

Dear friends,

**The more I delay the more there is to report. Bear with me.**

**Go to my website to see and read about the topics I list below. AND: scroll down to read my observations about the sorry state we are in, in South Africa.**

The following are new entries on my website:

1. See the announcement and first reviews of the book published in Germany, *Koloniale Vergangenheit – Postkoloniale Zukunft?* Edited by Henning Melber and Kristin Platt. It tackles the failures and short-comings of the long-debated agreement between Namibia and Germany about Germany's terrible colonial past. I contributed a chapter about my family's existence through that conflict and beyond.
2. See the announcement of a historical novel about the Zara, the Khoi-Khoi woman who made such a powerful impact during her life and the generations that followed. The author is Ursula Trueper, my cousin in Berlin. It will be on the shelves in November this year, and I'd love to see it published in South Africa and Namibia, in Afrikaans and English.
3. Roger Southall is a friend, the author of *Whites and Democracy in South Africa*. With the mountain of unfinished business by and about Whites in South Africa, I commend this book to you
4. See the obituary about journalist Lorna de Smit, written by her husband Graham. They were compelled to leave Apartheid South Africa. They made the UK their home – another loss to South Africa of good and capable people. There are two intriguing connections the de Smits – who married across the Apartheid colour bar - that involve my former colleague, Rev Theo Kotze who married them despite a law forbidding this and Cedric Mayson who helped smuggle them across the border out of South Africa.
5. Listen to a fine and thoughtful address by Fr. Michael Lapsley on the occasion earlier in 2022 when he was awarded the Japanese Niwano Peace Prize.
6. Lest we forget! In memory of Mapetla Mohapi – a foremost Black Consciousness leader and close associate of Steve Biko, and at one time a colleague of mine – killed while held in detention by the Apartheid police in 1976. See the review of a new book about him.
7. **Read from the Rand Daily Mail article of 20 May 1978: 'Three-year-old is refused passport'. Yes, Zindzi my daughter, was refused the means to visit me in exile until she was nine years old. See cutting on website.**
8. **The Rand Daily Mail, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1945 reported: 'Peyton Place is back – after 21 years'. This was announced in the same Government Gazette that made it an offence to possess a copy of the Dutch translation of my article (pamphlet form) of 'my reasons to support the ANC'.**
9. See photographs from 1952. My brother, sister, father and me in Sydenham, Johannesburg. See those dreaded Lederhosen with Hosen-träger we were made to wear year in and year out.
10. A photo of me with ex-President Thabo Mbeki earlier this year, when I interviewed him about Beyers Naudé and Cedric Mayson.
11. And if you scroll down to the bottom of the Christian Institute pages of the website, there are two new entries about Websites, one in the Netherlands and one in the USA, where source material on the Anti-Apartheid struggle can be accessed.

And now,

### **1. Zama-Zama illegal gold mining, cable theft, abalone poaching and Al Capone.**

Yes, there is a connection between illegal gold mining, the theft of copper wire that ruins what is left of our rail system, the divers who pillage abalone off our coast – and Al Capone. They all want(ed) to get rich quick, but that's only the obvious answer.

As head of Fisheries (2000-2005) I was tasked to rid the Department and its unholy relationship with the fishing industry and of related corruption. Minister Valli Moosa was a rare and honest ally who covered my back. Corruption had many faces: un-just quota allocations to whites only; over-fishing of Patagonian toothfish, south-coast rock lobster, and the flesh of the mollusk, locally known as perlemoen or abalone. It is highly desirable to Chinese men who believe it enhances their virility. They pay astronomical prices, especially for the South African variant. Its extinction is not far away.

I set out on mission impossible. What stared everyone in the face was men with goggles in wet-suits and oxygen flasks on small, motorized boats. Brazenly they deliver their catch into the shallows of the sea where runner-boys collect and take the abalone to waiting trucks. After that the story is murky about how exactly the contraband reached Hong Kong. Despite the regular arrests of runner-boys and those near them, the problem kept getting bigger. The fallacy to do the same thing over and over again and hoping for a solution was so entrenched that nobody, including MPs and the press cast sufficient doubt on the *modus operandi*.

One day I decided to attend – unannounced – a regular meeting of fisheries inspectors, local law enforcement and SAPS to find out whether we were making progress, regress or just muddling along. One of my own inspectors had the audacity to say that I did not have ‘security clearance’ to be present. I stayed, now conscious of two things: they will all censure themselves for as long as I’m in the room and, there are officers present here who are complicit in poaching. (Two years later I had the evidence that 14 Fisheries Inspectors were on the permanent payroll of at least one prominent fishing company – and was able to prosecute and/or dismiss them). Despite this, to my astoundment, the officers I had joined on that day in Hermanus seemed to have a wealth of evidence and knowledge about poaching. Why were there no prosecutions higher up the poaching chain? The answer was that the prosecutorial services failed them too often, and then they were always the ones to be blamed.

