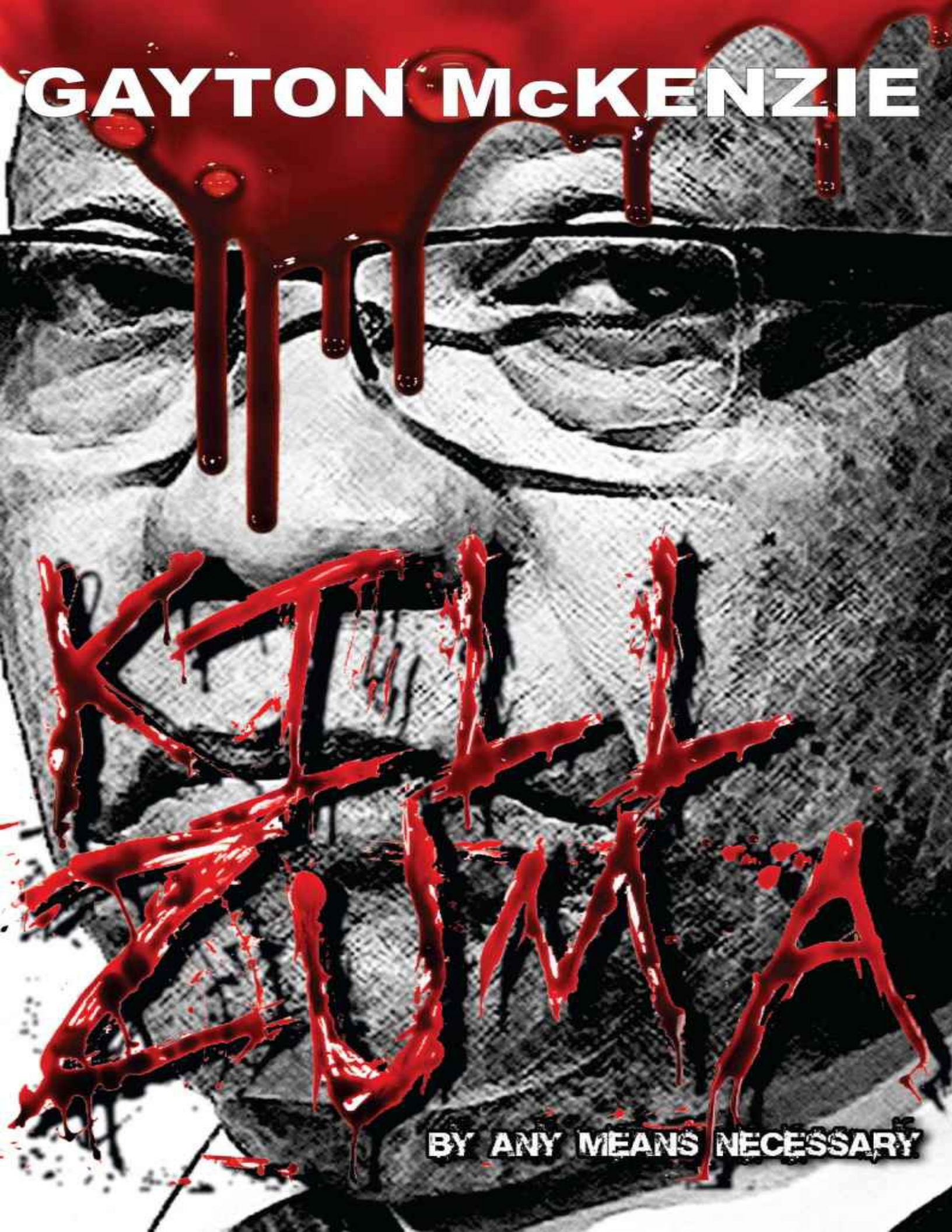




**GAYTON MCKENZIE**

**KILLMAN**

**BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY**

**Kill Zuma By Any Means  
Necessary**

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**Kill Zuma By Any Means  
Necessary**

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# **Dedication**

To all the Umkhonto weSizwe soldiers who were  
sent to their deaths by enemy agents.

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Dear black people

## **Author's foreword**

This is a book many people may not understand at first glance. When I first uploaded the cover to Twitter, I was inundated with messages from people wondering if I was advocating for the murder of our nation's president.

Obviously, that has been the last thing on my mind.

But once you realise this is a book about why and how various agencies and the interests they represent have identified Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma as their enemy, it will open your eyes to some of the deepest truths about South Africa that you have probably never thought about.

These truths are jarring, and capable of overturning all the casual, everyday assumptions that we as South Africans have come to take for granted.

Among those assumptions is the general acceptance we now live with that our biggest problem is Jacob Zuma. Many academics, a small handful of analysts and other commentators have tried to point out that the removal of Zuma will not do much to change the underlying malaise and structural malformation of our society, but nevertheless we have become fixated on the idea that South Africa can only begin to sort out its challenges once it has a president who isn't Jacob Zuma.

While I was writing this book, the ANC's elective conference was mere weeks away, and as I write these words now, that conference is less than one week away. The chances are therefore high that, as you read these words, you have the benefit of knowing whether Cyril Ramaphosa managed to succeed Jacob Zuma as the next president of the African National Congress (ANC) in December 2017, or if he was thwarted in his ambition for power by the first female president in the ANC's history, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.

My friends tried to advise me not to rush this book, to rather wait until after the ANC's elective conference. That way I could decide if I really wanted to take the risk of saying what I am saying in these pages and to spend more time reflecting on whether I wanted to say it at all or in this way.

But the more I thought about it, the more I concluded that the ANC and, by extension, South Africa, would be making a historic mistake of epic proportions if it entrusted our future to Cyril Ramaphosa, the very man who has been so carefully presented to us as "Mr Fix-It" and the champion of the anti-corruption crusade.

Whatever happens with the ANC's decision, I have accepted there's not much I can do to influence it, but I don't want to be among those fingered for blame later when the time to account arrives and I'll have to admit: "I knew, I just didn't say anything." So this is my way of going on the record and saying it outright: Cyril will be the worst thing that could happen to this country, particularly for black people, but perhaps in the long-term view even more so for the white population, who may well be wondering if he is their saviour to come and rescue them from the "Zuma mess".

Events may conspire to make a fool of me, but I think the ANC will once again confound the privately owned media in our country and pick Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, with her bold commitment to radical economic transformation. Even so, Cyril will then know he will just have to wait for another five years for yet another chance – so there's no time like the present to have this book available.

I don't have a crystal ball, and I don't need to in order to feel confident to reveal what is revealed in this book. Whatever the outcome may be this week, the contents of this book go far beyond who will be our next president. They go to the very heart of what the new South Africa means, and what we understand as the balance of power in this country.

For the record, I do admire and respect Jacob Zuma. I am not ashamed to declare that, despite knowing only too well that such a view must seem wildly out of sync with the mood of the times and the prevailing "popular opinion" (however that is determined in this diverse and stratified country of ours).

As you will see in this book, that does not mean I think he's perfect and that he hasn't made or been party to some serious mistakes.

But Jacob Zuma never sold out the struggle. He never sold out the ANC. He has remained true to his lifelong loyalty for a party that has been everything to him – more than family, more than friendship, more than the value of his own life alone. Because to Jacob Zuma, the ANC has been all these things and far more.

That is already the departure point between us. I left the ANC in 2013 because I could see that it had abandoned people who were struggling with drugs and crime, so I started my own party, the Patriotic Alliance, to highlight the agenda of fixing the culture of gangsterism in our communities.

I have a great passion for this party, and can never return to the ANC, even though it was always my political home and forged me in its liberation politics.

The story of this book must begin with the simple fact that I went to prison shortly after apartheid officially ended and Nelson Mandela became the first black president, and I came out several years later. While I was in prison, I could see the effects of the new government and the changes the political transition was bringing. I'd already been in and out of jail during apartheid, so the first and most obvious big change was that whites and blacks were now being imprisoned together. But there was also a gradual improvement in human rights for black prisoners: the diet improved, the mattresses got a little thicker, the hot water a little hotter.

So when I was released in 2003 I expected to see a lot more development for black people than I found. The malls were much shinier than before, the cars more fancy. But for poor black people, little had changed. That's still the case today.

When I was in prison, I'd had a complete change of heart when a teenaged white boy was gang raped inside the same cell I was sharing with 40 other guys. Half of those men raped that boy.

Those who read my first book would know that such things were common in

prison and I'd had no intention of helping the victim, who had been placed in that cell by corrupt warders who had been offered a bribe to do it. But the next morning, as I was about to step over that teenager, he looked at me, asked me for help and called me "Sir".

That stopped me dead in my tracks and, from that time on, my life has never been the same. My vow to expose the corruption in prison from then on changed everything about me. To this day, I remain a different man from the one who had been capable of armed robbery, other crimes and a comfortable life behind bars. I needed something to shake me out of my complacency and my unreflective racism. Because what had happened to me after years of imprisonment was something that happens to most of us over time. I'd grown institutionalised.

I look back on that now and realise that I had become so used to being a prisoner and thinking of myself as a criminal that I hadn't even bothered to continue with my appeal hearing. I had just abandoned it along with any real ambition to ever again live a normal life. I no longer cared whether I was in jail or outside of this very same maximum-security prison in Bloemfontein that I had been so appalled at first being sentenced to for some of the best years of my young life.

That young man who called me "Sir" made me question all my assumptions. I could no longer simply believe that all white people were born racists and that I was right for hating them. I could no longer accept the lie that there was no good left in me, to the point that I was incapable of standing up for a child who'd been wronged in the most profound way. I could no longer accept that I was no better than anyone else in that stinking jail.

So I changed everything about myself and have done all I can in the decade and a half since my release from Grootvlei Prison to live up to a higher expectation of myself and to spend whatever years remain to me in being a better man and in repaying my dues to society.

Few people really believed I would be true to my vows in 2003 to never again commit a crime. But I was changed, because I made a choice to change.

When I look at South Africa today, I see a country that is every bit as

institutionalised as I was all those years ago. It, too, is imprisoned. We have been jailed by a system that dominates most of the world today, designed to enrich a few at the expense of the many, which sacrifices human welfare and dignity at the altar of profit, which confuses GDP and economic growth with development, which rewards greed and punishes altruism. It prioritises the rights of those who have much over those who have little.

The institutions that have done this to us so successfully now have us all believing that theirs is the only way, and that all other paths will lead us away from our eventual salvation. But theirs is the easy road that many leaders walk only too happily, directing us all straight to hell with them.

The prison sentence under which so many of the people in this country continue to be incarcerated is one that began centuries ago and was increasingly enforced and strengthened by colonialism and apartheid. Unlike what we are constantly encouraged to accept, however, that sentence did not end in 1994. The conditions of our imprisonment merely changed, and that was a bondage that the ANC itself signed the “new” South Africa into. Hopefully this book will show you a little bit of why and how this is the case, and perhaps you will see that we have been living a lie.

I began to get an inkling of how strictly this bigger South African prison and its rules are guarded when I started to challenge its confinements. Years ago, I was living a relatively quiet life, getting good PR after my release from prison. I was considered the model of prison rehabilitation and an example to troubled youngsters and convicts of someone to look up to and to try to emulate.

Then I dared to get involved with big business. I worked at a gold mine, Central Rand Gold, and realised what a joke black economic empowerment actually is. It set me on a collision course with that company’s empowerment partners, something I’m told they still hate me for even today after all this time and even though that poor company’s share price is little more than crumbs compared to what it once was.

When I moved into the big leagues of working for Gold Fields, one of the world’s biggest gold mining companies, little did I know that I was basically signing up for having the word ‘controversial’ slapped in front of my name

whenever any journalist would write about me again in the papers.

I negotiated a BEE deal with Gold Fields for a large group of black people, including Gold Fields' employees, that would not do what all the other BEE deals had done up to that point. It trapped no one in debt to the mining company and ensured that they began to receive a dividend almost immediately. No one in that deal was a member of the same old shopping list of blacks who always showed up in empowerment deal after empowerment deal. There was no Tokyo, no Cyril, no Patrice, no Saki.

Many things about that deal annoyed many people. But eventually when my involvement in it was investigated by New York law firm Paul, Weiss, I was completely cleared. Nevertheless, Gold Fields' CEO was roasted by shareholders and the media for thinking it could ever have been okay to take advice from a former bank robber like Gayton McKenzie.

As for my reputation, I sometimes figured that I may have been better off robbing banks again than getting involved in business. From now on I would always be that "controversial" guy. I'd had no idea I was rocking the boat so much and unsettling a carefully balanced system that allowed blacks to only enter slowly and in limited quantities, just to ensure the pretence of empowerment without ceding too much actual ownership.

I was naive back then, not understanding that I was intruding on territory that big corporate advisory firms had long held to be theirs alone.

I am no longer so naive about big business and what it is doing in this country today, what it was doing for decades prior to apartheid, and what its role was during apartheid and the part it played in ensuring we were eased into the negotiated settlement that continues to define our lives today.

At this point I should also add that when I use the term "white monopoly capital" in this book I am not referring to all white people indiscriminately, as I've noticed some people do when they're trying to pass themselves off as "conscientised radicals".

The majority of white people in this country do have great privilege, especially when compared with the majority of black people, whether they

realise that or not.

