

# NEWSLETTER 34

Horst Kleinschmidt  
October 2017.

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## Three places in the Austrian Alps (August 2017).

### 1. Haunting Ebensee.

The African eye is not accustomed to the intense green. The landscape is idyllic, picture perfect: The trees, the lake, the surrounding mountains, the church, its ascending spire and the clustered houses around it, connected by narrow alleys. Ebensee is as pretty as any of its adjoining villages. I try and imagine the place in winter, the fur trees draped in snow.



**René Lescoute**

Walter has made an appointment with the curator at the local museum where the inmates of the WWII

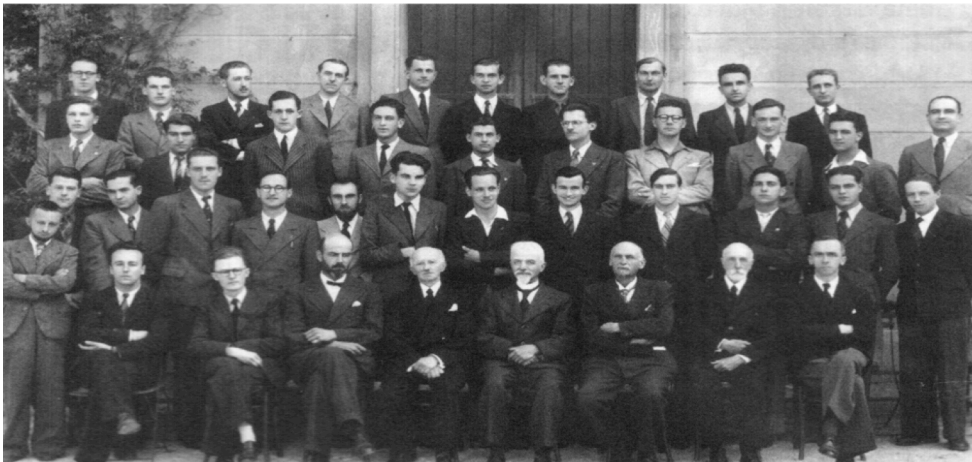
Ebensee concentration camp are commemorated. An estimated 8,200 prisoners died here. The camp was liberated by American troops on 6 May 1945, too late for Cape born René Noel Lescoute, inmate number "64135 (Cap de Esperance)". On 29 January 1945 he died from hunger, exposure, torture and exhaustion, one of thousands of forced labourers in the caverns and shafts of ancient saltmines on the edges of Ebensee. Toward the end of the war Nazi Germany was busy relocating its Peenemünde missile production, to this underground location. Peenemünde, on the Baltic coast of Germany was by then under heavy allied bombardment. To this end lots of labour was required, and as always, Nazi Germany availed itself of people it imprisoned.

How did René Lescoute, a devout Protestant from the Cape come to die here in such circumstances?

Lescoute was born in Tarkastad in 1920. His mother was Lina de Jager and according to his Cape Town descendents, she would have been classified 'Coloured' under the apartheid dispensation. Her

husband was frenchman David Lescoute, a protestant missionary of the Paris Mission Society. As a young man René went to study theology at the University of Montpellier. Records show that he was registered at the Philosophy Department of the Evangelical Theological Faculty in 1942/43. The war stopped him from returning home. He found himself a subject of the Vichy regime of Southern France – collaborators of Nazi Germany. Here he became engaged to Marguerite Poncet. But in mid 1943 his life rapidly changed. Germany was defeated in North Africa. In October 1943 the French Island of Corsica had been taken back by the French, led by General Charles de Gaulle. Liberation was beckoning in the South of France.

Theology students, amongst them René Lescoute, chose the nearby mountains of Tréminis, near Grenoble, to form a partisan group known as “The Nest”. “Today my faith will be tested” Lescoute wrote before this small group of “Camps of Theologians”, readied themselves to support the expected allied arrival. A local peasant woman sold them bread.



