

THE MERCURY
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Recall Malema

CONGRATULATIONS to the police for keeping the peace in a racially charged Ventersdorp yesterday. By all accounts the situation became rather tense outside court, with battle lines drawn after black and white South Africans taunted each other.

Well done, too, to the AWB leaders who were prepared to retract earlier inflammatory talk of revenge and managed to control their supporters so that things did not get out of hand. And bravo to those in the crowd who refused to be baited by the racist slogans and symbols of apartheid South Africa, including the old flag and the singing of *Die Stem*.

The situation could have spiralled out of control after a white woman threw her cooldrink at a group of black people singing *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* and scuffles broke out.

Police were quick to restore order, with razor wire rolled out to keep the two groups apart. The rule of law was allowed to take its course inside the court, with the accused formally charged with the murder of AWB leader Eugene Terre'Blanche. In the end there was no violence or bloodshed, as feared in some quarters, and South Africa passed yet another test.

The ANC, meanwhile, needs to show true leadership and pass its own test. In September 2008, its national executive committee took a decision to recall then-president Thabo Mbeki. It said in a statement that the decision was not taken lightly, "but it had to be taken in the interests of making the country move forward".

"The country needs a strong and united ruling party at the helm of government, capable of galvanising support for the government's development agenda. As the ruling party, we need to sustain the confidence of our people in the ANC and its government. Once this level of confidence is weakened, the ANC has no alternative but to take action."

In a similar vein, there can be no doubt that Julius Malema has been allowed to become a divisive, ill-disciplined and dangerous factor, not only within the alliance, but the country as a whole.

The ANC has repeatedly stated that no individual is bigger than the party. So today we say, prove it. Recall Malema - it's in the national interest.

War Criminals

WHATEVER the controversies over abuses of the asylum system, most people in Britain are proud of their country's record in offering sanctuary to those fleeing oppression. They would be horrified to learn that not only is the case for asylum by some flimsy, but others are mass murderers.

This is the claim put forward by the Aegis Trust, which campaigns against genocide, and which says Britain's failure to properly enforce legislation on war criminals has made it a haven for war crimes suspects.

Britain once had a specific war crimes unit at Scotland Yard, but it was confined to crimes committed in World War II and it was disbanded in the 1990s.

But the government has not been totally inactive. In 2004, the UK Border Agency was charged with screening entrants and identifying war crime suspects, and hundreds of suspects have been refused refugee status. But the agency cannot initiate prosecutions against suspects already in the country, and, despite having handed over more than 50 names to the police, none has been prosecuted. The explanation was that legal loopholes made it impossible to prosecute war crimes suspects for acts committed outside this country before 2001, while students and asylum-seekers could not be prosecuted at all.

The government has now closed this loophole, but the law is still vague. This reflects a lack of political will. War criminals are seen as an embarrassment, not a threat. It is time the legal loopholes that render such people immune to prosecution are closed. - The Independent



You & Me
ROD SMITH

Q: I WISH you would address the fact that men can also be abused by their wives. I have two brothers who are in problematic marriages and to see their spirits diminished to nothing is heart-breaking.

Their wives manipulate them and their children, shower them with guilt, forbid them to see their families and feign illnesses while my brothers slave away to care for them.

Please remember, it is not only women who suffer abuse. They often perpetrate it themselves and even direct it at other women.

A: Thanks for the reminder. Of course you are correct. I have counselled many women and only a handful of men who have been victims of the abuses you mention - and thus, I believe, my focus should be on women.

It remains true though that, as difficult as it is, all victims have to reach a point of taking a stand, of finding a smidgen of internal strength to begin the process of ending the vicious cycle.

I certainly do not want to blame your brothers or any victim for being victimised, but a perpetrator is unlikely to reach any point of insight while the abusive behaviour is rewarded.

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

The ANC's chickens are coming home to roost

The media's focus on the so-called Zunami of corrupt leadership could be effective in helping to bring about a popular backlash

HISTORY is a brutal judge. All those who saw in Jacob Zuma a welcome shift away from Thabo Mbeki's mixture of nationalist paranoia and technocratic anti-politics now have to confront the reality that all is not well in South Africa's political life.

Some are starting to question whether we are nearing a collapse into political disaster. My sense is that people of all races are losing confidence and there does not seem to be a positive vision for the country.

