

Dear friends and family,

As is my custom I offer you comment on matters current and past. Below is my take on South Africa after the disastrous rule of President Zuma and his associates in politics and in business. My second offering is on the passing of Winnie Mandela in April 2018. Also, there are numerous new entries on my website, as listed in my email associated with this Newsletter.

Our new political landscape.

By the slimmest of margins Cyril Ramaphosa was elected ANC President and then assumed office on 15 February 2018 in an acrimonious power struggle inside the ANC. The good news is that Ramaphosa has brought hope, stability and predictability to our twenty-four-year-old democracy. After the hopeless years of Zuma at least part of the nation currently bask in Ramaphoria. His swift actions to clean up some corruption and decay left by Zuma is most welcome. His first Cabinet is not rid of many a crooked or incompetent Minister. This tells us just how delicate the balance of power is inside the ANC.

Ramaphosa is capable, energetic and efficient. His office whilst he was Deputy President is said to stand out as well-run, even if his actions Zuma's deputy where at best, limp. It is welcome that he does not tolerate lateness (at meetings and appointments), a national trait that deserves challenging! He acts statesman-like, is responsive to national issues that Zuma and his gang ignored and brings back argument and intellect into the running of a modern state. He showed this quality when he departed from the pageantry indulgence at the Commonwealth Heads of Government gathering in London recently to deal with the unrest in North-West Province over the ineffective and corrupt provincial Premier, Supra Mahumapelo.

Also, remarkable for any politician, he shows that he has a conscience and an ability to relate to the anger felt in society. In his inaugural Presidential speech, he spoke of atonement in relation to his role in the Marikana massacre. We await his actions following such sentiment. At the funeral of Winnie Mandela he addressed 'woundedness' felt across the nation in relation to the unfinished business apartheid left us with. These are rare qualities in politicians.

The ANC remains deeply divided into the Zuma group who continue see Zuma as a martyr, notably after he recently appeared in court on corruption, racketeering and money laundering charges. His group has not coalesced but they aspire to a new narrow (racial) nationalism. I hear the sound of wanting to replace one oligarchy with another that is Black. They recognise in Ramaphosa a tie to the rich and powerful, which substantially represents old white capital. The manoeuvres at the top, I have little doubt, will once more ignore the poor and their right to education, health care, a living wage, decent houses, despite promises wrapped in powerful rhetoric. Worst of all they see this elite basking in affluence and often decadence at the top of the social pyramid whilst they continue to suffer. Can Ramaphosa fix this?

The ANC factions are poised at a knife's edge in equal numbers and influence. The deputy President is also Ramaphosa's most ruthless opponent. The 'top six' in the ANC are divided down the middle. Ramaphosa is the better negotiator and dealmaker but there is much evidence that the ANC keeps devouring itself with neither faction going it alone for fear of losing the purse that feeds them.

Ironically, the good that Ramaphosa is bringing has dented the electoral prospects of the Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Front. Both flourished while Zuma floundered which is also an indictment of the shallowness of opposition political programmes.

As we head toward elections next year all our political parties (the EFF excluded but for other dubious reasons) congregate, in content, the centre-right of the political spectrum.

Ramaphosa is millionaire made in post-apartheid South Africa. He is married to the sister of Godfrey Motsepe, one of the very rich men South Africa. Motsepe's other sister is married to the prominent Cabinet Minister Jeff Radebe. The speculators on the stock exchange love this new aristocracy in the making.

And while the ANC fights itself and the opposition parties have little to offer, Rome is burning:

- Our politicians seem impervious to the low-level civil war going on throughout South Africa. The poorest in the townships are barricading roads and highways with burning tyres at several places throughout South Africa each day. (On radio the reports about traffic congestion have given way to reports on roads barricaded by angry poor people). The EFF promote more tyre burning in the streets while the ANC and DA believe it's a matter of law and order the police must deal with.
- We are, by any measure, one of the most unequal countries in the world. Even the World Bank confirms this in its own recent study¹. The Zuma years have increased the divergence between rich and poor, making the gap worse than during apartheid. The Social Grants system helps 17 million out of a population of 57.5 million. Fiscal constraints do not allow for this form of aid to continue to grow.
- Unemployment is high and rising, notably amongst young people. Estimates are that over 40% of people are unemployed or no longer looking for work. There is no quick fix to this, especially in a country that lags behind other countries in rebuilding a manufacturing sector.
- We also have the worst educational outcomes of any country. Our school system has failed. Reading, comprehension and math at school level locate us at the very bottom. All this despite huge budgets and a huge privately funded non-governmental sector.

This should impel our politicians to stop name-calling each other at Parliamentary, Provincial and City level. They might as well live in a different country. Zuma, so volatile was the situation, is said to have considered calling a state of emergency in order to cut the ground from under Ramaphosa before he was toppled himself. Instead the real emergency should unite politicians across the board to urgently deal with poverty, jobs, education, training, land redistribution and the growing insurrection that is taking place in townships right now.

Plaintive hopes that the National Development Plan can save us, I submit, is nothing more than propaganda with goals that will keep being postponed indefinitely. Unless we begin the discussion of restitution with redistribution and a measurable plan that addresses the deepening divide between rich and poor, everything else is fiddling while Rome burns. What should be done can be done within the terms prescribed in our Constitution, our Bill of Rights and open democratic conduct.