That's hardly even up for debate. But let me be clear that there will always be a place for white people in this country and this is not a book that sets out to make the case that they should all just up and leave. But the days of thinking that nothing needs to change, that big reforms are not required to really fix the mess South Africa has always been ... those days should end. The privileged who wish to form a part of new, properly and radically transformed South Africa will always be welcome here. But the old ways of thinking will need to change, and on a large scale, and we will finally be able to move on from the past instead of burdening future generations with all our old baggage.

As for black people who still want to blame white people for everything that's wrong with their lives, this book is also for them. We, as black people, have ourselves to blame as much as anyone else. It's time we start focusing on creating real change and building the country we actually want to inhabit with pride.

To snap out of an institutionalised mind-set is not easy. To have much of what you think are the facts about the world turned upside down is something many lack the appetite or courage to do. It's much easier to go along with the official line that Jacob Zuma is the cause of all our problems and that he has near-singlehandedly corrupted the ANC and parasitically leached out all that was ever good about the former liberation movement.

Once you've accepted that idea, you'll probably also buy into the rest of the package of lies that comes with it. And that is what I reject. I reject having my intelligence so obviously insulted every day. I reject the lies that so keenly wish to ensnare me and institutionalise me into accepting that we are today living in a South Africa that could be so much better, if only there was no Zuma, no Nkandla, no Guptas.

That kind of thinking encourages only a very superficial analysis of our institutionalisation, and that is precisely the point. We are not meant to see that there are far bigger, more powerful players at work and they don't like Zuma and have always wanted him out of the way at any cost.

That alone has been reason enough for me to respect the man, even though he has many other admirable personal qualities we so rarely are given a chance to hear about or ponder.

How can anyone praise Jacob Zuma, you may be wondering. Hopefully you are feeling slightly uncomfortable.

This is just the start, Comrade Reader.

Read on.

*Gayton McKenzie*

*Johannesburg, 10 December 2017*

## **A warning**

Some time before Pravin Gordhan was removed as finance minister along with others in a cabinet reshuffle at the end of March 2017 – sparking a late-night media feeding frenzy that predictably “hurt the rand” and had the ratings agencies keeping a wary eye over the “South African situation” – one of South Africa’s most well-known ministers was summoned to talk to a member of a family that has often found itself in the headlines for various reasons, including allegedly wielding an inordinate amount of influence over the state and the business sector as a whole.

The minister understood that he needed to go and speak to the representative of this family because, when people in this particular family call, government has had a history of listening and jumping. What this family says, thinks and does matters and has far-reaching effects on South African society. They have always valued and even flaunted the fact that they can get the ANC government to do exactly what they want and, in return, have made billions out of the South African state and the economy as a whole. At one point, they famously received state funding to bail out some of their struggling businesses. They’ve never had to repay any of that money, despite the public protector of South Africa raising serious questions about it and financial investigators suggesting that it wouldn’t be that hard to recover these lost billions on behalf of the South African taxpayer.

This family had already benefited handsomely from the state’s policy of economic empowerment, which effectively saw public money invested in their businesses to ensure that they could compete with the more established corporations, especially those with links back to the British empire that had profited through their control of the mining, financial, construction, retail and most other business sectors in South Africa.

With a keen sense of self-preservation and the value of their family name, they had also hired one of the most influential and expensive public relations firms in the world, Bell Pottinger, to handle their image and ensure the world saw them as the good guys.

The minister in question was Fikile Mbalula. At that time, he was overseeing the sports and recreation portfolio in President Jacob Zuma's cabinet. Later, he was to become the minister of police.

The member of the family you have just been reading about was Johann Rupert, the son of Anton Rupert, one of the most successful products of Afrikaner nationalism and economic empowerment during apartheid.

There are many others like Johann Rupert, but none so famous.

By the time Mbalula was to talk to him, his father Anton had passed on, leaving a business empire to his son that has regularly seen him being described as either the "richest man in South Africa" or somewhere very close to it, with a net worth of around R90 billion.

In the 1960s, Johann's father had been touted as a replacement as head of state for the so-called "architect of apartheid", Hendrik Verwoerd. The more progressive, more educated and wealthier beneficiaries of apartheid's policy of getting Afrikaners to ascend the ramparts of the previously English-dominated business sector wanted the most rigid of apartheid's laws to be relaxed because these laws were preventing them from making even more money.

That never happened, though, and Verwoerd was eventually replaced after his assassination by an even stauncher supporter of rigid apartheid, BJ Vorster. So eventually Anton Rupert threw in his lot with some of the English mining and industrial magnates who were working to reform the recalcitrant apartheid state and were even recruiting young, promising black leaders into their civil society foundations. This book will tell you a bit more about that later.

In this way, the Ruperts were eventually accepted as "reformists" who had helped to bring about a negotiated settlement in South Africa. Along with the

Oppenheimers and the Menells, many within the ANC came to treat these wealthy owners of our economy as their friends and patrons whose philanthropic gestures were always much appreciated and their advice on economic matters always “taken on board”.

Even when, in the 1990s, it emerged that Rupert’s company Rembrandt (later renamed to Richemont) had been among several struggling Afrikaner-owned conglomerates that had benefited from an illegal R30 billion apartheid-era bailout courtesy of the South African Reserve Bank, the country’s first black president, Nelson Mandela, and his government decided to look the other way.

They allowed their new friends to continue to make their profits and enjoy the pickings of the shiniest fruits of our democracy that had been hard won by the ANC and others from across the liberation front who were covered in the dust, sweat and blood of the trenches of the struggle; those who had been tortured and murdered in custody; others who had wasted away behind bars; all those who had given their lives in myriad ways in the pursuit of freedom.

I don’t know if those people made those sacrifices so that our first black finance minister, Trevor Manuel, could eventually leave the ANC and politics to openly join the Rothschilds as an expert in global finance. Maybe that was part of the purpose of the struggle, because ultimately Trevor Manuel and other black people are free today to follow their dreams, and that, at least, is something a man like Chris Hani would happily have given his life for.

What I’m less sure of, though, is whether Hani would have been pleased that the economy has largely stayed in the control of white hands, even two and a half decades into democracy.

Curiously, Johann Rupert’s father created a wine brand called Rupert & Rothschild with the Rothschild family in France in 1997. They continue to share their “prestigious partnership” in wine production 20 years later.

When Manuel joined the Rothschilds (a different company sharing the famous name) in 2014 as a senior advisor to the group worldwide and deputy chairman of Rothschild in South Africa, very few eyebrows were raised. It was almost as if it was all too easy to accept that government and big white-

owned business were so closely interwoven that one could morph into the other without much effort.

The biggest critics of this have called this nothing less than collusion, which you will also read more of later.

At the time that Trevor Manuel joined the Rothschilds, his wife, Maria Ramos, a former Reserve Bank governor, was the CEO of Absa, a position she still holds as I write these words. Absa was one of the companies that had taken over Bankorp, one of those firms that had received funding from the apartheid-era bailouts that were never repaid.

Being rich is not a crime. It's not something to be ashamed of, per se. I personally far prefer having money, and lots of it, to having less of it.

But it's the entitlement of people like Rupert that I cannot stand. They actually believe the economy belongs to them, and exists to make them richer.

And that was why Minister Fikile Mbalula was about to have the following encounter with the then 66-year-old Rupert in Stellenbosch at a wine auction in the first few months of 2017.

Rupert called him to the sidelines of the auction at a multimillion-rand estate in the picturesque settings of the winelands as the sun was casting its orange rays on to the postcard-like mountains of the Jonkershoek, Drakenstein, and Simonsberg mountains in the east.

Rupert first of all asked Mbalula if it was true that President Zuma was planning to remove Pravin Gordhan as the finance minister in yet another cabinet reshuffle.

Mbalula replied that cabinet appointments were strictly the preserve of the president, and he could not say.

At the time, there was much speculation and even near certainty that the former CEO of Eskom, Brian Molefe, would be made the finance minister, a move Rupert declared would be totally unacceptable.

Rupert seemed to be in a bad mood.

“I want you to go and tell your president that I looked after Mandela. But if he fires Pravin Gordhan and Mcebisi Jonas, I will destroy this economy. My friends and I will make it look worse than Zimbabwe.”

It was no idle threat. The last time President Zuma had made an appointment to head the finance ministry that “the markets” did not approve of, South Africa’s main stock market, the JSE, lost somewhere in the region of R500 billion almost overnight and the rand plummeted to nearly R18 to the dollar.

Rupert, a member of the so-called Stellenbosch Mafia – a half-playful term that has attached itself to all the wealthy businessman from the town – also had a strong presence in the banking sector, especially Standard Bank, FirstRand, Nedbank and Absa.

So he could definitely trouble the economy if he wished to.

Mbalula wanted to interject, but Johann Rupert was not yet done.

“I would also appreciate it if you stop talking about this ‘white monopoly capital’ thing. I see even you have been going on about it. There’s no such thing.”

At this, Mbalula could not keep quiet any more. He told Rupert: “Look, if you are not white monopoly capital, then I don’t know what you are.”

“I’m not the enemy here, Minister. I’m feeding 17 000 schoolkids.” He also mentioned other philanthropic work he and fellow businessmen were engaged in.

Mbalula shook his head. “That’s the problem: it’s just handouts. Our people are dependent on your generosity.”

A small argument ensued between the two, with Mbalula then asking him: “How do you expect President Zuma to talk to you when you think you can make such threats?”

They eventually seemed to agree that the discussion may have started on the

wrong foot.

Mbalula told him he would convey his concerns to Zuma about the finance minister's possible removal, but he had a question for Rupert that had been on his mind as the minister of sport for some time.

"Why do you never invite me to the Laureus Sport Awards?"

"Oh, that. I'll tell you what," Rupert responded. "I will invite you next time, on one condition."

"Which is?"

"If you can guarantee the nation that you and the ANC will never change the Springbok emblem."

Mbalula wanted to laugh, but remained diplomatic. He later duly conveyed Johann Rupert's message to Jacob Zuma.

Jacob Zuma fired Pravin Gordhan and Mcebisi Jonas anyway.

# Carlos

This book would not exist if I had not saved President Jacob Zuma's life. For what it's worth, he says I did.

I came across some information one day that he was going to be murdered by a bodyguard who was very close to him. That bodyguard's name was Pedro Antônio Carlos, better known to close family and friends as Pedrito.

I then did what I suppose many other South Africans would not have done. I went out of my way to try to warn the president.

Carlos was born in 1981 in South West Africa (now Namibia) during the Border War.

Pedro's father was a Special Forces operative who was presumed to have died in the line of duty, though his body was never found. He and his mother moved to a part of Transvaal that would later become the North West province and he was enrolled at the Pica Pau Combined School in Pomfret, a small desert town that had sprung up in support of an asbestos mine, long closed, not far from the Botswana border.

It's a place unlike any other in South Africa, and almost everyone here speaks primarily Portuguese. Even all these years after the war, the residents continue to observe Angolan public holidays and traditions, and eat dishes associated with that country, such as caldeirada de peixe, a fish stew served with rice and beans.

The reason is because this is where most of the Angolan soldiers from 32 Battalion – the mightily feared “Buffalo Battalion” comprising elite Angolan mercenaries and white South African soldiers – were sent to retire by the

apartheid government at the conclusion of the war.

It was to become a hot, dusty, nearly forgotten purgatory for men who would have loved to return home but would never be welcomed by the revolutionary government of the man they had fought against, José Eduardo Dos Santos.

So the last of apartheid's presidents, FW de Klerk, bought the old asbestos-mining town and resettled the battalion members who could not be absorbed into the defence force following the end of the war and the withdrawal of all South Africa's troops from the frontline states.

Sipho Masondo, writing in *City Press*, explained how the now hollowed-out town that today doesn't have water, electricity, a clinic or even a police station was once beautiful, with "1 200 homes, three public swimming pools, seven churches, tennis courts and a state-of-the-art sports club, which hosted concerts and movies".

All of that changed in 2000, when the military relocated to Zeerust, 315km away.

While Carlos was growing up in Pomfret – at a school with a duck for a coat of arms – he was taught English, though he struggled to find anyone in the town to practise it with.

Everywhere he went, there were reminders of the military and war. The stories the men in the community told each other were of the war. In every house were photos of the retirees in their uniforms and standing next to tanks, artillery guns and armoured vehicles, and holding rifles. Pomfret developed something of a reputation for being a recruiting ground for mercenaries. It was a place where a career in the military would be the obvious choice for a young man like Pedro.

Some of these Angolan men who were now stuck here had been conscripted into the South African Defence Force by pure chance, without even knowing what exactly they'd been expected to fight for on behalf of Jonas Savimbi's National Liberation Front of Angola's guerilla troops.

Their apartheid-era commanders had kept them happy with promises that

they would be “looked after” in South Africa. At first, that was the case, but in the years of democracy Pomfret and the war veterans who were probably slowly being poisoned by the asbestos in the area have been abandoned and forgotten.

The young Pedrito was obsessed with trying to find out what had happened to his father, and whether there was a chance that Tony Carlos was still alive. He asked every former soldier he could find about it. Those who had met his father told him numerous conflicting stories: some were sure Tony had been killed by the enemy, others that he had been captured and was probably still alive in an Angolan prison.

Others told Pedrito they suspected his father had been killed by his own comrades.