The left in the alliance may hold cabinet portfolios but they have been deeply compromised by their own complicity with the descent into a culture of nepotism-fuelled bling. Anyway, they have no positive gain, nothing at all, to show for their positions in cabinet.

The only people in the ANC who are putting forward any vision are precisely those who scorn the constitution and openly celebrate the culture of bling and corruption.

Julius Malema was always a disgrace to the traditions of the ANC. But after the press exposed the sources of his wealth he turned to hate speech and an open embrace with the dictatorship in Harare to try to racialise what should be a straightforward issue of corruption.

Any political scientist will tell you that the logical

conclusion of this sort of politics, should it be allowed to proceed unopposed, is Zanu-PF with the goons from its youth militia enforcing consent for elite plunder.

Zanu-PF have destroyed political freedom in Zimbabwe and left most Zimbabweans destitute. Millions have fled the country. Yet the party elites have prospered as never before. If anyone doubted the degree to which we are coming to ignore the rule of law in South Africa they only have to look at the ongoing Menzi Simelane debacle.

This fact, read together with the ANC Youth League's outright intimidation of the press, leaves no rational observer able to draw any other conclusion than that we are heading away from a politics of principle and into a politics of brute force.

Of course not everyone in the ANC is part of the extreme degeneration of the party that Malema has come to symbolise.

There are many people who remain committed to principle and to probity. For instance, Pravin Gordhan, a man who we know from his time at the South African Revenue Service to be possessed with an unshakable integrity, is just one example.



IMRAAN BUCCUS

Gordhan has held the line against Malema's demand for more millions to feed the patronage networks of the ANC Youth League via the Youth Development Agency.

But we do not see Zuma leading from the front to support people like Gordhan.

Instead he tiptoes around Malema.

What is happening is that the ANC's chickens are coming home to roost. A party that builds its organisation around networks of patronage is simply unable to take an effective position against the politics of patronage.

Already Malema's attempts to distract public attention from the scandal around his tenders has seriously damaged social cohesion in the country.

The return to a song that celebrates racial violence and Malema's hate speech has produced nothing but fear and a growing counter-hatred.

Steve Hofmeyr's response to Malema, meanwhile, was nothing but racism of the most stupid and ugly kind.

The response to the murder of Eugene Terre'Blanche, by those among the late fascists' supporters who have threatened to take revenge, has escalated the spiral into an ever more debased public discourse.

Zuma has proved entirely incapable of rising to the occasion with wisdom and real statesmanship.

The left in the ANC appears too compromised to seize the moment and make a real break from a party spiralling into ever further depths of political degeneration.

The DA is deeply compromised by its seeming inability to deracialise its leadership. Cope has made a massive tactical blunder by not holding an elective conference and the other parties are largely irrelevant.

Many NGO-based civil society formations simply don't have the wherewithal to face up to the political realities of the new situation and have continued to play yesterday's games.

spirit of democracy as the Zunami has crashed and broken down on society has been the media.

The media has resisted spin and intimidation to catalogue the slide into systemic corruption, an abandonment of the rule of law and hate speech in gruesome detail.

Most South Africans are fundamentally decent people. Most South Africans want their country to prosper and their society to work.

If the media can keep up their scrutiny of the ruling elite, the government will confront a popular backlash that has more chance than any other force of restoring basic decency to our polity.

People like Malema are now so isolated from reality that they are making a fundamental miscalculation in taking the people for granted.

The hundreds who protested outside the court in Soweto where Jub Jub appeared after driving into a group of school children, allegedly while racing and high on cocaine, will not forget that Malema and Menzi Simelane took Jub Jub's side and not theirs.

If the media keep the light on the elites, the people will not allow this degeneration to continue.

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BALANCE OF POWER IS SHOCKING IN SA

THE LEVEL of corruption among politicians has reached alarming and extraordinary levels, worse than at the height of white political domination (and it was pretty bad then).

Now we are faced with a situation where the ANC, once, in the words of Thabo Mbeki, a party of "noble character", has been presented with a 25 percent

stake in Hitachi in South Africa and has, through its influence on tendering procedures, ensured that Hitachi is awarded a multibillion-dollar contract to construct a major power station.

The country needs the electricity, whether coal-fired or nuclear, and we need Eskom to get the cash to fund it.