¹ The report documents the progress South Africa has made in reducing poverty and inequality since the end of apartheid, with a focus on the period between 2006 and 2015. The main conclusions are: By any measure, South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world. Inequality is high, persistent, and has increased since 1994. Second, although South Africa has made progress in reducing poverty since 1994, the trajectory of poverty reduction was reversed between 2011 and 2015, threatening to erode some of the gains made since 1994. High levels of inequality and low intergenerational mobility act as a brake on poverty reduction and as a result poverty is high for an upper middle-income country. Poverty is consistently highest among black South Africans, the less educated, the unemployed, female-headed households, large families, and children. Poverty has a strong spatial dimension in South Africa, a demonstration of the enduring legacy of apartheid. Poverty remains concentrated in previously disadvantaged areas, such as the former homelands – areas that were set aside for black South Africans along ethnic lines during apartheid. Third, high levels of income polarization are manifested in very high levels of chronic poverty, a few high-income earners and a relatively small middle class. Fourth, the role of skills and labour market factors have grown in importance in explaining poverty and inequality while the role of gender and race, though still important, has declined, presenting an opportunity for policy to influence poverty and inequality outcomes. Social protection remains important in reducing extreme poverty, but the fiscal space for further expansion is limited. Low growth perspectives in the coming years suggest poor prospects of eliminating poverty by 2030 as envisaged in the National Development Plan.

The passing of Winnie Mandela

The death of Winnie created an unprecedented national outcry of anguish. More than in life she became our collective liberator, a heroine and the icon of struggle and resistance. As a woman she became the collective fighter for gender equality. This was best expressed by her daughter at the funeral. She asked why infidelity by heroic men was ignored yet her mother was condemned. She made an absolutely valid point.

But the shrill defence and support of Winnie quickly turned on all who voiced any criticism of her. The Stompie² travesty of the late 1990's was obliterated and became an invention of reactionaries, apartheid apologists and agents. Such falsification holds profound danger and truth telling of history to future generations. I am painfully conscious of such re-writing of history when Afrikaner and German nationalism were created.

But, what happened here in April tells of a national wound that has not healed in twenty-four years of majority rule. It speaks to the clamour for dignity in a country where endlessly political icons are seen to fail in the morass of mal-applied power and enrichment. It tells of a white and complacent upper class unwilling to express or demonstrate contrition yet continuing to loudly judge those formerly oppressed. Their implicit refrain, 'we told you so', or 'we know better', underlines at best paternalism and at worst continuing racism.

The worst white offenders are a group known as AfriForum, currently seeking to charge in court the black leader of the Economic Freedom Front, Julius Malema, with a variety of matters. He is the racist, they shout. What is known about AfriForum reeks of unrepentant narrow Afrikaner nationalists with deep roots in having upheld or enforced apartheid. They now don themselves as victims in the new South Africa in which they are a minority desperate to defend *their* human rights. Their drive equal to the Winnie warriors attempt to falsify the past. I find them deeply offensive. I do not want such people to speak in my name if I am perceived by anyone to be a member of the white group. Their actions, as the former perpetrators, as those who retain undue power to this day, further polarise our fragmented society. It is they above all other white power in our society, who offend most.

Those now haling Winnie *über alles* are a response to the promise of 1994 that never happened. We remain in search for true equality, an égalité that eludes us. Haling Winnie unreservedly holds similar dangers that the AfriForum *bittereinders* pursue.

There are those who stand above the quagmire of Winnie apologists and accusers. One such person is Njabulo Ndebele. I urge you to read his book *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*, published in 2004. I equally urge you to read Palesa Morudu's article, written after Winnie's death. Despite the wounds the struggle caused her and her family, she valiantly rises above the dangers of uncritical adoration. Ms Morudu locates the mid-point between Winnie as an icon and Winnie the tragic figure and villain. Importantly, she decries the subjugation of truth to a knew invented narrative intended to make Winnie faultless. I urge you to read this exceptional article. <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2018-04-13-has-truth-become-a-casualty-of-winnies-rejection-of-accountability/>

My association with the Mandela's goes back to 1972. I wrote about my, in the end fraught relationship in my Newsletter 21: *A foot soldier remembers the Mandela family*, dated December 2013 and written after the death of Nelson Mandela. Please visit www.horstkleinschmidt.co.za and go to Newsletters. I do not add nor subtract from what I said then. I bear no malice and I seek no apology. I remain proud to have been there when others failed or were unable to offer support. I did as I saw right. And I differed when that was the correct thing to do.

² For more on Stompie read: [Stompie burnt into Winnie legacy | News | M&G](#)

May Winnie rest in peace. We must honour her but we dare not forget her failings, our collective failings to better support her, but above all, we may never forget the exceptional horror apartheid subjected her to. It is a horror Special Branch officers and their mentors in the highest political office have not acknowledged nor for which they compensated Winnie for, or her daughters Zenani and Zindzi, or Nelson Mandela and South Africans as a whole.

We remain an angry nation. Massive governance failure by the former liberation movement, since 1994 the ruling party, evokes the uncritical adulation of Winnie. But there is another failure, that of the privileged who continue to exercise unbound privilege. Mostly they say they embrace the new South Africa. What they don't say is that they offer their support on condition that their wealth and continued means to grow this wealth, is not questioned or interfered with. The notion of redistribution is enough to make them leave the country, with their money. Ramaphose knows this is one matter he may not touch!