

## 25 Years On

THE 25th anniversary of apartheid strongman PW Botha's declaration of a national state of emergency went by largely unnoticed on Sunday, June 12.

For ordinary South Africans, now living in a free and democratic country, we have moved on.

Our concerns are more current, relating to poverty, unemployment, crime, corruption, the cost of living, decent health care, education and so on.

But for many, including in the government, we appear to have forgotten where we've come from and the costly price paid to get here. Some more than others.

Perhaps that is why it is so easy to abuse this freedom. With the soccer World Cup now more than a year old, the nation-building project is again on the back-burner.

People still talk and think of "them" and "us". Reconciliation is something for others. We continue to live in our silos, fearful and distrustful, allowing the Johnny-come-latelies or the Julius Malemas and the Steve Hofmeyrs to whip up our prejudices.

Which was why The Mercury's three-part package on the Magoo's bombing, marking the 25-year anniversary of the Durban beachfront blast on June 14, was a case of going where angels fear to tread.

There would be those who would accuse us of only seeking to open old wounds. Others would accuse us of only bothering to report on the infamous attack, because three white women were killed.

For The Mercury it was something much more. As a South African newspaper, committed to the health of our nation, it was an attempt to reflect and understand, so that we could progress. We are indeed concerned about the deepening of the divide among us and the retreat to the "own affairs" mentality of old.

As Durban academic, Crispin Hempson, wrote on Friday in his excellent opinion article: "... We need new ways of addressing the memories of the past – not exhortation, nor the simple slogans of 'simunye', but acts of imagination that start with a recognition of the losses taken.

"Memories can keep tugging us back to the past, distracting us from the tasks at hand. Approached with imagination, they can build hope and release energy."

We hope we played a small role in "opening new ways of recognition and understanding".



You & Me  
 By Rod Smith

Q: "My SON and his wife are in a constant battle with his ex-wife and her family. They want the grandchildren ALL the time and seem to never think of their new family as really part of the children.

"I hardly know my grandchildren but I would rather than step into the middle of the battle for time with the children.

"Should I be working harder to get to know these children so they will know me one day or should I just let things be as they are for now?"

A: If there are already tensions regarding who the children ought to know and visit then I would suggest you follow your intuition which seems to suggest you remain out of the tug-of-war.

Children will readily pick up on the stresses and tensions surrounding them and will ultimately use it to their benefit – and not necessarily to the benefit of the adults who are at present using them as bargaining chips.

□ Rod Smith is a family therapist who lives in the US. E-mail questions to Rod@DifficultRelationships.com

# New leader will not be able to reform IMF



By Imraan Buccus

Global south must unite to take control of their economies and throw off the shackles of international organisations

THE excitement in some sections of the media and civil society about the rumours that Trevor Manuel was being considered to be the first head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) from outside Europe was seriously misplaced.

For a start the only reason why Manuel's name was bandied about in the first place is because he was central to the voluntary imposition of our own structural adjustment programme, GEAR, which left us in the disastrous position of being the most unequal society in the world.

In other words Manuel's name was acceptable only because he would not have been a threat to the interests that control the IMF.

And anyone who dreams that the IMF could be re-

formed from above is clearly living on another planet.

The IMF is, together with the World Bank, the UN Security Council, the US military, the big Western donors and the global civil society organisations that they support, like Shack Dwellers International, a key institution of contemporary imperialism.

Global governance is far from being a multi-lateral affair: The West rules the rest. Where necessary it does so via coercion through organisations like the World Bank and the IMF and with violence through various military forces. Where possible it does so via co-option through its donors and civil society projects.

There are good reasons why our neo-colonial world has often been characterised as global apartheid.

There is simply no way

that major Western powers would allow the IMF to be reformed from above.

The only way in which its iron control over the economies of so many countries in the global South, and now Greece too, will be broken is when states in the global South unite against domination. And this can only happen when they are buoyed by popular movements from below.