He told himself he would dedicate his life to finding out what had happened to his father. The simple lure that Tony might still be alive out there came to obsess him and he started to truly believe it, convincing himself that he had to do something to help his old man, that it was somehow his responsibility to find Tony Carlos and rescue him. Scenarios in which he saw himself doing this began to play on repeat in his mind, becoming ever more elaborate each time.

All of this made him easy pickings for people with shadowy agendas of their own.

Always desperately looking for a father figure, Pedrito was taken under the wing of one of the many Portuguese-speaking men in the community, a man named Fernando, who impressed the boy with stories about the war and was always on hand to advise Pedro about his life choices. Once the teenager was finished with school, he recommended that the young man join the military in South Africa, and he even organised the forms for him to fill out.

He went as far as to promise Pedro it would be a first step to finding out what had happened to his father.

So he joined the army, where he was known as Carlos from day one, and excelled in basic training and was soon recruited to join the Special Forces,

something that gave him a deep sense of pride because his father had been selected for this honour. It gave him a sense of closeness to this man he had never met. His courage and tenacity saw him being trained up as one of the most respected young soldiers. However, there was a part of his training that was handled in person by his older friend from Pomfret, Fernando, that was out of the ordinary.

Carlos did not know exactly how Fernando fitted into the South African National Defence Force, except that his position was senior but vague. Fernando told Carlos he was being trained for a very special assignment one day. The man worked to ensure that Carlos became critically aware of the atrocities of the Russian government and the poor human rights record of Russia's leader Vladimir Putin, who had ruled the world's largest country in one form or the other since 2000.

Carlos was told how in Putin's regime his opponents were murdered; how Putin was supposedly relentlessly trying to annex his neighbours and trying to restore the old borders of the Soviet Union; how political prisoners were often sent to freezing Siberia to spend decades behind bars; and how Putin had no qualms about supporting fellow bloodthirsty dictators such as Syria's Bashar al-Assad. He came to consider Putin one of the great enemies of democracy and civilisation, a force for evil in the world that needed to be stopped. Much of what he was told about the Russian leader was propaganda and lies, but it had a profound effect on Carlos.

When Carlos was moved to the position of becoming a senior bodyguard to President Jacob Zuma, he grew close to one of the president's closest and most loyal aides, George Moloisi. The two men were often inseparable, and formed a team that Zuma knew he could rely on every day to not only protect his life but manage some of the more mundane everyday aspects of it.

By the time Carlos was given his first proper assignment, which revealed the real reason he had been moved so close to Zuma, he had been guarding the old man for some time and been given the rare opportunity to observe him and get to know him like few others could.

He was impressed by the president's humour, his regard for the welfare of others, his humility, good manners and charm that almost everyone who

encountered him remarked upon, his tireless work ethic, his profound loyalty and love for the ANC, the stories he would sometimes tell them about his life and the memorable experiences he had lived through.

What truly struck Carlos, a man with few family connections, was just how rich and vast Zuma's own family connections were. His children and grandchildren fawned over the old man, there were uncles and aunts at every turn willing to help and take care of each other, and there was clearly a great love for the family patriarch, Msholozzi, who had so often been mocked by the media for having all these many wives and children. But all Carlos saw was a close-knit family bonded by shared respect and affection for Jacob Zuma, who was somehow able to make such a big and complicated arrangement work very well, when many of those who mocked the man could barely manage their own small nuclear families of one or two kids and one spouse.

For someone like Carlos, who was still looking for the father he had never had, the experience was profound, and in Jacob Zuma he found a father figure unlike any he had known before. Through George, who had also been by Zuma's side as his aide since 1999, Carlos also came to view the old man as George did.

To illustrate the depth of the relationship between Zuma and George, his younger aide had not known a word of Zulu when he first began to work with Zuma, but he taught himself the language so well by speaking to Zuma every day that many people were later easily fooled into thinking that George was a deeply rural Zulu homeboy. There could be no other explanation for how he knew the intricacies of Zulu customs – such as the seating arrangements that would have to be prepared for Zuma when they were in a traditional context and how food would need to be served – so well.

He had learnt some of these things from Zuma, and others – such as how some Zulu words would need to be substituted by Zuma's wives for other words when they were talking to him, simply as a sign of respect – he learnt from the Zuma family matriarch, Zuma's first wife, MaKhumalo.

There was always room for one more son in Zuma's life, and so it should probably come as little surprise that Carlos came to see himself to some extent as part of Zuma's family. His natural enthusiasm, loyalty and

conscientiousness towards the president earned him a playful nickname from President Zuma that Carlos hoped he would never have to live up to one day, but which he was prepared to do: The Bullet Stopper.

Zuma knew that as soon as there was any reason to believe they were in a dangerous situation, Carlos could be relied upon to always place himself at the lead, right in front of Zuma, even if there were 20 or more bodyguards around. Although he was not the chief bodyguard, which is an appointed position, he played something like that role as his most trusted bodyguard.

Carlos had thus earned himself the distinction of being the man entrusted with the regular duty of giving the president his packet of smoked beef Simba potato chips and small bottle of red Grapetiser every day. A man of modest vices, everyone who is close to Zuma knows he is addicted to smoked beef crisps and carbonated grape juice. George and Carlos always made sure that they had enough stock with them wherever they went, and especially when they travelled abroad.

All of this made it all the more difficult for Carlos to process his instructions from Fernando one day in 2013 that he was expected to poison the president.

The story of how I came to know about this particular plot is one that, like so many things about me, starts in jail. The thing about almost any prison that people who've never been sentenced for a long stretch would never understand is that it is a unique confluence of people and stories that you would struggle to replicate anywhere else on earth.

For every imaginable crime under the sun there is someone in jail who has probably done something just like it. Aside from the usual lowest common denominators of petty criminals and the general foot soldiers of organised crime, I also came into contact with some of the upper echelons of the criminal underworld.

Imprisoned with me at Grootvlei Maximum Security on the outskirts of Bloemfontein had been, for example, the biggest "don" of one of the town's Greek mafia families. You treat such people with respect and do what you can to make their stay in prison less intolerable. And if you are me and you have managed to take over the running of the prison's contraband network

and have just about every corrupt warder in your pocket – as I once did – then you are the person who is turned to when someone like that needs to be looked after and protected.

I built a reputation as a guy never to be crossed, but who could always be trusted and who would, at all times and no matter the cost, deliver on his promises. No one who was ever sent to that prison didn't know who I was. I ruled over most aspects of prison life and got a share in everything that was smuggled in, be it food, drugs, and whatever other contraband you can think of. If you wanted a loaded gun smuggled into jail, I could get it for you. We proved exactly that in 2001 when our footage of just how rife corruption in prison had become was aired on national TV and made headlines worldwide.

In prison I came to know some of the country's most gifted con artists; I met the most unscrupulous lawyers, financiers, and other corporate criminals. I listened to their stories and their experiences. In prison, everyone gets to know everyone else's business. Whoever you are, prison will find you out.

That is part of the reason the trust that develops between prisoners is so strong; it can endure long after both people have been released and the prison itself starts to fade into foggy memory. But once you have established a bond of trust with another person inside prison, you will know that it is real. Because prison exposes you for what you really are: if you're a coward, that cowardice will be on full display every day in prison. If you're an untrustworthy snake, you will join the gang of informers and be painted as an informer for life. If you are brave and reliable, people will come to know you as that behind bars. You cannot fake it for a decade in the face of constant contact with your fellow prisoners under the perpetual lights of those fluorescent tubes above you.

Every now and then a foreign prisoner was admitted to Grootvlei, and those guys always interested me more than most. Each of them had a story unlike any other, and particularly because I'd never been overseas and didn't know very much about foreign countries I was always only too eager to find out about what had brought such people to prison, what their home countries were like, how people lived and thought and how different they were.

I personally made a point of looking after just about every foreign prisoner

entering the prison gates. With some of them I established friendships that have lasted until now.

In this way, I inadvertently ended up having networks with people living all over the world after most of these guys returned home after their jail terms in South Africa. Just to give an example of the usefulness of such networks, long after I was released a friend of mine lost his passport and wallet in Mexico and was stranded. His mother called me and told me they were panicking, but I told her to calm down, I knew a guy in Mexico and would give him a call.

Soon enough, my friend was given enough money to last for a few days along with a phone until he could get a temporary passport issued for his flight home. I duly repaid my contact in Mexico his money and a little extra for his trouble once my friend was safely back in South Africa.

Among the most interesting kinds of people who were imprisoned with me back then were those who had been caught while working in espionage.

Simply because saying anything at all about one of these people would probably risk revealing who they are, suffice it to say that the information that I was later to learn about President Jacob Zuma came through one of these people I had met in jail.

So when, in 2013, I was casually going about my life and I received a call from my old foreign friend from prison I took him very seriously when he greeted me and asked me how I was.

I was a little surprised by the call but very happy to catch up with this very intelligent man who soon informed me that he had immediately thought of me when he came across some information about developments in my country that had the potential to destabilise it badly.

What developments, I wanted to know.

My friend told me that I should prepare myself for a period of chaos in South Africa because my president was about to be assassinated.

“What?”

“Yes. It’s happening this week or next week. You will see. You should call me afterwards because big things are happening. There are huge plans with this thing. I will explain it to you.”

“But how? Tell me.”

So he explained that President Zuma had a bodyguard called Carlos and the plan was for Carlos to give the president a lethal dose of poison contained in a packet of crisps and a bottle of fruit juice. He told me the back story of Carlos, why he had been picked to kill the president and precisely how much money he’d been paid, or would be paid, to do it.

“It says here that it will be in a packet of smoked beef flavour Simba chips and a bottle of Grapetiser. Does that mean something to you?”

“Not really, but I know what that is. They’re just local products here.”

“Well, that’s one way they’re planning to do it.”

“You mean there’s another way too?”

“Yes. They are also sabotaging the presidential jet. One of the airport technicians has been paid a lot of money to make it happen. The crash will be ruled a tragic accident.”

As outrageous as this sounded, I knew who this man was and what he represented, so I informed him that I could never be told about such a plot and do nothing. “I have to warn the president,” I said.

He laughed. “I had a feeling that might be your response. Good luck with that, my friend. If I were you, I would leave this thing alone. It’s only going to get you sent back to prison.”

“I don’t care. I can’t just do nothing.”

“Yes. But you never heard it from me.”

“Of course.”

I arranged with him that I would travel abroad to meet him later so that he could show me more about how he happened to know about this plot. He promised he would explain everything, and that was that.

My mind was racing. Who should I call? Who would believe me? If I said something to someone and it turned out that the president was then killed anyway, I would be the number one suspect.

I scrolled through my list of contacts and dialled the number of every notable ANC leader I knew. Not a single one of those calls was answered, much less returned, despite me leaving messages for them to call me back as a matter of urgency.

My problem was that, at that time I had already left the ANC to form my own political party, the Patriotic Alliance. Prior to that, I had been linked to the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a new radical party that had been founded by expelled ANC members to challenge the ANC, and which identified Zuma as a personal enemy.

Some in the ANC called me a traitor and many just cut me off completely. I wasn't sure anyone was going to call me back.

Frustrated by my lack of progress, I decided to try calling the president's daughter, Dudu Zuma, who was an old friend of mine but we'd fallen out of touch after she got married. I was certain that she would offer a direct line to the president or his office.

Unfortunately, she also didn't return any of my calls.

What I was most concerned about was that I might end up on the phone with a presidential bodyguard named Carlos asking me what my information was about a threat against the president. Of all possible outcomes, that was one I was most keen to avoid.

While I was racking my brain trying to figure out a way forward, I remembered I had met a parliamentarian named Nyami Booï just a few days

earlier. We had been introduced by a mutual friend at the Southern Sun Hotel in Cape Town. Luckily, we'd exchanged numbers, so I gave him a call, which he also at first did not answer. He did, however, shortly return my call.

I was greeted by the words I'd been longing to hear: "Chief, how can I help you?"

"I need your help urgently. Can I come to your house?" I asked.

He agreed to assist and invited me over to his place in Midrand even though this must have seemed like a strange request from a man he had only just met a few days ago. After Nyami had given me his address, I called my friend Kenny Kunene to inform him about where I was going, who I was meeting and that I had some info about Number 1's possible murder. I conveyed all of this to him in prison language, known as Sabela. Kenny wanted to hear more, but I told him I'd meet with him later.

My mind was racing as I sat in Nyami's home. I knew I couldn't just come right out and tell him I wanted an audience with the president, so instead I told him I needed to meet with someone very high up in the ANC to relay some extremely sensitive information. He agreed to facilitate a meeting and we headed to my car while he made the necessary calls. Just as we were about to leave to go and see Jeff Radebe, a car pulled into his driveway. My heart sank as I realised the man in the vehicle was none other than General Mthandazo "Berning" Ntlemeza, the then head of the police's most elite investigative unit, the Hawks.

I couldn't help but think he was somehow on to me.

But it turned out Ntlemeza had just passed by to see his old friend, Mr Boo. It was pure coincidence. We greeted, exchanged pleasantries, and advised him we would be right back. As we drove, Nyami rang Jeff's phone repeatedly but didn't get an answer. I asked if he knew of any other leader we could go and see. I egged him on by saying I had serious information about the EFF.

I figured that would inject a sense of urgency. It did, and Nyami called the

then state security minister, David Mahlobo, who invited us to his house in Pretoria.