**Theology Faculty members in Montpellier with René Lecoute, 2<sup>nd</sup> from left, second row from the back.**

Within six days a column of German soldiers, assisted by French collaborators, arrested them. The group had been betrayed. René Lescoute, Pierre Fabre, George Siguier and Joseph Laroche, with other prisoners, were taken to Grenoble to be tortured and interrogated.

His transport from here is carefully recorded. At the end of November 1943, the Gestapo took eleven men to the prison in Montluc in Lyon to be charged by a German military tribunal. Nine of them, including Lescoute, were sentenced to death. Five were executed and on 7

January 1944, the others, including Lescoute, had their sentences commuted only to be sent to the transit camp at Compiegne.

On 27 March 1944 Lescoute was taken to the Gestapo camp “Neue Bremm” in Saarbrücken. Malnourished, Lescoute was then taken to the Austrian concentration camps of Mauthausen and Linz III. On 28 January 1945 he died at the sub-camp at Ebensee. No rockets were ever produced here but liberation came too late for Lescoute.

In South Africa, René Lescoute deserves to be remembered!

[My thanks to Prof Walter Sauer and his students who researched Arab and African prisoners held at Mauthausen in Austria. The inmates were Nazi opponents from various European places, with 20% being Jewish]

## **2. Dad’s army or ominous signs in Bad Ischl? (look it up, if you do not know the English amusing meaning of Dad’s army)**

“Just look at us, I’m over 75 and nobody here is younger than 40”. I ask him: are the medals on your uniform earned through service or are they handed down from your father? “No, I earn them for service and loyalty to my Tyrolian *Traditionsverband* (Association based on traditions), but the iron cross is a replica and I wear it as a provocation, it is meant to make people ask questions about our history. Most of these guys wear uniforms just because they like it, but they don’t know what it represents”. I had picked on him for no particular reason but was curious about what made these people dress up. He stood alone, looked more approachable. I briefly explain who I am: far-away Cape Town and born in Namibia. “Ach so, Süd West Africa”, he exults and wants to know why I speak ‘such good German’. Later he says: Its wonderful that there are still cells (Zellen) in far away places where German is spoken. I cringe.



Nostalgia defines everything. He is Tyrolean first, then Austrian, yearns for the Kaiserreich (Empire) that ended nearly 190 years ago,

and lastly and with emphasis, he sees himself as part of a German identity. “We can’t talk about it”. At first I think its because of some personal trauma but soon realise it is because the Austrian Government, he believes, does not allow him to speak about it. “Today we go to Italy, they talk about Musolini and Hitler in a way we are not allowed”. And, “Hitler did good, only that thing with the Jews, that was bad”. I shudder. Were there acts against Jews in Tyrol I enquire? “Yes” he says rather more softly, nearly ruefully, “there were pogroms”. Then follows an old and disjointed theory about the Jewish ‘nation’ who know to renew themselves every 200 years - and by inference that is why they needed, even abetted in the holocaust; Hitler wanted renewal for the German nation and he infers that the war casualties achieved that for Germans. Most Jews, he says, fled Germany but the USA did not want them; even the USA Jews opposed their arrival. Many/most got stuck in Rotterdam harbour, and allied bombing caused their death. At this point my head is spinning and I’m lost in his Weltanschauung. I’m keen to depart and he’s keen to join his contingent to march, sabre at his side. There are 5 or 6 of them in his *Traditionsverband* contingent.

Another man attracts my attention. Younger and overweight he dons a somewhat drab khaki uniform with a hat I last saw in an antique shop in Swakopmund. And, I recall, my father had one. “Yes” he confirms, it’s a uniform of the colonial Schutztruppe of German South West Africa, from 1884 – 1915. He is excited to hear I come from the place he dreams of. He tells me they are a small group who ‘study’ the history of this ignominious army. They already have quite a few of these old uniforms and they have tied up with a similar group in Germany. They even have some piece of land where they ... it’s unclear, but it seems to me, where they march. I bid a hasty good bye but not before Christine manages to take another photo.