### Struggle

If we want to break the control of the IMF over the global economy, the first step is to go to the streets and build real popular movements. Lobbying for the "right" leader will only help if it comes on the back of a major mass struggle for economic independence.

Between them, the IMF

and the World Bank have ruined the lives of millions and set many countries back generations.

Their prescriptions are always to the advantage of international capital, and especially finance capital, and never to the advantage of local firms, let alone local people.

Under their control the poor have got poorer around the world – both within and between countries.

It's only in those countries, such as Venezuela, where governments have adopted a critical distance to these organisations, that real economy progress is possible.

Some years ago there was a big debate in the global justice movement, a network of progressive NGOs, about whether or not the IMF should be "fixed" or "nixed".

The consensus was clear:

These are institutions of imperialism that cannot be fixed. They need to be replaced with democratic and genuinely multinational institutions.

The most effective way to refuse their authority and to take a principled decision to default on their loans.

We need to concretise our attempts at uniting the countries of Africa on a new platform and pushing for African solutions to African problems.

We must lay the ground for a new sense of common purpose that could, possibly, lay some sort of foundation for an eventual strengthening of the position of African states in the world system.

It would be dangerous for all sense of the realities of global real politik to be lost. Africa cannot career

blindly around the world stage with no sense of strategic purpose.

It is only in Latin America where there are serious attempts to push the IMF and the World Bank and to develop some real economic autonomy.

The revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East are not yet concluded but early signs seem to indicate that they are more about deposing Western-backed dictators than taking economic independence seriously. But there is no need for too much pessimism.

A democratic opening could well, in due course, open the space for a Latin American-style challenge to economic imperialism.

● Imraan Buccus is attached to the School of Politics at UKZN.

## Saving The Young

IMMUNISATION has changed the world. It has saved more lives than pretty much any other public-health programme in modern history. Mass killers such as smallpox have been eradicated. Others such as polio are close to extinction. Some 80 percent of children in the world are vaccinated. But tens of millions on our planet have still not been reached by the immunisation revolution.

Preventable diseases are still responsible for about 1 million child deaths a year in the developing world. The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (Gavi) aims to close that lethal gap. Gavi, an umbrella organisation comprising charities and multilateral relief agencies, has immunised 288 million children over the past decade.

But are Gavi's methods cost effective? Médecins Sans Frontières has argued that the prices charged by pharmaceutical companies are still too high and that Gavi should be driving a tougher bargain. It is a legitimate debate. Any money saved in this way can be used to distribute more vaccines. Governments have a responsibility not only to donate to Gavi but also to press it to be as efficient as possible.

E-mail merletter@inl.co.za, fax 031 308 2715, or post letters to: The Editor, PO Box 47549, Greyville 4023. Letters must carry the author's signature, name and address.

## forum

E-mailed letters should also include a physical address and telephone number. The editor reserves the right to edit or shorten letters. Letters with pseudonyms will only be published in exceptional circumstances.

## Why are they more important than us?

TRANSPORT MEC Willie Mchunu is quoted as saying that other road users must give way to cars with flashing blue lights "Give way to blue lights to avoid road rage" (The Mercury, June 10).

I would like to know why. Common sense dictates that way is given to emergency vehicles such as ambulances, fire trucks and marked police-vehicles.

Why should other road users give way to some puffed

up, self-important politician or other, who once again is late for another appointment or thinks that they are so important that all must make way for them?

The National Road Traffic Act applies to all, and this includes the new elite.

I look forward to an explanation from the MEC.

Gillitts R DAVIE

## Information errors make disconnection a riddle

ONCE again I have received a letter from the deputy city manager, together with my consolidated municipal account.

It asks for a customer information verification and ends with a threat that non-compliance may result in services being disconnected.

That would be very interesting. I wonder which services they would disconnect?

a) At the wrong address that I have repeatedly corrected as requested;

b) At one of my other addresses;

c) At someone else's address;

d) None of the above?

I have dutifully submitted the required information, by telefax, on more than one occasion, also last year and have even spoken to a real person (called Moses) at the RIA customer services centre, but to no avail.