I remember how, on the drive to Pretoria. Nyami told me he was troubled by the fact that his daughter had brought a white boyfriend home.

He admitted he hadn't expected to be quite so disturbed by it.

"This is what I fought for, Comrade McKenzie, but I don't think I was prepared adequately."

I set him at ease with a laugh.

"Comrade leader, every father is jittery when his daughter brings home her first boyfriend. It will be okay."

"The boy is extremely well mannered," he said, almost as though he was trying to console himself with this. The small talk soon ended, though, when we got lost trying to find Mahlobo's home, losing us more valuable time. We finally found our way there and Mahlobo invited us in after scolding us for parking outside instead of in his yard.

He offered us tea or coffee, but we declined. Nyami told Mahlobo I had some important information about state security that I wanted to pass on.

I needed to somehow speak to Mahlobo on my own and so I repeated the lie that I had a file with vital information about the EFF but, in my haste, I had forgotten to carry it with me. Being a well-seasoned politician, Nyami quickly caught on. He explained he had only come to introduce me to the minister and suggested that Mahlobo and I exchange numbers so we could make arrangements to meet later and discuss the matter.

We said our goodbyes and left. I dropped Nyami back at his home, offered him my heartfelt thanks for his assistance and immediately returned to meet with Mahlobo alone.

I sat across from him and started to convey the message that had been weighing on me since receiving that international call.

“I’m a serious person and I know some serious people. One of these people approached me with information about a plot to assassinate President Zuma. I can tell you, with full certainty, an attempt will be made on the president’s life, perhaps as early as tomorrow.”

Mahlobo listened attentively and remained calm. He leaned forward and asked me: “Who is your source?”

I told him I was more than willing to divulge the exact details of the attempt as they had been given to me but I made it clear I could not and would never be able to give him the name of my source. They had given me this information so that action could be taken to protect the life of a president. They had trusted that their identity would remain confidential. I was a man of my word and could never betray such trust.

Mahlobo accepted it, for the moment, and then asked for the details of what I knew.

I told him that if the president had a trusted bodyguard named Carlos, then he was in trouble, because this guy was going to poison him with a packet of smoked-beef Simba chips and a bottle of Grapetiser. He had been signed up by foreign intelligence and was part of a broader plot to kill Zuma at all cost.

I could see Mahlobo’s expression change immediately. His eyes widened and he sat forward, scooting to the very edge of his seat.

“Go on,” he demanded, his voice rising.

I felt both a sense of increasing alarm myself, as well as pure relief, because it was obvious from the minister’s reaction that my intel was on the money. That partly freaked me out even more, but at least I wasn’t making a fool of myself.

So I felt far more confident when I told him that there was an additional plot involving the presidential jet and that they should have one of their own technicians check every nook and cranny because something was being done to *Inkwazi* that would cause it to crash in what would eventually be ruled an unfortunate aviation accident.

Mahlobo promptly stood up, shook my hand and politely thanked me for my time. I noticed him collecting a set of car keys as he escorted me to the door. He said that he wanted to see me again that same evening. As I started my drive home I caught a glimpse of him in his car in my rear-view mirror. I hoped he was heading off to the Union Buildings.

After a tense afternoon of waiting, which I spent with Kenny, I met Minister Mahlobo again that evening as agreed. He confirmed that what I had told them was correct and then gave me a long and almost convincing speech on why I should reveal my source to him.

Nevertheless, I gave him a short answer.

“Minister, the people who told me this, they know I will never reveal their names. I’m not about to break that type of trust.”

When I woke up the next morning I knew I must now be under surveillance. I was certain both my mobile phones and house phone had been tapped. As I drove around I could tell I was being followed. I had anticipated such a response given the nature of the information I had revealed, but not the extent to which it would go.

The fact that I had provided such exact details, coupled with my staunch refusal to reveal my source, had obviously made me a prime suspect. This I could live with. What I hadn’t prepared for and what I couldn’t live with was the extended effect this had on my friends and family. We discovered they were all under constant surveillance.

Our every move was monitored and analysed. Mahlobo maintained an open dialogue with me and continued to be friendly, but his guys were everywhere.

I nevertheless managed to send a message to my friend abroad that I was still planning to meet with them about the information I’d been given, but I wasn’t sure I’d be able to keep it secret with all the state attention that was now being lavished on me.

When I was on the plane to this rendezvous, I realised I’d have to call off any meeting because the plane was full of Mahlobo’s spies. I realised the true

extent of their commitment: they would even follow me out of the country if necessary and were perfectly capable of doing it at a moment's notice.

I returned without having seen my friend.

I was later picked up for questioning by members of state security. People very close to me were interrogated and it pained me to hear them narrate their encounters with these security agents.

Apparently, I was later told, members within the security circle believed I had been complicit in the attempt to assassinate the president and had merely gotten cold feet just before we were meant to execute the plan. They struggled to accept that there could be another explanation.

An ordeal I'd thought would last for only a few days ended up enduring for months. I got used to the fact that I had to watch what I said over the phone and keep a constant eye on my rear-view mirrors. I couldn't grab a cup of coffee without them knowing about it.

In frustration, I finally asked for another meeting with Mahlobo and told him I was aware I was constantly being followed. I detailed the whole modus operandi of his guys and how I had once counted nine of his agents on my flight to Dubai.

In true spy style, he told me he would have to investigate this because he wasn't aware of it.

I was having none of that, though, and told him I would not inform them of any new info in future if this was how they planned to treat me.

He finally looked a bit taken aback and nodded.

"You're right, Gayton. My guys are naughty, I'll address them."

I had to smile at his use of the word 'naughty'.

I no longer noticed any guys tailing me. That didn't mean I wasn't being followed, but I felt more confident now to leave the country again and try to make contact with my source. We ensured that we'd meet in the countryside

somewhere and I took endless precautions that no spy in the world would have been able to counter to tail me. So I was pretty confident that by the time I met my friend, no one in the world knew we were together.

It turned out he had not only told me the truth, but there was more to learn than I could ever have imagined. Over the phone that day in South Africa, I had only been given a fraction of the facts. What he showed me next was something I was never fully ready for. I was given access to file after file of the many operations that had been run by the apartheid regime.

It was all there as a lesson in statecraft at its most odious: extortion, murder, trickery and betrayal. I realised while reading through page after page that the whole story of South Africa was basically a lie.

I found myself in the basement of the most high-ranking intelligence officer who had overseen the South African project for 33 years.

Some of what I found can be found in these pages, but most of it will have to form part of future books. There was simply too much information for one man to really understand, but I've done the best I can. I had no intention of even writing this current book in the form you're reading it, but one has to start somewhere, and a file with the subject line in all caps saying "KILL ZUMA, BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY" was one that haunted me most.

I have since secured all those files. They belong to me now. I have already read thousands of pages and the three things that really stood out for me were how my people were conned at Codesa, how Jacob Zuma is actually a revolutionary hero and that he has a list of spies who worked for the apartheid government and who went on to occupy senior positions in government. I saw something that could possibly be considered similar to the list Zuma has, though mine, apparently, is much longer. Mine had hundreds of names.

This project has obsessed me. I travelled the world, confirming what I could, and it cost me a fortune. I became a platinum member of Emirates Airlines within the space of a few months.

I was soon to realise that all that had really happened was, as I suspected and

feared, that Mahlobo had merely made his surveillance of me less obvious. I was still being monitored and tailed.

As time passed and the situation remained unchanged, my frustrations reached boiling point. I approached Dudu Zuma and requested that she arrange for me to have a meeting with her father. Surprisingly, she didn't ask me why I needed the meeting, which led me to conclude that she had already been briefed about me and she was well aware of my current predicament.

The meeting was scheduled faster than I had anticipated. I met with the president the very next day. I was ushered into a room at Mahlamba Ndlopfu, the presidential house in Pretoria, and instructed that he would be with me shortly.

Within minutes the door was flung open and the man himself entered. I stood up to greet him. He welcomed me with a broad smile; the same broad smile he had given me at an ANC event some time back. We shook hands and he surprised me by starting the conversation with thanking me for having saved his life.

Needless to say, I was shocked. I later found out that when they had investigated the presidential plane, they had discovered some kind of "tampering" that could have proved fatal.

Here I was, standing face to face with the very man I was suspected of attempting to kill, and the first thing he had done was thank me. He continued by apologising for the behaviour of the security forces and explained – given the gravity of the matter – that they had needed to be thorough with their investigations.

As we sat down, the tea arrived. President Zuma stood up and asked how many sugars I'd like. I was taken aback but quickly realised this was a display of his trademark charm that many people had mentioned to me before.

We started to chat casually. He asked me about my thoughts and knowledge of gangsterism in Cape Town and we engaged in a fairly long and stimulating discussion of my suggestions on how to curb it.

He then cleared his throat and I knew the million-dollar question was coming.

“Gayton, who is your source?”

I responded in the same way I had to Mahlobo and the many security officials who had asked me the same question over the past few months.

“You know I can’t tell you that.”

He smiled, gave me a concessionary nod and continued: “Did your source give you access to other material?”

“Yes, he did.”

He asked me if I had access to National Intelligence Service or State Security Agency files. I smiled and said, “No comment.”

He asked if I would ever reveal any names. I replied by repeating that there was no chance of that ever happening, and asked him why he insisted on me doing something that he had not yet done himself.

At this he only smiled disarmingly. We both knew he had access to a lot of vital information that implicated some very important and high-profile people, but he had never released it.

“How much do you know?” he wanted to know.

“I know a lot,” I told him.

He produced that robust chuckle of his and we shared a moment of understanding.

I thanked him for his hospitality and left, smiling to myself; partly because I had enjoyed my encounter with this truly wily old cat and partly because I was looking forward to – hopefully – returning to a normal life where my every move wouldn’t be examined under a microscope.

Or at least I hoped that would be the outcome.

I later found out what had actually happened to Carlos. Long before I was warned about the plot, Carlos had been given a box by his mentor, containing a packet of chips and Grapetiser, with the instruction that he was now about to embark on the most important mission of his life, a mission that would be his ultimate service to the country.

When Carlos asked his mentor Fernando why killing the old man could possibly be seen as a service to South Africa, he was told: “Jacob Zuma is in bed with the Russians. His best friend is Vladimir Putin, and you know what kind of man that is. We cannot allow South Africa to partner with Russia.

“Do not be fooled by what you think you know about that nice old man. He is planning to give Africa to the Russians through Brics. You know what will happen to the people here if that can ever be allowed.

“You, Pedrito, have the power to stop that and to save South Africa. Give him the food and the drink. That’s all you have to do. We will make sure that nothing happens to you. We shall have money and enough time to do all the things we have spoken about. We will go and find out what happened to your father and seek out the people who harmed him.

“So do this thing for me and for your country.”

I don’t know whether Carlos went through a period in which he was willing to follow through on his assignment. What I do know is that after he had already accepted payment for the deed, he approached Zuma and confessed. He told the president that there was no way he would be able to kill him. He had come to love and respect the man too much. It would be like killing a father, and he would never be able to live with himself.

So he told Msholozzi about the poison and handed him the laced Simba chips and Grapetiser, telling him to send it off for tests to confirm that he was telling the truth. He also showed Zuma the money he’d been given. He wanted to hand it over, but Zuma told him to share it among the guys.

“I will never betray you, Baba,” Carlos told him. “It’s better that they kill me, but I cannot do this thing. I will never be able to do it.”

When I was telling Mahlobo about Carlos, he already knew about that full confession. He was, however, shocked that I knew about it because only a handful of people had ever been informed about it, and there was no way it could have been leaked. Carlos had continued to work for the president and dedicated himself even more faithfully to saving Zuma. Instead of killing Zuma, he became a key man in keeping the president alive, making him aware of any potential plot and investigating the many new attempts and their origins.

At one point I was introduced to Carlos, and he and I spoke. He told me more about his background and why he could never hurt the president. He was also more than just a little intrigued to know how I had known about his training to kill Zuma, but once again I told him that was something I'd never be able to divulge.

I later found out that Carlos died in a strange car crash at midnight between 7 and 8 December of 2014. This was a man who'd been trained in some of the most effective driving techniques available, and yet he crashed his car straight into a wall. A security guard working at the Momentum life insurance building where the crash happened later said that he noticed two women and a man at the crash site before the ambulance arrived.

He said they opened the car on the driver's side, but he didn't see what they did. They were there for some time and left.

Carlos was declared dead when ambulance arrived.

# Ralph

Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, whose praise name is Msholozzi, was born on 12 April 1942 at Nkandla in the then northern Natal. He is the eldest of five children and his Zulu name was originally Mhlanganyelwa, which was given to him by his mother, Nokubhekisisa, in violation of Zulu custom.

His father, Gcinamazwi, should have named him, but since he was working far from home when Zuma came into this world, the baby needed some sort of name until his father returned. “Mhlanganyelwa” refers to people conspiring or ganging up against you, and though he had that name only briefly, his life has certainly lived up to it anyway.

When his father returned, he named him Gedleyihlekisa, a shortened form of the Zulu sentence “Ngeke ngithule umuntu engigedla engihlekisa,” which means “I can’t keep quiet when a person pretends to love me with a deceitful beautiful smile.”