Together there are 50 or more of these tradition-bound Austrian associations, each here with a contingent. Brass bands, swords, breech-loading firearms, medals, beards and yesteryears uniforms abound. There is no end to the variety of these men in colourful drag, handed down over decades and centuries – I notice no Nazi uniforms. Their women are not far behind, some even

wear men's uniforms and join the marching, but the majority take delight in wearing hooped frocks and headgear and carry umbrella's from a bye-gone age. The backdrop to all this is the *Kurgarten* of this quaint, picture-perfect spa town of Bad Ischl.

The previous night we had attended the Theaterhaus to see a performance of Franz Lehar's *The Merry Widow*. This was a modern adaptation, bravely dealing with sensuality and sexuality which stood in sharp contrast to the elderly audience of men kitted-out in formal Lederhosen with feathered hats and their wives in Dirndlekleider. Intriguingly the impresario behind this provocative and modern performance of this Lehar operetta is South African-born Leonard Prinsloo.

But the morning after, here in the Kurgarten, in front of the Theatre, things are much more military. No Nazi regalia but a yearning for an Empire that fell apart until nearly nothing was left; just a small land-locked Austria, seeking a role in the monster that is the European Union. Elderly and paunchy and everything other than fit and raring to go, this is dad's army. A senior church official, cassock and all, comes to bless each contingent. When ready, the Bad Ischl brass band, also in colourful costume, leads them all, in step, sort-of, to the St. Nicholas village Church, to celebrate the birthdate of the erstwhile Kaiser Franz-Josef. The 'regiments' and their banners are lined up behind the cross and altar in a semi-circle. The seamless image of church-soldier-war is not in question here. The Bishop preaches about mildness (milde), love, courage and justice. Unsurprisingly the sermon serves to comfort everyone for every conceivable need, including war.

Having the church's blessing, the motley wanna-be dad's army, with their tambours and flags, now heads to the imperial palace - to the imperial gardens to be precise. Champaign is sold by the glass and a distant heir to the throne is pleased and grateful for the love expressed by his underlings, for the ever supportive church toward the nobility and for the memory of a once notable world power. These are the sentiments expressed by His Imperial Highness Archduke Markus Salvator von Habsburg Lothringen. He is aged and soon is worried that the underlings have to stand in the blistering sun, and, slightly incoherent, but proud and confident none-the-less, then bids his loyal subjects farewell. No doubt cold champaigne awaited him inside. A pleased crowd heads to the local ice-cream parlour.



Here, nationalism, populism, Church, identity, purpose and nostalgia are part of one uneven canvass. So far young folk seem to have no appetite for this.



### 3. Salzburg.

Her loss of Peter was writtten large on her face. Despite her grief her welcome was warm and hearty. Marianne and Peter hoped to visit us once he retired as conductor of the Salzburg orchestra. Too late, his passing earlier this year ended his dream to meet the people that connected him to the Southern Africa he never visited.

Through Marianne's eyes we now hear about his achievements, his struggles, and his progressive outlook. Through a CD and video we gain insight into his love of Mozart and his own compositions.



**Peter with his mother Erika von Zedlitz**

Marianne opens Peter's collection of family history. It centres on his mother Erika von Zedlitz. My curiosity is why, after her complicity in pre-war and war-time Nazi Germany, she wrote up the family tree in which she openly commits to her Khoi great great grandmother. I want to know if she was contrite and in some way atoned for her career in the Hitler Youth. Was she exploding the social and the family taboo of our ancestry? Was she taking stock and distancing herself from the political party that brought her to the brink? Was she navigating a path beyond her complicity, entwined with her victimhood of the Third Reich? (See Newsletter 32) Written evidence eludes me. Marianne affirms with embarrassment that Erika remained proud of her career in the BDM of the Hitler Youth. And then, a letter addressed to Baroness Erika .... Yes, she claimed nobility via a complicated marriage. There are even suggestions of family coat of arms. Tools to cover her tracks?

My hope to find contrition was not realised. All I can draw any deductions from is her pioneering role in making public that Johann Hinrich Schmelen was "since 1815 married to a Nama woman" and that his second wife was Maria Bam. It leaves open the question whether we descended from the "Nama woman" or from Maria Bam. Ursula Trüper, our family biographer, established the name of the 'Nama woman' as Zara Hendricks. We also know that Hinrich and Maria had no children.

