Horst's 53rd Newsletter
August 2024

Greetings to you all,

As always, herewith comment on that which moved my head or my body. You can view below also on my website www.horstkleinschmidt.co.za. where the text is augmented with photos and images.

1. Stop Press: On 5 October 2024, nephew Otto |Uirab will ascend to the position of Kaptein/Chief of the Swartbooi Traditional Authority of the Kunene Region in Namibia! We will be in Fransfontein to celebrate - and we congratulate him!

To-be Kaptein Otto |Uirab with myself, visiting us in Cape Town late August, 2024.

2. Takeaways after a superb visit to the UK (and Spain) in July 2024.

Christine and I escaped the worst of Cape storms, worrying from a distance whether our friends, neighbours and our house was safe from downpours, ... and mudslides. At least one couple we know in Kalk Bay had to be evacuated when mud and rock came down the mountain that had only months ago, been damaged by a veld fire. All was well with-our home.

But nature took back in other ways too whilst we were away. Outside our back door a Cape Robin made her nest on top of upturned brooms. She shouts furiously if anyone comes near. Little Robins show their beaks. We have declared the area out of bounds.

And nature gave: We harvested at least 350 lemons from the sole lemon tree in our garden, after our return.

And, where I stored my Land Rover in Simon's Town, a baboon troop chose the front

screen of the car as a slide – muddy paws all over and a broken radio aerial was the evidence. As I turned the corner on collecting the car, there sat the troop, gorging themselves from an upturned waste bin; could have sworn one of them winked at me!

Whilst in Europe:

A wonderful five days with Leonie, now ensconced in a beautiful flat south of Valencia, Spain, a village called Penido.

Then we attended a wonderful Tamil Hindu wedding where my niece Alicja, married Jeevithan in a Temple in south London, conforming to music and writings in Sanskrit that goes back at least 5000 years. The whole event was beautiful, with positive and joyful rituals devoid of heaviness, controlling rules and darkness. The soles of my socks will never look the same after walking for a day on petals of flowers! A second day was spent at a lovely venue in Walthamstow Wetland – augmented by witty yet profound speeches.

I then paid a visit to Exeter University in the far south-west of England who assisted me with the large archive in our home. The first part of my digitized archive will shortly go 'live'. I'll let you know!

At Westminster Abbey I attended a celebration of 30 years of democracy in South Africa in the heart of ceremony and pomp as Britain knows best. Our new Foreign Minister, John Lamola spoke and affirmed his predecessors policy on Palestine!

Then a lunch with Actsa – the UK custodian of the UK AAM archive and the activism the movement led so successfully. I was pleased to establish a working relationship with them.

And then a very pleasurable reunion with my former IDAF staff organized by John and Ruth Hughes at their home in Brighton. Thank you! The oldest amongst us being Peggy Stevenson, now 90 and still with a twinkle in her eye. Separately I met up with my former PA, Afua Boaten, laughing and catching up with the times 40 years earlier.

Also spent time with my brother Immo in Brighton, with Christine's brother Paul in the far north Darlington and time with close friend, Anne Thomas, in Balham, south London. She afforded us accommodation between the hectic visits away from London.

I love London, just like I always did during my twelve years of exile in this bubbling, busy, 20mph (new speed limit), multi-cultural city. This despite the obvious and huge social contradictions. The richer parts are clean, parks (many of which I walked again for old-time's sake) are well kept and mostly public services function! As an aside, I observed a perverse love-affair of Britons with ultra-expensive German luxury and sports cars – cars I've never seen in SA (maybe I have not visited Clifton or Camps Bay in recent years). Dominant remains a conservative nothing-will-ever-change confidence, now perpetuated by the Labour Party, who returned to power on the day of our arrival.

We paid a lovely and extensive visit to Whitechapel Gallery to see and understand the art of South African artist, Gavin Jantjies. He deserves greater recognition in South Africa! The streets around Whitechapel display more starkly a clash between the glitz of young bankers in flashy suits and dresses on the way to midday functions, and beggars and street grime.

Not everything works: On returning from Spain we got to the airport in Alicante only to learn that our BA flight was cancelled; not an airline official in sight. Late in the evening we Ubered to the town centre, to find a hotel with a room to spare. We found one easily but outside the noise informed us that it was the great soccer match between Holland and England. Fans of both sides were having a great time cheering on their teams. We decided to join them – sided with the UK fans, whose language we understood.

And, when returning, late at night by train from Darlington on another trip, our train stopped on the outskirts of London because Kings Cross station was "congested" with trains. Ninety minutes later – close to midnight and everyone in irritable mood – we got to Kings Cross and then navigated our way back to South London. From BA and British (privatised) rail we await compensation – making such claims demands patience and the IT skills of people much, much younger than we are.

Returning home, despite a 10-hour (night) layover at Schiphol and hoping to sleep on airport seats and under glaring lights, we realised how much we needed this break.

And yet, always reminding ourselves what privileged lives we lead. Poverty and misery hit me upon returning. And knowing also that the country we visited contributes armaments to war zones without a conscience!

3.

In Newsletter 52 I commented on the impending South African elections. Here I delve into two elements about the way ahead following the elections.

First, we now have a GNU (Govt of National Unity) consisting of the ANC (who got only 40% of the vote, the DA with 21.8% and a number of small parties including the new 'Patriotic Alliance' that stands out for two things: so-called 'Coloured nationalism' led by a man who has served eight years in prison (not as a freedom fighter!).