It’s a name that, as we shall see in this book, is deeply ironic considering that Zuma has spent, and it seems will continue to spend, large parts of his life surrounded by people pretending they are something they are not.

The name has been popularly understood to also refer to someone who “smiles while hurting you”, a more ominous meaning Jacob Zuma himself says is equally valid.

He earned his Judeo-Christian name Jacob when his mother took him to be baptised at the nearest church and the pastor, himself a Zulu, declared with great authority that it would be impossible to enter heaven one day with only a Zulu name. So since his mother could not think of a more Western-style name for the boy, they threw open the Bible and picked the first name they

found.

The biblical Jacob is one of the Good Book's more famous characters. He fathered 12 sons, one of which, Joseph, was born to him by a woman not his wife. Once again, there was some prophecy in that name too.

Jacob's father died too soon and, as the young man of the house, he had to take care of his siblings. They and their mother went to live with her parents in kwaMaphumulo, where Jacob became a cattle herder while many of his peers were going to school. He yearned to go to school too, but circumstances did not allow it. In the apartheid days, government was not strict on schooling being mandatory for black children, so Zuma was left to wander the Natal hills, looking after his grandfather's cattle and goats. He built a reputation among the other kids for being good at stick fighting. It's said that when he was losing a stick fight, his courage actually swelled and he would toss aside the stick and go in with his fists.

His reputation as a fighter was such that he was brave enough to help himself to meat at social gatherings before the older boys were served. This was a severe breach of custom and hierarchy and would normally get any other young man punished by his seniors, but the older boys knew that if they wanted to enforce such rules they would have to fight Jacob. Few of them saw chance for that.

His childhood sweetheart was Sizakele Gertrude Khumalo, one of the few people who was to remain a constant throughout his life, though his tumultuous political career often contrived to keep them apart.

The only employment his mother could find was as a domestic worker in Cato Manor in Durban; she left her children behind in kwaMaphumulo to be raised by their grandparents. Throughout his life, Jacob never saw much of her. It's said, though, that as the eldest son he refused to allow her to remarry, even after she bore her new lover another child, Jacob's half-sister.

He started teaching himself how to read in Zulu, picking up basic literacy by looking at the books of other children in his area who were attending classes. This was helped along later by a neighbour in Standard 4 (Grade 6), Cabangile, who, despite being a few years younger than him, was still able to

pass on many tips and improved his reading. She gave him and a few of his friends tuition, for which they paid her 25 cents in return. She would give them homework to do, too, which Jacob would concentrate on during his days among the cattle.

The young Jacob loved listening to the radio, a habit that stayed with him all his life. Later, as a teenager, he walked the streets of Durban, struggling to find work. He tried to go to the cinema three times a week, mostly so he could attempt to make sense of the English language.

He tried to decipher Durban's daily English broadsheet *The Mercury*, and relied strongly on *Bona* magazine, which was published monthly in both a Zulu and English version. He would read the Zulu version first and then use that to decode the English version until he began to feel more comfortable with the language.

When he encountered a group of ANC volunteers, they struck a chord with him because he had already been politicised by a family member who was active as a trade unionist.

The young Zuma began to attend their meetings and soon joined the party through its youth league in 1959 – just in time to be a member of the liberation movement when Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd banned the ANC in 1960 following the Sharpeville massacre.

The young Zuma soon became involved in the armed struggle through its military wing Umkhonto weSizwe (MK), which he joined in 1962. He took part in sabotage operations in the province and planned to go into exile for proper military training abroad. To this end, he was tutored in politics by, among others, Moses Mabhida, who deemed him ready in 1963 to become an active MK member. He was meant to be sent to Zambia with 44 other recruits for military training, but the security police got wind of their plan and arrested Zuma's group near Zeerust while they were en route to Botswana. He was only to learn later that Gertrude experienced a miscarriage around this time. They would end up never having a child together.

He was detained in solitary confinement for 90 days at the Hercules Police Station near Pretoria, during which he was interrogated and beaten. His trial

was held at the Pretoria Old Synagogue where Judge Fritz Steyn sentenced the 21-year-old Zuma to 10 years on Robben Island for conspiring to overthrow the apartheid government. Handcuffed and in leg irons, Zuma and his fellow prisoners travelled the more than 1 400km to the Cape in a windowless van with only a bucket between them in which to relieve themselves.

They reached the island off the shores of Cape Town on 30 December 1963, and Zuma shared a communal cell with 30 to 50 other prisoners. They washed in cold water and were given mealie meal three times a day. On the island, he was imprisoned alongside Nelson Mandela and the rest of the ANC old guard, which helped with his continued political education in preparation for what he would do upon his release.

He encouraged the more educated prisoners on the island to start passing on their knowledge to prisoners who were not as learned. He would join these classes, pretending to observe while knowing only too well that he still had a lot to learn himself.

Zuma became a favourite among the ANC leadership on the island because of his cheerful nature, songs and ability to put on impromptu theatre shows. Always ready with a quip or joke, the light-hearted Zuma was said to have been great for morale, something that was often much needed after a day of hard labour in the blue stone quarry digging and crushing slate so that more prison cells could be built.

He initiated political study groups and served in a number of ANC positions on the island, including playing a part in the perpetual fight for more rights in prison – among which was the chance to play sport. He loved soccer and athletics and became the captain of one of the island's teams, the Rangers. He also formed a choral and traditional dance group, and learnt to play table tennis and chess.

For all of the 10 years he was on the island, Zuma never once received a visitor. His mother could not afford the travel fare from Durban to Cape Town, so Zuma wrote to her, encouraging her to rather save her money to look after his brothers and sisters.

He left the island on 29 December 1973, was kept in Pietermaritzburg's police cells for another two weeks and was finally released in Nkandla. A Durban attorney found work for him in a pet shop in the city, while Zuma resumed his political activities behind the scenes. He played a key role in re-establishing underground ANC structures and aided in organising a massive strike of 160 000 workers in the city.

He worked closely with the South African Communist Party's Harry Gwala to send young MK recruits out of the country for military training through Mozambique, from where they later returned with weapons and instructions from leaders in exile. The trickle of these youngsters was to become a flood after the turning point of the Soweto riots of 1976.

He had married Gertrude in 1973 but was soon gone from her again by 1975 after Gwala's arrest. His life in exile started in Swaziland where, the story goes, Thabo Mbeki first taught him how to use a gun. It was also on a train in Swaziland that he met his second wife, Nkosazana Dlamini, a strong, independent young medical doctor blazing her own trail in the ANC. Before he married her, he asked for permission from his first wife Gertrude, whose favourable response was: "When you went into exile, I never expected you to be alone all the time."

After a number of run-ins with the police in Swaziland, he was deported to Mozambique where he served as the official ANC deputy chief representative and later chief representative.

He worked closely with Mbeki and others and was later deployed to work largely within the Natal Machinery. He became synonymous with the internal underground work of the ANC, which elevated him into the ranks of the ANC national executive committee (NEC) in 1977; he proved to be naturally gifted in intelligence and counter-intelligence, which particularly came to the fore after 1978 when he completed a three-month leadership and military training course in the Soviet Union. It's said he learnt to understand Russian perfectly.

By 1984, he had been elected the deputy chief representative of the ANC, and remained in Mozambique. By 1986, Zuma commanded the Mandla Judson Kuzwayo unit with Yunis Shaik, his brother Moe Shaik and Jayendra Naidoo,

who were able to infiltrate the security police in Durban and access information relating to some of the informers the apartheid police were relying on to combat the ANC. When PW Botha's government learnt of this, they put considerable pressure on Mozambican authorities to expel six senior members of the ANC, including Jacob Zuma, from their borders. The party moved Zuma to Lusaka in Zambia in January on 1987, where he was appointed the deputy head of the ANC's secret police and head of the intelligence unit known as the "Green House". He was to report mainly to his only senior in the ANC intelligence wing, Joe Nhlanha, who had been his boss for several years at that point.

One of his main tasks was the unmasking of informants and traitors within the ANC and MK using the resources of the ANC secret police, known informally as the Mbokodo or "The Grindstone".

Those were brutal times, not only because South Africa was at war with the frontline states and those in the struggle were regularly found, arrested, tortured, beaten, detained without trial and even killed, but because trust among comrades was at an all-time low. The apartheid state had infiltrated its way into just about every organ of the ANC.

The infamous story of Craig Williamson and all the shock and disbelief that followed his unmasking in 1980 had led to a major escalation in counter-intelligence in the ANC, and no one was closer to the coal face in that department than Jacob Zuma.

The audacity of Williamson's case was a wake-up call for everyone in the ANC, but especially for Zuma.

Williamson, born in 1949, turned out to be a police major who had inveigled himself into the heart of the ANC to direct a series of state-sponsored overseas bombings, burglaries, kidnappings, assassinations and propaganda. The lesson from his story was that there was seemingly no limit to the lengths the apartheid government was willing to go to, and the amount of patience it was willing to demonstrate, to plant its operatives in the heart of the liberation movement.

After his year in the police, in 1972 Williamson was instructed to enrol to

study politics and law at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), which at that time was a hotbed of liberal activism. He appeared to immerse himself in student politics, at first through the Wits students' representative council and, later, the leftist National Union of South African Students (Nusas).

He soon appeared to be on the frontline in the war against apartheid. At a march, he was beaten up, arrested and spent a year on trial. He rose up through the student movement's ranks to become the Nusas vice president.

After being harassed by security police and having his passport seized, he fled the country to continue his activism with the International University Exchange Fund (IUEF), an anti-apartheid organisation in exile. He was eventually appointed the fund's deputy director, where he redirected some of the money meant for the struggle straight back to the apartheid government.

As a recent biography about him revealed, as the IUEF's money man, Williamson had access to powerful ANC and Black Consciousness leaders.

"He joined the ANC and formed his own unit to carry out clandestine work to topple the National Party government. But Williamson was not the anti-apartheid activist his friends and comrades thought he was. In January 1980, Captain Williamson was unmasked as a South African spy. His handler, Colonel Johan Coetzee, the head of South Africa's notorious Security Branch, flew to Switzerland to bring him and his wife back home."

Williamson was described as South Africa's superspy who had even penetrated Russia's feared KGB. His unmasking only inspired him to work harder and kill more, and when Williamson returned to South Africa during the turbulent 1980s, he worked for the foreign section of the police's security branch.

Professor Peter Vale wrote about that time: "On landing, he was lauded by the local press – especially the then odious *Sunday Times* – who played off the metaphors of the Cold War spy-writer, John le Carré. It's not surprising that in apartheid circles he became something of a hero.

"Two years after he left Switzerland, he returned to Europe under a false name and with a crack squad of special force officers to blow up the ANC's

headquarters in London. He was also responsible for a parcel bomb that killed Ruth First in Mozambique and the bomb that killed Jeanette Schoon and her six-year-old daughter Katryn in Angola.”

He was later granted amnesty by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for these crimes despite expressing no remorse for them.

For Zuma during this time, it was difficult to know who might be another Craig Williamson and who not. The ANC was only too aware that there were far bigger collaborators than this police operative, and unmasking them could be considerably harder.

Little is known about the Mbokodo, but the late journalist David Beresford spent a lot of time trying to understand it, particularly why the ANC’s Motsuenyane Commission in 1993 implicated the Mbokodo, and by extension Zuma, in possible human rights abuses.

In the 1980s, the Mbokodo was concentrating on disciplinary functions and guard duties in places such as Quatro, the ANC’s main detention camp in Angola, moving away from intelligence activities.

The nature of Mbokodo can be best conveyed by an account of some of the allegations arising from the 1983 Quatro mutiny, which revealed many horror stories from that time.

Beresford wrote: “There were accounts of routine and bizarre acts of torture, beatings with barbed wire, bicycle chains and iron bars, and food and water deprivation.

“Detainees were made to crawl through colonies of red ants with pig fat rubbed into their skin. A prisoner had his lips burned by cigarettes and his testicles squeezed with pliers; a detainee was buried up to his neck before being suffocated with a plastic bag; a woman had a guard masturbate over her because she refused to have sex with security officials. A trainee tried to commit suicide after his girlfriend was ‘taken away’. People were locked up in goods containers, in suffocating conditions. And people simply disappeared.”

Beresford admitted it was very difficult, if not downright impossible, to know what part, if any, Zuma had played in some of these abuses, and the dates in government biographies and listings of commanders that were sent to the TRC were confusing, at best.

He mentioned two murders in particular that went to the heart of the Mbokodo, the first being of Mzwakhe Ngwenya, better known as Thami Zulu, a once popular commander from Natal who had died from poisoning in 1989 after being held by the Mbokodo for 14 months without charge, including eight weeks in solitary confinement.

His deputy was a man with many names, but was universally recognised in the ANC as “Comrade Fear” or just “Ralph”. His real name was apparently Cyril Raymond.

“He died while in the custody of the Mbokodo, denying that he was a police spy. He apparently drowned in his own vomit,” wrote Beresford.

“The death of Thami Zulu caused such an uproar within the ANC that the organisation was forced to set up a commission of inquiry into it. It found no evidence that Thami was a South African agent.”

Ralph’s name crops up here and there, much as it did in Beresford’s article, but what’s most curious about it is how little we officially know about him, especially as he was one of the most important agents for the South African government in their infiltration of the ANC. His role and impact was possibly far greater than Craig Williamson’s could ever have been, and yet he features as little more than a few paragraphs in history’s pages.

