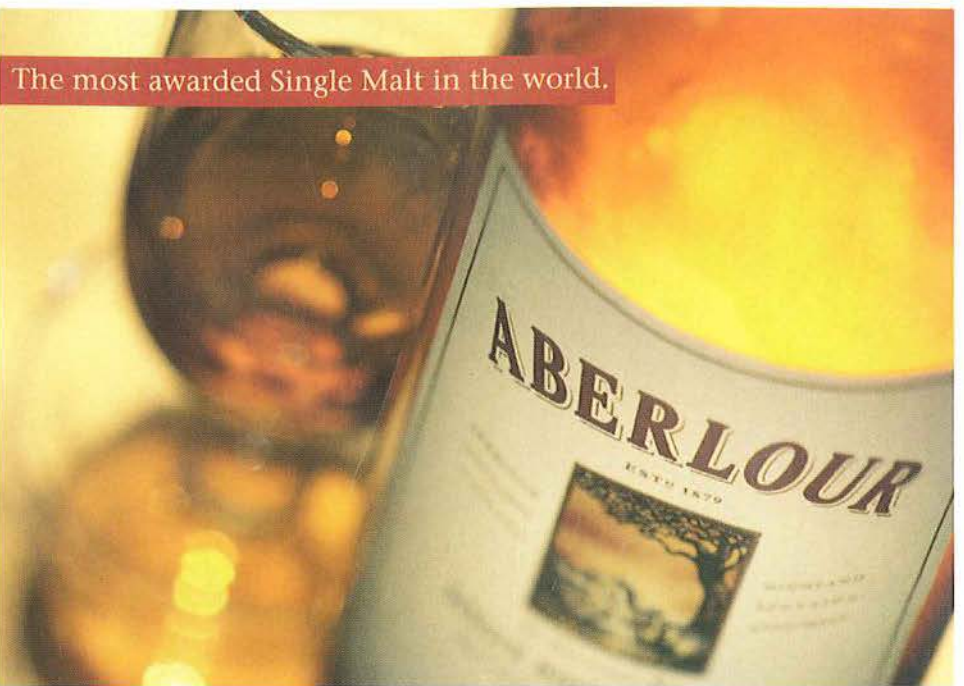


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