The big wake-up call is this: Only 58.64% of eligible voters cast their vote. In 1994 the turn-out was nearly 90%. Nearly as many eligible voters did not vote than votes were cast for the ANC and DA together. This must ring alarm bells!

I thought the GNU would move slowly if at all but instead early indications are that Ministers from the different parties are trying to outdo each other by acting on things that were on hold, or dismally failed, for many years. I think history will bear out the need for a re-affirmation across colour and class divide, thirty years post-Apartheid,

now known as the GNU. 1994 was not a sudden watershed but a process that still needs nurturing. We also need reminding that our transition and democracy was negotiated and not a victory of one over the other! – Unpalatable as this is to some to this day.

But the old still hangs round our necks and the new still needs to be imagined with boldness and vigor but also care and patience. The GNU, as I see it is an overdue class alignment between the old rich (White DA) and the new rich (Black ANC). The two sides have been in a *toenadering* for years with liberal capitalism as their philosophy, - but old allegiances die hard. Their proximity in one (very bloated) cabinet will get us to see our ruling class embrace and unite beyond the old, now artificial, colour separation. Such alignment should help those excluded from the pie, at last, to get together and articulate how we unite and build a new progressive movement and voice against the upper crust, busy entrenching themselves ever more!

Both the DA and the ANC have right-wing and reactionary forces within them. The old White racists are still exercising influence and a yearning for the past they once ruled over. And a unreconstructed and nationalist wing of the ANC still yearn to shout victory over White apartheid outside of democratic parameters. Hard as it is, they just cannot accept that we have what we have, unjust as it is, a negotiated settlement and not the military victory the ANC promised until 1990 (at least in its utterances to it supporters).

Although the EFF and the newly-formed MK party, have absorbed a chunk of the nationalistic and sectarian elements within the ANC, there remains a rump within the ANC, as I see it, who pull the ANC in a direction counter to that of the President et al. The DA is weighed down by a similar problem – old fashioned racist thinking versus the likes of the Premier of the Western Cape or the Mayor of Cape Town. (Note that the Freedom Front Plus voters voted for the DA in this past election.)

Do not imagine for one moment that the DA is a model province when it comes to service delivery, in the Western Cape. The delivery to poor people is as abject as it is in the rest of the country; spatial apartheid persists, and NIMBY remains the Grundsatz of white DA voters. Poor people still pay overly high amounts to get to work when compared to the spacial residing in most other countries. Cape Town City owns vast pockets of land in and near the City or its industrial centers. The appetite to integrate class remains elusive. I listened to Roelf Meyer and banking chiefs recently and they contentedly took the view that an *Arab Spring* will not happen in SA, despite the continuous service delivery protests in SA's townships. The reason? 'Fortunately' our excluded people don't live in the heart of our cities denying them the bargaining advantage one can witness elsewhere. Shyly, big business thanks Apartheid and concluded that 'SA can be expected to muddle on for the next ten years with no threat of revolution – and enough scope to make undue profits'.

So, where are we going? I'd expect this GNU to probably come apart, forcing a new national election in two years' time.

But where to? Can we build a progressive, inclusive movement that inspires also those who did not vote?

We are the most unequal country in the world! And it gets worse by the day! The steep social pyramid that is us, is our society, is going to break! Poverty, hunger, dysfunction, alienation, anger, distrust, denial of services and dignity make us a cruel, careless, self-satisfied and hypocritical class having it good for as long as it lasts. The display of glitz and riches at the top knows no end. We are set to fail if structural inequality is not spoken about, political education does not take place and a progressive view asserts itself to counter the current by-product of the super-rich: the EFF/MKP/PA who fan nationalisms cum fascism, parading as socialists on the side of the poor. We cannot allow the disaffected class to be delivered to such right-wing politics as is currently happening. It happens here, in the USA, and elsewhere.

Not a single political party, old and new-comers, in the recent election had wording or a plan beyond the trite phrases of 'attract more investment' and 'growth über alles' and hence dance to the tune of foreign investors. We need to flatten the rich-poor divide. That, of necessity demands that the rich need to give. To date they have given (up) nothing. Wealth tax, anti-monopoly legislation, Mitbestimmung legislation and much more needs airing. As an example we are the country where more people buy their food from a handful of Supermarket chains than in most other countries – they, as an example, stunt small entrepreneurship.

And we need quality education! Teachers need motivation and new skills and society, from the Presidency down, need to put schools, learners and teachers at the top of our agenda's. The quality within our systems does not, right now, make us become a nation of equals amongst nations. We may be training a competent (and avaricious) elite but we need to train all, such that we can run our harbors competently, increase rather than decrease our manufacturing output, beneficiate our minerals, etc. etc.

When will the rich struggle history we have, imbued with progressive intellectual thought, get together, broker historic differences and organize?

The link to below article appeared in GroundUp recently. It concerns the impact of Steve Biko and Rick Turner during the late 60s and the 70s. I see myself as hugely influenced by them.

https://theconversation.com/rick-turner-and-steve-biko-were-leading-liberation-thinkers-in-1970s-south-africa-why-their-ideas-still-matter-237058?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20August%2029%202024%20-%203080131400&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20August%2029%202024%20-%203080131400+CID_e502a5155072066e17c84df9823dc4c8&utm_source=campaign_monitor_africa&utm_term=Rick%20Turner%20and%20Steve%20Biko%20were%20leading%20liberation%20thinkers%20in%201970s%20South%20Africa%20%20why%20their%20ideas%20still%20matter