There was much else Marianne handed me. One is a long letter by my father to Erika written in 1936. The two cousins, it appears saw each other as soul mates when it came to admiration for the Third Reich. In the letter my father is effusive with praise for the 'new' Germany he experienced during his twelve months in 1935. He even suggests that Erika would do well to visit South West (Africa) to teach the German youth the true spirit of the HJ (Hitler Youth).

My hope to find Erika atoning lies shattered.

Maybe you wonder why it is that I am pursuing the above? – My response is that silence is close to complicity and is no option to deal with the past I am connected to, was educated into. Neither does silence or denial provide the remotest chance to re-build the bridge with the Other, those harmed by Nazi Germans. The theme of silence and denial goes beyond the German context and is deeply related to the silence and denial of White South Africans. My quest to draw out white South Africans who deny and justify continues. The path to

personal liberation involves honest admission or acknowledgment. When that happens, only then, is a pillar built toward the bridge that connects us to our fellow South Africans.

## THE EVENTS OF 1977 THAT IMPACTED ON THE WAY WE ARE.

BANNINGS A TURNING POINT

CAPE TIMES

19 OCT 2017.

# Year that changed SA's trajectory

Today, October 19, is the 40th anniversary of Black Wednesday, the banning of Black Consciousness Movement organisations, publications including the World newspaper, the SA Christian Institute and the detention of a number of journalists and activists. It followed within weeks of the killing in apartheid police detention of BCM leader Steve Biko on September 12, 1977. HORST KLEINSCHMIDT looks back at the time he worked for the Christian Institute's White Community Programme, collaborating closely with Biko, who worked for the Black Community Programme. They had been friends since their student days. Biko was planning a secret visit to Botswana to meet the ANC's Thabo Mbeki in early 1977, but was killed in detention before this plan could be executed. Cedric Mayson had been asked to 'spirit' Biko out and back into the country. The accompanying photo of Steve Biko has not been published previously.



EVENTS 40 years ago this week influenced the way we are today.

Apartheid power and violence was reaching its pinnacle, inflicting war on its own citizens and on neighbouring countries.

On October 19, 1977, a resurgent internal opposition, as had happened in 1960, was driven into the underground.

The white government, aided by the overwhelming majority of its white support, entrenched discrimination, repression and spread hate further to levels from which we as a society have not yet risen.

On that day known as Black Wednesday, the Black Consciousness (BC) organisations, the Soweto newspaper The World, and the Christian Institute of Southern Africa (CI), were banned, outlawed - and their assets confiscated. Among those banned, the CI was the only one of the organisations that had mainly white staff and membership.

Additionally the police detained countless BC leaders and minister of justice and police (Jimmy Kruger) banned personally - a form of house arrest - the leadership of the Christian Institute.

A month earlier, on September 12, the police tortured and killed Steve Biko, the acknowledged thinker and leader of the new resistance. His closest associates had been hounded for years.

Among them Maphela Mohapi was killed in detention in August 1976, and in April 1977 Maphela Ramphele was banned and banished - a form of internal exile. There were countless others.

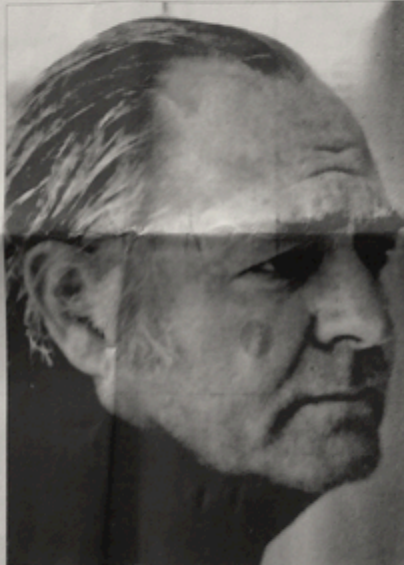
Apartheid was acting out its own eventual downfall. Growing waves of dissent made swathe of South Africa ungovernable despite the state's violent rule.