Colleagues, unsurprisingly without exception, also have information errors on their municipal bills. How is eThekweni municipality actually being run?

DEVLYN FRASER  
 Umkomaas

## Incomplete job just creates more work

I WAS encouraged by the sight of teams of workers cleaning verges in Attercliff Road, Kings Avenue and Broadway in Westville on June 6. As they did that they left little piles of accumulated rubbish lying on the side of the road.

However, what was not good

to see is that these piles of rubbish were left at the roadside, only to be scattered by the wind, washed away by the rain.

A few days later, a lot of the piles had been washed towards the drains as a result of the downpour, and would probably

contribute towards blocking the drains. Wouldn't it be great if those in charge of municipal services would ensure the work that has been started is completed properly?

H W BERNHARDT  
 Westville

## Municipality must explain its actions

I AGREE wholeheartedly with letter-writer W Strickland's sentiments on the destruction of Zukiswa Young's nearly completed home by the municipality; a criminal, heartless action that brings to nothing her savings and work

for her family's future (The Mercury, June 8).

We would all do well to remember Robert Mugabe's awful actions against his own people in his so-called "Clean up the Trash" campaign.

Harare residents in some

areas were forced to tear down decent homes they had built themselves.

A public explanation is called for:

WENDY ERASMUS  
 Kloof

## POLICE MANAGEMENT KNOWS HOW TO WASTE

I AM disgusted that the police hierarchy can spend R36 million on a single day of "celebration" (The Mercury, June 13).

In what draconian, dictatorial banana republic are we living that this amount of money can be literally burnt for a fun day?

It sickens me that they spent that amount yet there are SAPS vehicles that need

urgent repair and are without working radios; police stations also need upgrading – never mind the pathetic take-home salaries of the lower ranks.

Should you therefore be surprised that the average policeman is bitter and demotivated?

Dare you walk in his shoes with his salary for just one month and refuse bribes

or any other income besides the one he gets from the government?

Are the police management really insane enough to believe that that amount of money was best used? Could they find no other need more urgent than printed water bottles and lunch packs?

On that subject, I know that all the police who were

sent to the function got paid a travel allowance anyway. So then, the food budget was actually more than double, if you add the two together.

I am horrified at what has transpired.

There should be an investigation into who signed off the budget and they should be held accountable as this can never

be justified. How can a couple of pieces of chicken and an energy bar cost R85? I can have a full meal at the Spur for less!

We can never get that money back. What we need to do is to give moral support to the policemen and women on the ground who have to work under these conditions.

POLICEMAN

## To compete we must look the part

I FLEW out of King Shaka International Airport on Emirates recently and what an embarrassment the international section is.

Passengers wanting to have a relaxing beverage or two before the flight, or purchase a souvenir or reading material, should do so before going through customs and "irritation", utilising the many options available in the domestic area.

If we are wanting to attract other international carriers as well as compete with Cape Town, it might be an idea to look the part.

PETER JOHNSON  
 eMdloti Beach

## Don't save the best for last

WOULD someone please tell the Sharks when they come out on Saturday to play the first 15 minutes the way they normally play the last 15 minutes instead of coming out like they have never met each other before and don't know why they are there!

DAVE DUMBLETON  
 Durban

## Increased deposit makes electricity bill too high

IECHO recent letters about late accounts. eThekweni is quick to send out letters for raised deposits and disconnection notices. The service and attitude leave a lot to be desired.

For the past three months I received a letter of increased deposit within a day or two of the monthly account arriving, advising that our deposit is being raised as we are using more electricity than usual and the deposit is insufficient for the increase.

I have a family of four and we have been living on the same property for the past eight

years. The first increase in deposit was R533, the following month another R1 032 then again this month R532. How can this be justified?

This is billed automatically and added to the following month's electricity bill whether you approve or not, which pushes our electricity and water portion over R4 000 a month. That is astronomical.

I cannot afford it and trying to sort it out with them is impossible. The attitude is pay it or the power will be cut off.

CYNTHIA FREER  
 Westville