One man who knows everything about this man’s story and the damage he once caused the ANC – and perhaps continues to cause – is not talking about it, either, and that man is Jacob Zuma.

What we do know about Ralph is that his mischief in the ANC led to the murder of one of its most popular Natal commanders, Benjamin Langa, the brother of writer Mandla Langa and Pius Langa – who later became the chief justice.

Ben was shot dead in Pietermaritzburg in May 1984 by fellow MK soldiers Sipho Xulu and Lucky Payi. Payi and Xulu had gone out of the country and received military training at MK bases in Angola before returning to South Africa. Apparently acting under orders from the high command of the ANC, they convinced a friend of Ben's, Joel Martins, to take them to Ben's flat, knock on the door and call out to him. When Ben Langa opened the door, they walked in and gunned him down, later testifying that they then fled to a waiting car and sped off.

Both shooters were hanged on 9 September 1986 by the South African authorities for the murder, which only compounded the tragedy.

The victim's brother Mandla had once considered one of the trigger men, Xulu, a personal friend after they had met at the ANC's Malange camp in Angola. Even worse, Xulu and his victim had been even closer.

Beresford wrote: "Xulu testified that Ben had actually recruited him into the ANC and helped him get out of South Africa. In exile Xulu had risen to the rank of battalion commander before being sent back to kill his sponsor and friend.

"Asked by counsel when and where he was given instructions to kill Ben, Xulu said it was on the way from Mbabane in a car driven 'by the regional chief of security for Umkhonto weSizwe'."

Xulu testified: "While we were in the motor car he [the regional chief] then said to me ... there is a person who has done us a lot of harm. I asked him: 'Who is that person?' He said the person was Ben Langa. I said: 'It cannot be Ben Langa.'"

But Xulu was such a highly trained and disciplined MK cadre that he still followed his orders despite having serious misgivings about it. Beresford wrote that one exhibit in the Pietermaritzburg trial had been a decrypted code book in which one entry read: "Ben Langa eliminated on May 20. Reason: Leonard informed us on the day we left that Ben is the guy who handed two comrades to the Boers."

Reading David Beresford's 2009 article about the saga, you would have to be

naive to miss the implication the journalist was trying to create that Jacob Zuma knew far more about the debacle than he was letting on.

He wrote: “There was only one ANC cadre named Leonard in the region at the time. He flatly denies having been a ‘regional chief of security’, or having had the conversation recounted by Xulu. His only connection with Ben was that he (Ben) had been seen with a former policeman in Wentworth and Leonard had sent a report to this effect – to Jacob Zuma.”

What Beresford fails to mention is that names can mean little when trying to figure out what was going on in the 1980s in MK.

Former MK member Mwezi Twala, in writing about the Mbokodo, explained in 1994: “No one knows how many people were slaughtered at Quatro and the other camps, not even the ANC leaders. The use of MK names and Quatro names added to the confusion of keeping track of who was dead or alive.” He added that he had heard “one bizarre case where due to a confusion in code names a prisoner being tortured confessed to having murdered himself”.

In the year 2000, Martins told the TRC that one of Ben’s killers had in fact told him they had been acting under orders from a senior commander in Swaziland named Ralph. Ben was executed for having “sold out comrades”, according to Ralph.

Zuma was due to have testified at the TRC hearing into Benjamin Langa’s murder, but failed to show. Not even the celebrated senior counsel George Bizos, who appeared for the Langa family at the hearing, was able to get a statement about the matter from him.

However, a statement from Thabo Mbeki that did make its way into the TRC’s records pointed the finger directly at Ralph.

Mbeki wrote: “In a few cases, deliberate misinformation resulted in attacks and assassination in which dedicated cadres lost their lives. In one of the most painful examples of this nature, a state agent with an MK name of Fear ordered two cadres to execute Ben Langa on the grounds that Langa was an agent of the regime. These cadres, Clement Payi and Lucky Xulu, carried out

their orders. This action resulted in serious disruption of underground and mass democratic structures in the area and intense distress to the Langa family, which was the obvious intention of Fear's handlers.

"Once the facts were known to the leadership of the ANC, President Tambo personally met with the family to explain and apologise for this action. Xulu and Payi were arrested and executed. A triple murder had been achieved by the apartheid regime without firing a single shot themselves."

Beresford wrote that "the basis on which Mbeki was able to identify Fear as a police agent and a murderer is not known".

This incident ranks as among the most embarrassing in the operational history of the ANC. All three of the young men who lost their lives through it were popular and well regarded in MK. Both Ben's brothers went on to live accomplished lives, and the matter has remained sensitive. As late as 2013, President Zuma apologised again on behalf of the ANC to Benjamin's family at Pius Langa's funeral.

The apartheid government's infiltration of the ANC had produced more paranoia, infighting and self-destruction than they could ever have hoped for. According to Twala, "The purge created great fear among all of us, to the point where the smallest criticism, such as of badly prepared food, was seriously reconsidered by every individual, for one could never be certain that a 'best friend' would keep his mouth shut."

The regime had devised many ways to infiltrate the ANC, most of them successful, and apartheid-trained soldiers were often even more schooled in the history of the ANC, its traditions and character than some of the innocent soldiers.

These infiltrators did immeasurable damage, not only collecting intelligence but also causing distrust among comrades and ensuring that many good comrades were successfully accused as spies, to be brutally tortured and even killed.

Later, when the truth emerged that these "spies" had been innocent and their accusers were in fact the real spies, the sense of guilt that left on the

shoulders of those who had hurt or killed them was profound.

When double agents would send comrades on missions that ended in inevitable capture by apartheid police, most of these comrades never returned. They died fighting arrest at all cost, perhaps realising at that moment they had been sold out. Others, faced with all the evidence that they had been betrayed, still refused to believe it. They hung on to the hope that there might be some explanation or a mistake made, as it was difficult to fathom that any MK soldier would deliberately plot the death of another.

But while the apartheid government had many spies, none was as masterly, none caused as much damage, none was as highly respected and revered and none as loyal to the Afrikaners who had deployed him than Ralph.

This is among the reasons why Comrade Fear has been written out of history and why it's so difficult to get comrades to talk about him. He caused so much confusion, so much death, recrimination and unintentional betrayal from loyal cadres, that to begin to unravel his networks and the full impact of his crimes over what is said to be the 18 long years or even more that he was part of the ANC is something has always threatened to unravel the ANC itself. The guilt that comrades continue to feel about having worked beside him and trusted him, along with the devastation that undeserved trust led to, has ensured that few people outside the ANC in exile have ever even heard of him.

Fortunately, not even an operative who was as skilled and respected in the ANC as Ralph was able to avoid detection forever.

In 1984, while staying in a three-bedroom prefab house in Manzini, Swaziland, Zweli Nyanda, the brother of MK veteran Siphiwe Nyanda, spent a great deal of time trying to puzzle out the mystery of why so many of their operations had failed – failures that had led to many comrades losing their lives, being captured or simply disappearing.

The problem was that few operations were ever only the knowledge of one or two people alone, and it was difficult to know who the traitor might be. He was beginning to strongly suspect Ralph, difficult as it must have been for him to do so because Ralph had been part of MK for such a long time and

was such a senior, trusted officer as Zweli's head of communications, and possibly well beyond that.

But if he was an agent of the regime, it would have explained why so many of their plans were going awry because Ralph was at the nerve centre of MK. There was little that he, as head of communications in Zweli's division as well as beyond it, did not know. It was hard to imagine a worse position for an apartheid informer to occupy than this, but that's exactly where Ralph was.

So Nyanda lied to Ralph and told him he had reason to believe that one of the collaborators they were working with – another man with them in the transit house at that moment in Manzini, Keith McFadden – was a spy.

He told Ralph that he had laid a trap for Keith.

“I told Comrade Keith about a big cache of weapons and bombs in this house. I suspect he is the one who's been informing. I told only him about it. But there are no weapons here, Comrade. It's just a trap. If the cops come looking that cache, we will know it's McFadden who has been selling us out to the Boere. I never trusted him. I never trusted his brother. But let's see. I told him the high command knows about those bombs, so he has no reason to suspect he can be exposed if the cops come. If no one comes, then maybe it's not McFadden. I will then have to keep looking to find the spy.

“No spy can be told what I just told McFadden and do nothing. No way. If Keith is a spy, they will come. They will come.

“But let's see, Comrade, let's see.”

Ralph dutifully said he could not believe McFadden was betraying them and he was sure no police would come. But the opportunity this unexpected moment appeared to present was just too great. At the first available opportunity, he communicated the message to the nearby Swazi police about how critically important it was that they came to the house to make it look as though they were trying to find weapons.

In the transcripts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings that

were conducted into the deaths that later occurred in that little house in Manzini, mention is made of the fact that the house was raided by the Swazi police.

A South African policeman, Warrant Officer Freek Pienaar, who was involved in what happened later, was asked under cross-examination by the TRC if he had any knowledge as to whether the house was raided by the Swazi Police, “immediately prior or a day or two prior to [Zweli Nyanda and Keith McFadden being killed by the South African Police”.

He denied having any knowledge of such a raid, but was told that the ANC was aware that “Keith McFadden had informed his brother, Gavin, that their house was in fact raided one or two days prior to this operation taking place and that all the weapons that they might have had on them, were in fact removed”.

Pienaar then expressed surprise that the police had not arrested anyone.

The reason was that there had been nothing to find. They were forced to leave empty-handed, but it was at that point that Zweli’s suspicion of the near-impossible was confirmed. He had already begun to suspect Ralph after the South African Defence Force attacked an ANC facility in Matola, near Maputo, and Ralph had been one of the few who escaped.

Ralph had to be a spy – possibly the most dangerous in the history of the ANC.

No one can say for sure what happened in that house after Comrade Zweli Nyanda had his proof.

According to a later confession from Ralph, Zweli told Keith about the trap and McFadden was furious. They confronted Ralph, who defended himself and pointed out it could simply have been a coincidence that the Swazi police had come knocking that day. Ralph managed to cloud the issue despite the clear evidence and told his accusers:” We are going to Maputo this week, Comrades. The leadership there are the ones who should address this issue.”

Both McFadden and Mkhize shook their heads, but agreed to wait until they

were in Maputo to take the matter further.

At this point, Ralph managed to communicate his predicament to the South African Police. No one is entirely sure how he did this, whether through a direct call to Piet Retief or Ermelo, or through a message to the nearby Swazi police, but the message reached Special Agent Colonel Chris Deetlefs.

The police were told everything there was to know about the house and a major operation was mounted within a short space of time.

Reading through the TRC amnesty committee transcripts of the police's version of what transpired at that time, a picture is painted of a well-planned attack on the house that was coordinated over a number of days, but the MK version and, according to Ralph's later confession, was that it took mere hours.

The elite of the force were called in, including a man whose name has gone on to live in infamy in apartheid history, Eugene de Kock, aka Prime Evil. Back in 1983, De Kock had only recently joined the death squad based at Vlakplaas 20km west of Pretoria after making his name with Koevoet.

Their amnesty-application testimony suggested that De Kock and other officers, under orders from the head of the Security Branch and Brigadier Willem Schoon, were sent to Swaziland to kill Zweli Nyanda for his role in attacks against South Africa as the head of MK's Natal machinery. The stakes had been raised by the Church Street bombing in Durban, which had been authorised by ANC leader Oliver Tambo. They believed the bomb had been smuggled into South Africa from Swaziland.

That was, he said, the justification for the operation to kill Nyanda in Swaziland and the reason he and the others were applying for amnesty.

Schoon was the first witness to testify on 14 June 1999. The officers who testified after him tended to stick to the same story that day and the next.

They maintained that they had not known that Keith McFadden was also in the house, but they were under strict instructions to kill all the occupants of the house. When De Kock testified, he insisted they had been told to kill

Nyanda's colleague Edward Lawrence, who they also knew as Cyril Raymond, Comrade Fear, Cecil and Ralph. All of these names referred to the same person, who witness after witness from the South African Police denied had ever been an informer for them.

At one point, De Kock tried to suggest to the hearing that he was aware the ANC was concerned that they may have made a mistake about Ralph, who he referred to as Lawrence.

"I would just like to mention at this point, that the history of Lawrence, if I have it correctly from reports, is that upon a previous occasion with the Defence Force's attack on Matola, near Maputo, he was one of the few who escaped. And that suspicion fell upon him after he escaped for a second time from Swaziland. Me, a DCC officer and a former officer were in Vienna busy with the recruitment of another agent with the Department of Intelligence and Security, the specific division referred to as [Mbokodo], which was highly feared. This person enquired about two persons from me consistently after we met and became acquainted. 'There was MK Thami Zulu, his name was Boniface who operated in Swaziland and about whom we later made a terrible mistake'.

"He also asked me whether Lawrence was a source and I told him that he was not a source, that he was a very effective operative. And he once again said that 'we made a terrible mistake with him as well'. And the idea that I had from this was that both had been murdered by the ANC."

De Kock, however, failed to mention who it was he had supposedly been talking to in Vienna. He was keeping to a carefully constructed script about what to say at the amnesty hearing, including doing everything possible to create doubt that Ralph had ever been a spy.