The exile movement, headed by the ANC, as well as international pressure, eventually forced Pretoria to its knees.

By the 1990s, this powerful mix, led by internal dissent, began to balance the military and money weight of the minority government. It was crucial time: negotiation led to democracy, the constitution and the rule of law we have today.



DIED A HERO: Martyr Steve Biko.



EXILE: Christian Institute leader Theo Kotze in Cape Town.



HEROIC: Christian Institute leader Beyers Naudé in Johannesburg.

The 1977 moment cannot be underestimated. The Christian Institute leaders, Beyers Naudé in Johannesburg and Theo Kotze in Cape Town, supported Biko and his movement and importantly took the BC message against white know-all and white lead all to heart.

The CI listened to black thinking and applauded black leadership. They shed the liberal dog-good and white knows-best history to provide solidarity with the poor and follow their leading voices. So the Christian Institute ran White Community

Programmes intended to challenge and change white society.

We published *White Liberation* in 1972, which was banned in 1973 when one of its authors, Rick Turner, was personally banned - only for an apartheid assassin to then kill him in 1978. Changing white attitudes proved difficult, a challenge not resolved to this day. The CI also co-sponsored the Black Community Programme, the base from which Steve Biko helped build the BC organisations.

Naudé and the Rev Cedric May-

son joined the underground, providing support, solidarity and building an all important bridge between the internal and external movement.

Kotze fled abroad to join the call for disinvestment and the isolation of South Africa.

Before going into exile Theo and Helen Kotze were targeted by security police who shot at them in their Bunderbosch home and petrol-bombed the CI offices in Mowbray and the Anglican Church hall in Bunderbosch where the CI had met.

His ministry to the men on Robben Island, including Robert Sobukwe, ended when warders discovered that prayer could also be the means to convey messages. The close bond between Kotze and Sobukwe lasted until the latter's death in 1981.

During his banning, Naudé confronted his deep belief in non-violence when an ANC MK soldier knocked on his back door in the dead of night, seeking medical help for his comrade injured in a shoot-out with police. He found a doctor

and an impromptu operation took place on the kitchen table, moved into the back yard so as to be distant from any listening devices in Beyers' and the home.

Mayson, also banned, would wear overalls and a crash helmet to distribute, on a motorcycle, cassette tapes of Oliver Tambo's January 8 speeches to designated addresses in Soweto. In possession of a pilot's licence and a borrowed light aircraft, he flew people, concealed as luggage, into exile in Botswana. For this he eventually suffered torture

and imprisonment.

Men and women of the Christian Institute lived and risked much for equality and a non-racial and non-sectarian South Africa. The journey to achieve this has to continue. Their contribution should be measured as an important counter to the racial hatred and mistrust that apartheid sowed. They may also be remembered for not seeking material reward. They had no truck with those who made money out of apartheid or those who became rich after overcoming apartheid.

Many of you all remember 40 years ago when even more darkness descended on South Africa. To recall the events (in brief) I wrote above article which appeared in the Cape Times, Pretoria News and



The Star. If the article is hard to read as newspaper copy, I attach it as pdf. I hope I have dealt with the subject fairly and relevant to today.

The photo's have to be credited to German Pastor Bärbel von Wartenburg. She provided important support to the Christian Institute in the 1970's and 1980's.

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## **HOMAGE TO A COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND - DULCIE SEPTEMBER.**

Below photo: International Defence and Aid Fund staff at an office Christmas party in the mid 1980's. From left: Dulcie September, Janet Love, Ramni Dinat-Naidoo, Zodwa Dabengwa and Barry Feinberg.



Dulcie left the organisation to become the ANC Chief Representative in Paris. In a new book, *Apartheid, Guns and Money – a tale of profit*, author Hennie van Vuuren and a team of researchers, cast new light on the unresolved assassination of Dulcie. Besides French collusion

with apartheid, irrespective whether Conservative or Socialist, the Apartheid military established a large European head quarters in Paris to purchase arms for the SADF despite the United Nations arms embargo. The book details the dirty tricks, the money laundering and the shady arms dealers. Dulcie was on to the secret deals and thus became a target.