This week, as this ordinary, powerless South African citizen understands it, the World Bank will decide whether or not to advance a loan of \$3.75 billion to fund Hitachi's contract... awarded despite our so-called public protector having found that there was a clear conflict of interest when the ANC Eskom board member, Valli Moosa, failed to recuse himself from

the decision-making process which resulted in the tender going to Hitachi.

It is vitally important that the bank abides by its own, hopefully sacred, protocols whereby it does not fund political parties anywhere in the world.

A corrupt ANC has become a threat to our democracy and must, at all costs, be stopped from participating in World

Bank munificence.

To this end it must get rid of its stake in Hitachi.

And the tendering procedure must be reopened, free of conflict of interest, to allow fairer competition and a wider choice of supplier and mode of generating power.

CHRIS DODDSON

Lidgerton

Now let the war on crime commence!

AT THE stroke of a pen, police chief Bheki Cele has anointed himself a general and replaced nearly all police ranks with military ranks.

Left, without any logical reason, is the policeman at the bottom of the pile who

seemingly retains the old nomenclature of constable.

To any self-respecting constable this should be deemed as offensive. He should immediately be redeployed to the rank of rifleman.

This would entitle him to be

trained as a marksman and the talented few attaining "Sniper's Stripes."

Let the war on crime commence.

PETER QUANTRILL

Kloof

Rajab gets it right: we need more teaching of trades

DEVI Rajab's column (The Mercury, April 6) hits the nail on the head, as usual. Some years ago, as a member of Rotary, I visited a vocational training school in

Inanda where an ex-naval petty officer was teaching a host of trades which would enable students to get employment. Rajab is right: this is what we need more of, not technical

universities "where students seem more interested in striking".

CPD OGILVY

Durban

What purpose do war ditties serve in our country's inflamed post-struggle climate?

IN A SENSE, here in South Africa, we live in a "post-war" period. The ANC won the Struggle, but are they now losing the peace?

Is their support of songs like *Shoot the Boer* and *Bring me my machine gun* a constructive route to take in building our troubled young democracy?

Is it really just about conserving sentimental or cultural links to Struggle

heroes, and protecting rights to free speech (and song), or does it emanate from more sinister shadows? Does it fan fear and anxiety, or pour healing salve on our wounds?

What purposes do war ditties serve? Depending on their tone, they can extend from the boosting of national pride and morale, and so can serve as a call to arms, through bashing of the enemy, or they can

provide comic relief, or sentimental reverie, catharsis for jangled nerves.

A sample of songs from World War II ranges from the inspirational: *We Did It Before* and *We Can Do It Again* to a jocular wish about *Hanging Der Fuehrer from a Sour Apple Tree*.

Within 24 hours of the bombing of Pearl Harbour, more than 1 000 tunes

developed on the streets of the US, among them: *When the Little Yellow Bellies meet the Cohens and the Kelleys*. The latter sung by Americans today would hardly be useful incentive to boost trade relations between the two countries, nor would: *To be Specific, It's our Pacific!*

Less offensive to international relations, perhaps, is the lyric of inflamed

Axis bashers: *Put the Heat on Hitler, Muss up Mussolini and Tie a Can to Japan*, with its more comic undertone.

A mean streak which continues to disparage former enemies in unflinching ways raises other issues more deep-seated than trade and commerce. It has one asking about "war ditties": "When is their usefulness over?" As someone pragmatically

pointed out, the very "Boers" whose assassination the masses are remembering in song are the descendants and kin of many we want to welcome to our shores for the World Cup, hardly a warm invitation.

During 1914-1918, a soldier/writer of war lyrics concluded, before his death in battle, "The Empire is kept going by character, not by shouting".

Democracy is furthered by the Mandelas, not by the Malemas of this world.

We silent citizens rely on our Constitutional Court. May it balance issues of freedom of speech with responsibilities, taking due cognisance of our currently inflamed post-struggle context.

Durban DESI HALSE

I AM not, nor have I ever been, a fan of Eugene Terre'Blanche, but I am sure I am not the only one to be disgusted by the cartoon (The Mercury April 6).

An elderly man was beaten to death by what can only be described as two thugs, but apparently you seem to think it a cause for laughter. You should hang your head for shame.

Durban BRIAN P KENNEDY