Even so many years after the end of apartheid, enormous trouble was being gone to in order to protect a long-dead spy. No one could admit the simple truth: that they had gone to Manzini to save one of their own, one of the most important agents to have ever infiltrated the ANC.

What was never in dispute was that the South African Police's killers crossed the border into Swaziland and later attacked the house. One person managed

to escape through a window and ran away, straight to the nearest police station. That person was Ralph. The ANC maintains that he had lain in bed, just as instructed, fully dressed with his shoes on.

Ralph and McFadden had gone to bed in their own rooms, and Nyanda, who had invited a girl over to keep him company that night, took her with him to his room. Her name was Fikile.

Then, in the early hours of the morning, they heard a crashing sound that woke them all up.

It was a shock grenade being thrown through a window and, when it exploded, it shook the walls of that prefab house like a small earthquake. De Kock said in his testimony: “It had a double action, it would give two explosions. The objective was disorientation without shrapnel. I then observed that Colonel Cronje was standing in front of the back door [and] that he was firing his Machete into the door at the lock and handle section.”

Nyanda reacted by taking the girl to the bathroom, ordering her to lie flat on the ground and stay completely still. In the ensuing maelstrom, both McFadden and Nyanda were killed, while the woman suffered a bullet wound to her thigh.

De Kock testified: “I then left that section where I had been stationed and ran to Colonel Cronje to help him to kick the door in. In the process, I seriously injured my foot, I broke my toe and, in the process, when the door finally went open, Colonel Cronje ran in with Van Zweel behind him.

“At first I tried to step on my foot. At that stage bullets, which I thought originally came from within the house, about 30 rounds of bullets, were fired approximately two metres away from us. The entire place was full of steam, it [had] fired the heating system of the house. At that stage, I saw a person moving away from the house in an easterly direction. It was a shadowy figure, I wanted to fire but abstained because I didn’t know whether or not it was Bosego or Nofomela [De Kock’s black officers], who were seeking shelter. I didn’t want to risk shooting one of my own members.

“Upon that, I moved into the house where I found Cronje in the first bedroom

on the left side. I don't know who was in the second bedroom. I went straight through to the room that I had tossed the shock grenade into. I found nobody there.

"From there, Van Zweel and I went to the lounge. Mr van Zweel fired shots with the Scorpion into the lounge and I went in. His shooting was to provide extra fire should there be anybody there. I looked around with a torch. I couldn't switch on any lights and I didn't find any form of occupation or any clothing or bags or documentation.

"From there, Van Zweel and I moved into the room into which I had tossed the shock grenade and I saw that there was blood on the floor which led to the bathroom. The bathroom was on the right-hand side. I tried to break the lock but the door was locked and there was blood of approximately knee length against the wall. I still asked somebody whether they knew whether this person had been killed but they said he had been shot. I left Van Zweel at the door of the bathroom and went outside with the idea to throw a shock grenade through the bathroom window.

"And as I exited at the kitchen window and I was busy obtaining the grenade, a person burst through this window. He broke through, physically, through that part of the window and I immediately opened fire.

"I have a vague recollection, I think I fired about six or seven shots on this person, it didn't appear that there was any impact on this person's body. He fell down, on to the ground and then jumped up and once again began to run. Initially I couldn't shoot because it would have been in line with Bosego and, as soon as he moved out of that line of fire, he started firing again. I fired about three or four shots at his back; he was a target which was moving away from me. And once again, it appeared to me that this person could not be killed or I wasn't firing, that I was missing. A metre or a metre and a half from the gate, he collapsed. I approached him and saw that Mr Pienaar was approaching from my right-hand side. He fired two shots with the Perchet at the person who had fallen, he fired two shots at his head. However, I accepted that he had already died because he had the position of somebody who was dead."

The victim was Zweli Nyanda, who De Kock recognised from his

photographs and having seen him in the flesh on one occasion before.

De Kock also confirmed Chris McFadden had been killed inside the house.

“I saw a man lying in the one room on the left side. If you move down in an eastern direction, in the passage. However, I did not know who it was. I saw no other dead persons there apart from the blood mark which led to the bathroom.”

As for the woman who had been with Zweli, De Kock said that it was only later, when they got back to their hotel, that they “had a quick discussion ... and orders were given by Cronje, and there I was informed that there had been a woman who had hidden in a cupboard or underneath a bed, I am not entirely certain”.

He believed she had been left completely unharmed.

De Kock said some of them crossed back into South Africa illegally hours later near the official border post.

He was repeatedly questioned under cross-examination about how suspicious it was that they had allowed someone to escape from the house.

De Kock countered that he had not felt confident enough to shoot the escapee, reiterating that it may have been one of his own men.

“I did indeed see somebody running in an easterly direction. In other words, away from the house. At that point I wanted to fire on this person and decided not to because I was not sure whether it was one of my members who ran there, or whether he was following somebody else.”

De Kock’s cross-examiner did not miss how weak an explanation this was. He asked: “Would one of your members run away from the scene of the target where you were supposed to attack?”

They would have done even better to ask De Kock, even more pointedly, if it was possible for the fleeing person to be anyone *other* than a member of the opposing side considering that the man was running away mere moments

after the detonation of De Kock's shock grenade.

Unfortunately no one asked that question and De Kock was allowed to get away with saying: "I did not say somebody ran away or that one of my members ran away. One of the members might have decided to follow somebody who was running away. But I could not take the risk; in that case, I must allow that person to get away before I shoot one of my own people. And as I have said previously, policemen learn to think on the ground, think on your feet. One of our greatest problems at that stage was that we did not have internal radio communication."

All the police witnesses maintained they had been told that when Ralph reached the Swazi police, he was naked. One of the cross-examiners mentioned, however, that they found De Kock's reasoning about not shooting the man strange, since he had stated he was concerned the fleeing man might be one of his own officers, but a naked man could not possibly have been part of their group.

"Mr de Kock mentioned in his evidence to us that the person escaped and the reason he didn't shoot was because he wasn't sure at that stage whether the person was possibly one of the members of your group or not. Now if the person was unclothed at the time I find his reasoning then strange."

Captain Paul van Dyk answered: "I think when Mr de Kock saw the man he was quite a way from there already, so you couldn't have seen whether the person was naked or not. I think that question has to be put to Geoff Bosigu, because he would be able to say whether this man was naked or not; he was at the window.

"Are you saying that it was so dark that you can see a person, but you can't tell whether the man has clothes on or not?"

"I don't know, you have to ask that to Colonel de Kock."

The transcripts from those two days of amnesty hearings run to several pages, and yet not one witness – from the brigadier who ordered the killings to the colonels and lesser-ranked officers who took part in the operation – was willing to reveal who their source had been. They would not say whether he

was either in the South African or the Swazi police. They denied a report from someone called “the subject” who had allegedly come out of the house to talk to the policemen before the attack took place, and who then went back to the house before escaping through a window.

They were already aware that the TRC had concluded that Ralph had been a spy and he had been their source all along, but in their amnesty applications the former policemen professed complete ignorance of this, instead offering testimony in direct contradiction of it.

If ever there was a reason for the TRC to be reopened again, from scratch, it is the lies that were peddled by all those police witnesses in 1999 about what really happened at that house in Manzini.

Eugene de Kock and whoever else is still around from that time should do the right thing and tell us the truth about who Ralph really was. Don’t hold your breath, though, that it will ever happen. After all, we’re talking about Eugene de Kock.

In volume 2, chapter 2, subsection 27 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final report that had been published earlier in 1998, it states: “On November 22 1983, Mr Zwelibanzi ‘Zweli’ Nyanda, MK commander for Swaziland and head of the ANC’s Natal military machinery, and a fellow MK combatant, Mr Keith McFadden, were killed in Manzini, Swaziland. The operation was authorised by the head of the Security Branch and Willem Schoon, who applied for amnesty for it. The operation was led by Vlakplaas commander Brigadier Jack Cronjé, while his raiding party included [Eugene] De Kock, Almond Nofemela, Jeff Bosigo, and a number of Eastern Transvaal security police including Sergeant Chris Rorich, Captain Paul van Dyk, and Warrant Officer ‘Freek’ Pienaar.

“A third person in the house was the second-in-command of the MK’s Natal machinery, Mr Edward Lawrence (aka ‘Fear’, Ralph McGina and Cyril Raymonds). He escaped by jumping out of a window. It later turned out that this was by prearrangement as he had, for ten years, been a Security Branch agent or source. ‘Fear’ supplied the information on Zweli’s house and gave the attackers a signal when the occupants were asleep. Nyanda was shot by De Kock and McFadden by Cronje. Those involved in this operation received

the Police Star for Outstanding Service (SOE medal) from the then Minister of Police, Louis le Grange.”

The importance of these medals was not something that went unnoticed by the amnesty hearing, as they were not only the highest honour that could have been bestowed on any police officer, technically it should have been impossible for the men who’d taken part in the mission to receive these medals, as they were strictly reserved for generals.

Under examination, Brigadier Schoon’s counsel attempted to use the high honours they received as something in their favour, in possible mitigation of the murders.

He was asked: “Were any awards given to some of the members who were involved in the incident?”

“If I recall correctly there was an application for medals and these medals were awarded to them.”

“Can you recall which type of medals these were?”

“It was a medal which would usually, if I recall correctly, only be allocated to generals.”

“The SOE?”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“And, as you have said, usually only generals would be the recipients of such medals?”

“That’s correct.”

“And in this case it was awarded to who?”

“I think it was Jack Cronje, Mr de Kock and three or four other persons who had been involved in this operation.”

Just think about the implication of this for a moment. These former

policemen would have had that hearing believe that they were given such a lofty honour for taking part in an operation in which they had been meant to kill *two* identified operatives, the first being Zweli Nyanda, and the second being Comrade Fear. The fact that they also killed Chris McFadden was merely a detail. But they only killed *one*.

Upon objective assessment then they had only completed half of their intended mission, since Comrade Fear had not only escaped, he had actually been *noticed* by one of the medal recipients as fled, and still been allowed to get away. At best, then, the killers could not possibly have considered their operation an overwhelming success for which the highest honour possible would need to be bestowed.

And yet, that's exactly what happened. They received their medals, but that happened not because the South African government was feeling particularly generous that day but because they had in fact achieved every single detail of their actual mission – which had been to *save* Comrade Fear and ensure they killed his accusers, Nyanda and McFadden.

As for that mission, they succeeded brilliantly, and they still have the medals to show for it.

So what happened to Ralph, then, you may be wondering. Well, the Swazi police soon released him, after which the ANC's leadership ordered him to report to Maputo.

All across the MK camps, comrades were moved and shocked by the deaths of comrades Nyanda and McFadden. Some of them were angry and even started to question how Ralph could have survived the attack. He quickly became a suspect in their eyes.

However, when Ralph arrived in Maputo he was greeted with a hug from Sipiwe Nyanda, the so-recently-slain Zweli Nyanda's brother. In those days, Sipiwe Nyanda was serving as a field commander in MK and later became MK chief of staff in 1992. He would go on to serve on the Transitional Executive Council that oversaw the change of government in 1994.

During democracy, he would – like most former MK soldiers – join the South

African National Defence Force into which MK was incorporated in 1994, and eventually be promoted to chief of the SANDF in 1998, becoming minister of communications for 18 months, from 2009 to 2010. President Jacob Zuma would give him a job as an adviser after removing him from cabinet when allegations of financial impropriety were to emerge against him. Despite this, that would not later stop Nyanda, in early 2016, from joining the chorus of calls for Zuma to step down as president.

In order to be able to understand the hug Siphiwe Nyanda gave Ralph that day in 1983 in Maputo, it's necessary to pause for a moment and look at the story of another MK soldier who worked with Siphiwe Nyanda in those days and who continues to have questions for his old commander, which he believes have not been answered to this day.

That man's name is Keith "Kid" Sogovu. He joined MK at the age of 15 and soon built a name for himself as a fearless soldier. When he joined the Gebuza Machinery, MK's Transvaal urban machinery, which operated from 1977 to 1987, he fell directly under Siphiwe Nyanda's command.

Sogovu distinguished himself as an operative who was regularly sent into South Africa for some of the most difficult sabotage missions around, including blowing up police stations. After returning from one of these successful missions in 1982, he was later deployed by Nyanda with Curtis Mhlanzi to execute a follow-up mission.

Upon arrival at the agreed location in South Africa, they successfully located their DLB (dead letter box) where they expected to find the guns and bombs they needed for their mission – but there was nothing there.

When they made contact with their commander, Siphiwe Nyanda told them "The baby is sick", the code phrase that something was wrong.

Curtis found it strange that their commander appeared to mainly be interested in their current location. Nyanda gave them another address to go to and wait there for their weapons to be delivered, but something about this new instruction didn't look and feel right.

So for safety's sake, they agreed that Curtis would go on his own to wait for

the weapons, collect them and rejoin Kid at a spot only the two of them knew about.

Curtis reached the spot that Nyanda had directed them to. But instead of bombs and guns arriving, Security Branch members appeared and promptly arrested him.

They tortured him to the point of near death because they wanted to know where Kid was. Somehow they knew that both men were meant to have been together. Curtis eventually relented and led them to his comrade.

It was obvious to both men that these police officers knew far more about them than should have been possible. They were even in possession of a statement Sogovu had given his commander, Siphiwe Nyanda, about all the details of their previous mission.