I remember her as a vivacious, articulate, straight talking person. She was cut down in her prime by evil forces. This is a time to remember her.

The book can be purchased through South African publisher Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd. I urge you to read it.

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## **THE RE-OPENED INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF AHMED ESSOP TIMOL**

Many families are still haunted by relatives killed by police whilst held in solitary confinement. The Timol family attained some closure on the death of their relative by having the Inquest into Achmet's death re-opened. On 28 June 2017 I wrote below email to the Timol family.

Dear Imtiaz,

It is great that you have got this far with the much needed legal action. Painful as it may be, and painful as it will be.

This is the reason of my email:

The SB raided our flat in 1971, before we knew that Achmet was killed. The raid was connected to the Achmet arrest. I never met him nor did I know of him but he allegedly sent prohibited publications to me. I had just finished my term as NUSAS Vice President. My wife and I were living in a flat in Milnerton, Cape Town. The SB's found illegal literature. I was charged under the Suppression of Communism Act.. I argued that I could not help it if people sent me banned literature via the post. I told the judge I knew it was dangerous but I thought I needed to first look at it before I destroyed it. Judge King gave me the benefit of the doubt and let me go with a warning.

Then, in September 1975 I was detained under the Terrorism Act. I was working as Assistant to Beyers Naude at the Christian Institute at the time. From my house in Melville, Johannesburg I was first taken to John Vorster Square before being taken to Pretoria Central. At JVSquare I was taken to the

9th floor to Col. Coetzee's office. Then to Olivier. Then Spyker van Wyk and Col Gough and others took me to Pretoria where I spent the next 73 days in solitary confinement. Before departing they drove up to the Government petrol pumps at the back of JVSquare, to fill up. Spyker said: When Timol 'jumped' he fell on to one of the pumps and it was a mess.

I pass this on for what it worth. Maybe your lawyers see some value in this.

I regret adding to the pain you and your family feel.

Yours, Horst

## **Judgment handed down on 12th October 2017 in the Ahmed Timol review matter.**

.....The 1972 inquest into the death of AHMED ESSOP TIMOL ("*Timol*") was formally re-opened by the High Court on 26 June 2017, in terms of section 17A of the Inquests Act 58 of 1959 ("*the Act*"). The 1972 inquest was held following Timol's death in 1971. The purpose of re-opening the inquest is to investigate the circumstances leading to the death of Timol in 1971, in light of further evidence that has been uncovered.

.....Timol's death was brought about by an act of having being pushed from the 10<sup>th</sup> floor or roof of the John Vorster Square building to fall to the ground, such act having been committed through *dolus eventualis* as the form of intent and *prima facie* amounting to murder. There is *prima facie* evidence implicating Gloy and Van Niekerk who were on duty and interrogating Timol at the time he was pushed to fall to his death. Rodrigues, on his own version, participated in the cover up to conceal the crime of murder as an accessory after the fact, and went on to commit perjury by presenting contradictory evidence before the 1972 and 2017 inquests. He should accordingly be investigated with a view to his prosecution.

Read more by visiting:

<http://www.ahmedtimol.co.za/judgment-the-re-opened-inquest-into-the-death-of-ahmed-essop-timol>

## **New DNA evidence increases genetic time depth of modern humans.**

A valuable article appeared in the online publication *The Conversation*, Africa Edition, on 13 October 2017.

The analysis of ancient DNA is improving our knowledge of human history and our ancestry. Marlize Lombard explains the technique that has helped researchers recalculate when humans like us - Homo sapiens - first split or branched from pre-modern human groups.

“Tapping into ancient DNA can help us understand ancient humans’ movements and lives. Go to the website to read:

**[Ancient DNA increases the genetic time depth of modern humans](#)**

Archaeology is not only about stones and bones: it is mainly about the people of the past. DNA is one way to get from the stones and the bones to the people and their stories”.

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