What I gleaned from the meeting was: there were more than 15 syndicates that bought poached product. One syndicate was “white”, one was “black” and based in Zwelihle and all the others “coloured”, mostly based in Hawston. Here homes with large safe’s where the tell-tale of a syndicate leader. I later succeeded to bring the ‘white’ Marx syndicate to book. Their arrogance as being untouchable amongst the syndicates, was their downfall.

But I had not gone very far yet. So, I made an appointment to meet with the prosecution teams in Pretoria. During a long and frustrating morning, I concluded that collusion with the poaching machinery had a long history here too. During lunch I asked an elderly Advocate who seemed not part of them, if he would go for a walk with me. I appealed to him on environmental grounds – that soon SA would have no abalone left and how this impacted on the wider eco-system. He seemed sympathetic and said he would invoke the Al Capone rule after lunch. I was mystified.

The poaching chain starts with the divers who worked for competing syndicates. They drop their catch in rocky inter-tidal waters where runner-boys carry the loot across beaches into the bush and to waiting pick-up trucks, managed by this or that syndicate. Then it went in refrigeration trucks, without fail, to a cold-storage facility in Jet Park Industrial suburb near ORT airport in Johannesburg. From here it was exported to Harare or Gaborone without due description. Why? Because from there it would be re-exported as a SADC ‘product’ via Johannesburg International airport to Hong Kong. Because we have friendly relations with our SADC partners no real checks of the frozen product took place. Naturally at each airport paid customs officials could be relied – they got a kick-back every time they closed their eyes.

Who ran the Jet Park operation? And who bought the product in Hong Kong. No secret to the prosecutors. A South African bought the product in Hong Kong and the Jet Park facility was run by a Triad member, one of three Chinese living in South Africa. Despite this knowledge, so they said, they could not pin a charge on him. The kindly advocate now pounced: Let’s instead of chasing the abalone link, do a tax check on the Jet Park owner. And bingo, a few days later the suspect was arrested for failing to pay income tax. He was charged and held in custody. The 15+ syndicates must have been worried. Al Capone could not be caught for breaking the Prohibition rules in the USA in the 1930s but was caught as a tax-dodger. In the Jet Park case, the outstanding tax was soon paid by someone in Hong Kong.

I tell this tale because illegal gold mining, copper theft, abalone/rhino horn, drugs and much else that attains a high price, without doubt has a similar pyramidal chain. Thus: stop chasing the runner-boys, and instead go for those at the top who buy and pay those lower down the chain. Or is it that they, at the top of the chain, enjoy protection by complicit politicians?

## **2. The ANC step-aside.**

The ANC is currently pre-occupied with one matter above others: the interpretation of their step-aside resolution. In lay-man’s terms this defines who can stand for or retain political office when charges against a politician of theirs’ are pending. The charges vary from crime, sexual assault to stealing from the public purse. The ANC acrobatics over definitions of allegations, charges etc. was center stage at the ANC’s recent Policy Conference. In my humble view a political party in need of such resolution should shut shop! The party abounds with officials and wannabe candidates whose ethics are in doubt or are tarnished.

## **3. Truth telling then and now.**

First:

Fake news has always been around. It just used to be packaged differently. Fascist ideology of the 1930s or formal apartheid ideology after 1948 had little or nothing to do with fact or truth – both engaged in massive propaganda to dupe those whom they used as tools to gain power. Key to such strategy is always to conjure up an enemy, to blame someone ‘not like me’. Demagogues spread their hate, riding on the lie that they will make it better for their adherents and propose to achieve this by taking away from the ones they have ‘othered’. Hatred is their means – never more terribly expressed and exercised than during the twelve years they ruled in Nazi Germany. Apartheid did not do the same but similarly used race as the vehicle by which to avenge ‘poor-white’ poverty post the Anglo-Boer war and the depression of the 1930s. And today, as SA and global poverty escalates, fake news merchants again seek ascendancy – the syndrome of men with a swagger and who seek power on the back of others, is on the ascent. They come in all colours. As usual, they care little about the poor, dispossessed and alienated; instead, they use them. The greatest hate that is being revved up in SA now is against African foreigners residing in our country as political or economic refugees or migrants. The EFF, operation Dudula and sections of the ANC are making themselves guilty of this at this very moment. It will get worse! Spaza shops and other traders from Africa are their target. Violent language is abundant. And violence against them is taking place. Real illegals, and there are those, should be dealt with by the police but it is they together with home affairs officials, that is fanning the fire in our country. Do not be surprised if, what is currently called xenophobia will later be turned against others they can ‘other’. Right now I hear of the worry and fear felt by the DR Congo car-guards living solely from charity – for fifteen years and more. They are being ‘othered’ once again. Corruption at Home Affairs, hopeless politicians and Congolese officials, stops them getting work permits.

Second:

The Rev. Frank Chikane makes two vital observations about the struggle against Apartheid. With the benefit of hindsight, he says that ethics, morality if you like, should have been foregrounded in the struggle years. He suggests that such absence (inadequacy) during the struggle years landed us in the mess we are in today. I believed that if we fought for *égalité*, ethics would be self-evident. I was wrong: I believed that we fought for the progressive realization of equality and my assumption about ethics was misplaced.

In paying tribute to Ds Beyers Naudé, Chikane says: we asked him to commit class-suicide and by him so doing he made our struggle one for humanity rather than tempting us into a Black versus White analyses. He rightly asserts that class not race lies at the core. It can never be race or religion or any form of sectionalism, created by the men who advance such rule by using fake legends as though they are the ‘truth’. Whether xenophobia or blaming ‘Indians’ or ‘Whites’ in the unfolding hate speech, Chikane’s vital point needs once more to be amplified.

Third:

Beyers Naudé, having fought against Apartheid, was part of the ANC contingent at what are known as the Groote Schuur talks. Those talks were the first formal encounter, in 1990, between the apartheid adversary and those who fought for the end to racial rule. I wanted to know why Beyers was post Groote Schuur, not part of the negotiations that led to our first democratic elections in 1994. The subsequent talks are known as the Codesa talks. He provides the answer in his Afrikaans autobiography *My Land van Hoop*. He makes it clear that it was right, morally too, that he fought in the trenches with all us all during the 70s and 80s, but he says, when peace talks took place and a new order was being negotiated, he would rather be a truth teller. He says that he once compromised with truth – when he was both a Minister in the Dutch Reformed Church and a foremost member of the Afrikaner Broederbond. He had learnt that there is a time and place for truth tellers and in the post ’94 South Africa he wanted, through painful experience, make sure he’d call out corruptors, power-abusers, or convenience-arguers.

We need truth-tellers and whistle-blowers! Always! Beyers was an uncompromising truth-teller in the fight against Apartheid. He spoke (and acted) for the truth even when Apartheid agents set out to kill him. Beyers Naudé and Babita Deokaran are worthy of the same honors. Beyers stood up against an evil system; Babita stood up against evildoers who have it in them to (re)-create an evil system.

Fourth:

With the ANC in terminal decay, South Africa enters un-charted waters. Demagogues and opportunists will want to capture the popular imagination and vote. Two things stand out for me: Beyond actively defending and extending our democracy we need a strong articulation of an honest collective that speaks in the public domain. However, limited its reach initially, such voice needs a place in Parliament after the 2024 elections. It needs a new and young voice. They must not be remote-controlled by old ANC gatekeepers, nor must they be sponsored by the super-rich do-gooders with their power and their agendas. They must speak to us as the most unequal country in the world; they must speak to wealth – not only land – redistribution; they must be directly accountable to voting constituents; they must shun the trimmings and glitz displayed by the current elite.

My pennies’ worth is that, yes, we need proper oversight, tighter rules and laws, support for whistle-blowers, a free press and a political programme that delivers better education, health and that re-distributes wealth, but we also need

truth-tellers – a voice for egalité that is not part of those who rule. The faith communities, with very few exceptions, are once again sleepwalking through our countries' devastation. But truth-telling is not the preserve of the religious only. The good people in the ANC and in other parties and especially from civil society need to gather around principled social and economic objectives that address the deep crises that confronts us. The coalition politics taking place in Metros currently is a far cry from this.

#### **4. The common good.**

The display of greed and the display of opulence at the top of our society is simultaneously a message of disregard and of disdain for those waiting for equality and justice. The elite's conduct has a knock-on effect that ripples down and throughout our society; it translates into 'I'm in this for myself'. Whether in personal behaviour or acting 'for my family' or for my clan, or group, or racial identity, or religious association, the callous conduct at the top is increasingly defining the behaviour of those down the line. The belief in the common good, doing something for the greater collective, of doing 'for others' without recompense, is the direct result of the pot-bellied men at the top of the chain – many civil servants included. Apartheid made it tough to act for the common good, the past 28 years compound it.

#### **5. 'Comrade' and 'Revolution'**

It does not cease to astound me that ANC rhetoric is constantly embroidered with the words 'revolution' and 'comrade'. This is espoused by the very people who for 30 years have diddled the public purse to get very rich, very quickly. There are exceptions but the band of fraudsters and thieves parading as revolutionary comrades is nauseating. And Cyril settled it for me: There is no good vs bad section in the ANC; whichever faction eventually trades with the name ANC, they all sold out the poor and disempowered people of this land, whatever their rhetoric. They got rich at the expense of those they claimed they fought and struggled for. The words comrade and national revolution have become political fashion attributes.

Enough said. Had to get this off my chest!

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