Every time Kid answered one of their questions, they would go to the phone and speak to someone on the other end. At one stage, Kid Sogovo remembers lying on the floor and hearing them talking about someone named Ralph.

“Ralph says he’s telling the truth,” one of them said.

He didn’t know who Ralph was, and continued to be in the dark about it until he and I met when I interviewed him for this book.

I gave him a brief explanation of who Ralph actually was.

Kid Sogovo, a grown man who had seen it all, had tears in his eyes when I told him.

“Thank you,” he told me. “You’ve just answered one of the biggest questions of my life.”

He and Curtis were sent to Robben Island after their capture. For years, he was filled with questions about not only his own capture but what had led to the capture and deaths of so many of his fellow comrades in the Gebuza Machinery. They had felt cursed, unable to regularly pull off any missions of genuine significance, because it always seemed that the security police were a

step or two ahead of them.

When he was released, he and other comrades who'd survived met with their old commander and demanded answers from him. What was obvious to them was that the Gebuza Machinery had been infiltrated at the highest levels. They wanted to know if General Nyanda knew who the spy was and they wanted to know what had happened to Nokuthula Simelane, who Sogovo remembers well from when they had lived together in Maputo.

She was a 23-year-old university graduate when she disappeared while working as a courier for MK, moving between Swaziland and South Africa.

She was abducted in 1983 after falling into a trap, presumably set by one of her own and was never seen again.

General Nyanda agreed to answer their questions and promised to call them within a few days for a debriefing. Since then they have continued to wait for two decades. They're still waiting, even after Willem Coetzee, Anton Pretorius, Frederick Mong and Msebenzi Radebe were finally prosecuted for Simelane's murder in 2016.

Early in 2017, Kid Sogovu was sitting in Soweto listening to the radio. He heard that Siphwe Nyanda was calling for the removal of Zuma and that he would be addressing MK soldiers at Luthuli House.

So Kid jumped in a taxi and found a full auditorium at Luthuli House. Every journalist in the country was there to hear Siphwe Nyanda denouncing Jacob Zuma and calling for him to step down or be removed.

Overcome with emotion, Kid Sogovu could not help himself. The anger and outrage were bubbling over in him and he marched to the front to confront his old commander in full view of the world's video cameras and recorders to ask him the same question he had asked so many years before: "What happened to Nokuthula Simelane? Before you can talk about removing Zuma, give us those answers."

This unexpected conflict was a treat for the media, who lapped it up. You can find a number of articles written about what happened on 6 February 2017.

*Times Live* quoted Sogovu as telling Nyanda as he walked from the gallery to confront Nyanda at the podium: “No, no, no, sorry ... This conference must answer a lot of questions ... Nokuthula Simelane disappeared when you commanded us to come and fight inside the country,” Sogovu said. “You never gave any press conference. You never told us about the disappearance of Nokuthula Simelane.”

*The Times* said a shocked Nyanda ordered Sogovu to be removed from the conference venue and the “short, plump man was dragged out by security officials”.

Some of the other veterans, as well as Sogovu himself, heard Nyanda declaring the unthinkable words: “I don’t know this man”, though he would soon backtrack on that.

Nyanda told the media after Sogovu was thrown out: “It’s been written so many times that Nokuthula was captured by the enemy, tortured and most likely killed. I didn’t even know that she was participating in the struggle in our missionary. Some people were working with her so I had absolutely nothing to do with her.”

But Sogovu offered a different version to reporters outside.

“Clinging on to a placard with the words ‘Tell us about Nokuthula Simelane, Sphiwe Nyanda’ scribbled on it, Sogovu said Simelane was working under Nyanda when she was captured by the security forces, tortured and killed.

“Sogovu said he had also landed in jail during the apartheid era after following orders by Nyanda.”

They quoted him as saying: “I committed acts of sabotage in 1982 with other comrades and we went back and reported to [Nyanda] in Swaziland. From Swaziland we went to Mozambique.

“Then in 1983, he sent us back again to come and commit further acts of sabotage as members of MK and that is when I was arrested,” he said.

Kid retold the story of his arrest and said he was still waiting for an

explanation from Nyanda about how they could have been arrested.

“What I am demanding from Siphiwe Nyanda is to give a full report. Who sold out this lady? I suspect the person who sold out this lady is the same person who sold us out,” Sogovu told reporters.

Nyanda admitted that day that he knew Sogovu “very well”.

He claimed that he had “heard about his unhappiness a few weeks ago from people who said ‘Kid is unhappy about stuff’. I didn’t expect this.”

I later met with Kid in a Wimpy at Maponya Mall in Soweto shortly before finishing this book. The tears in his eyes were very heartfelt as he took out his phone to show me a photo of another of his former commanders, Barney Molokoane, who he described as one of the bravest MK commanders, a man who not only sent his men into South Africa but would be the one to lead them.

After Barney was shot during an exchange of gunfire with South African forces, he and Kid spoke about the liberation movement while Kid was cleaning his wounds.

Barney told him: “Comrade, you must never trust Gebuza [referring to Siphiwe Nyanda].”

At the time, Kid dismissed it as the words of one commander simply being jealous of another unit. But when he told me that story, it was clear he no longer felt that way.

So I decided to come right out and ask him a question others I had previously asked had been evasive about.

“Do you think Gebuza was an enemy agent?”

There was a silence before he answered, but it was emphatic.

“Yes. You see, Comrade McKenzie, I was trained in MCW [military combat work] and there is no way he was not. He sent many of us to our graves and to imprisonment.”

So let's get back to that hug Siphwe Nyanda gave Ralph in Maputo shortly after Ralph arrived with a cloud of suspicion hanging over him, a cloud of suspicion that perhaps he had something to do with the murder of Zweli Nyanda – the brother of the very man giving him that embrace. It had the predictable effect of calming all suspicion among the comrades.

There was no way any man would give a hug to someone if there was even half a reason to think he may have had a hand in the killing of his brother. The comrades told each other the conclusion was inescapable. Ralph was merely lucky to have escaped death and capture twice.

Ronnie Kasrils also declared that he had never for a moment believed Ralph was an apartheid spy or enemy agent of the West. He openly disputed the allegations that had been made and rubbished any talk that implicated Ralph.

Watching from the sidelines, however, Jacob Zuma was not so easily convinced. He told his old friend Ronnie exactly that, but Kasrils was adamant and tried everything in his power to convince Zuma his suspicions were wrong.

Kasrils knew Jacob Zuma was the man who would be tasked with interrogating Ralph, so he insisted that Zuma's boss, Joe Nhlanhla, join them.

I don't know how he did it, but somewhere during the course of those interrogations, Zuma managed to break Ralph and Comrade Fear confessed to being an enemy agent.

Joe used the opportunity to ask Ralph if he thought his wife was also working for the regime. Ralph said: "I don't know, but I suspect so."

Joe leaned in and asked: "What makes you suspect so?"

"I've noticed that Jessica has never once asked me about the many rumours that circulate about me being an apartheid spy. I find that strange. When I look back at how we started dating at university and how she followed me into the camps in Swaziland, I could say the whole relationship was probably

orchestrated by the regime, so she could keep an eye on me. I remember how, after her third visit, she told me my mother had told her the security police were at her house.

“We then decided she should stay behind with me at the campus. I now realise the apartheid regime probably didn’t want me to have any kids with a lady from the ANC. This would cause an attachment and conflict of interest that might affect my judgment and actions. I am their top spy. They couldn’t have that.”

Zuma saw Ralph’s confession as an opportunity to infiltrate the apartheid state at the highest level by turning him into a double agent on the ANC’s side.

So he decided this was the best moment to make his move on him: “You know that you are going to jail if you don’t turn against the apartheid regime, right? You are going to Quatro.”

Without flinching, Ralph replied: “I have never worked for the ANC. I work for my handlers. I always will. With respect, Comrade Zuma, I wish to go home. I wish to be done with this life. In return for my freedom I will provide you with the names of every agent I’ve signed up in the past decade. I have all the names you need for the Natal Regiment, the Rural Regiment and many other detachments. You will find that, among those names, are very high-ranking ANC officials.”

Zuma was sceptical but handed him a separate piece of paper on which to write the names. It wasn’t long before Fear asked for more paper. Both Joe and Jacob then looked at the completed list in shock.

They both uttered the same word: “Unbelievable!”

They called in Ronnie Kasrils, who had been immovable in his view that Ralph was innocent. He was there within minutes. Zuma asked Ralph to excuse them. He handed Ralph’s written confession to Ronnie, but not the list of names, which he had put in his jacket pocket.

Ronnie read the confession and shook his head in disbelief. The next morning

he came back and, astonishingly, again told Zuma he didn't believe Ralph was a spy. He was, in effect, telling Zuma that they had forced a false confession out of an innocent man.

Zuma just shook his head and left.

A fight then broke out between Zuma and Joe as to how to deal with the names on the list, particularly because both of them were still reeling in shock at what it meant if it was true. Joe struggled to believe it; Zuma, not so much.

The information had the potential to destroy the ANC underground completely. They decided to take it out and go through the list of names again, one by one. As they called them out to each other, they shook their heads at the lie they had possibly been living as the ANC.

Joe Nhlanhla went to go and inform the ANC president about the list and receive instructions about what should be done about it. Oliver Tambo listened to Joe's revelations and told him he wanted Joe and Comrade Jacob to decide between themselves how they wanted to handle the matter and report their decision back to him.

With the list on the table between them, Zuma asked Nhlanhla: "What are we going to do? How can these comrades sell out the movement like this?"

"Let's lock them all up," said Joe, but Zuma disagreed. He had been trained by the Soviets and understood one important aspect of that training very well, and that was the value of being able to turn an asset. It was one of the most notoriously tricky and difficult things to accomplish in spycraft, but a turned spy could unravel all your enemies' plans from top to bottom and ensure you got the upper hand. Zuma loved his chess and thought of it as an even more potent move than promoting a pawn to a queen. It was like achieving the most impossible move imaginable in chess – promoting a white pawn into a black queen.

So he told Joe: "If it is true that such important people are not our comrades, let us inform them that we now know about them. Let us give them a choice. We will ask them to take actions that will prove to us they have turned and

become our assets; they can now work for us. It will also insulate us against further damage and they will rest easy in the knowledge that they will never be blackmailed by the apartheid regime, even if the regime falls.

“They will then be safe with us. The apartheid regime keeps these spies subservient for years with the threat that they will expose them. We can benefit from this. Our jails are too small to hold all these traitors.”

Joe, though, was livid.

“How dare you even suggest such rubbish! In all my years in the struggle, I have never heard such a stupid suggestion.”

Comrades in the adjacent room say they didn’t know what Zuma and Nhlanhla were arguing about, but their voices were raised in a way they had never heard before between them.

“Are you calling me stupid!” Zuma shouted.

“I never called you stupid,” Joe said. The argument between the two continued outside.

Comrades say they had never seen the men so angry. One said he was sure he was about to witness an infuriated Zuma shoot Joe with the Makarov pistol he always carried around. He’d never imagined the smiling, joking Zuma was even capable of such fury. Years later, Zuma confessed to a close comrade that it had only been his discipline that had stopped him from attacking Comrade Joe on that day.

Leaving Joe behind, Zuma stormed out and went straight to the leader of the ANC, OR Tambo. Still boiling, he asked him what the rationale had been behind appointing a person like Joe as the head of intelligence when he was so obviously not suited for the role.

Oliver Tambo tried to calm him down, and when Zuma was finally willing to listen to reason, Tambo explained what it was he had seen in Joe Nhlanhla.

“Jacob, Joe can never be bought. No one can ever buy Comrade Joe. We live

in very dangerous times; we live in times when comrades do funny things for money, where comrades will openly lead other comrades to death like pigs to slaughter.

“You know this is true, Comrade Jacob. If you have any doubt, just look at the names I have here. A very weary-looking Tambo waved the envelope he had earlier been given by Joe Nhlanhla containing a copy of the list of names.

Zuma left Tambo somewhat appeased, but his plan of confronting the spies and having them make their choice never became an official project of the ANC.

Curiously from Zuma’s perspective, Kasrils came to speak to Zuma days after Ralph had made his confession and been sent to prison in one of the camps.

He told Zuma he still could not believe that Ralph was a spy. Zuma found Ronnie’s argument “very funny”.

Apartheid files show that members of MK asked for permission to travel to the camp where Ralph was being detained, citing fears he would confess all their names, not knowing he had already done so. They may have even wanted the army or police to mount yet another mission of murder, but this time to kill Ralph instead of to save him. It would have meant an all-out ground battle with the trained MK soldiers guarding the Mbokodo camp where Ralph was.

In the end, though, it never came to that.

Later, Zuma received the news that Ralph was dead. When he tried to investigate the matter, he was told there was every indication that he had been poisoned. They found him “drowned in his own vomit”, according to a report.

Zuma wanted to know who had gone to the camp. Ralph was meant to have been kept isolated and safe. If he had been killed by a junior officer who’d perhaps taken a bribe, it would have been difficult to ascertain what happened. Perhaps he had been given the poison somehow and then had

taken it himself.

Zuma's intelligence finally informed him that the last person known to have visited Comrade Ralph at the camp was Ronnie Kasrils.

What Ralph knew was important to both sides, and Zuma was deeply disturbed that one of the most important spies he had ever unmasked would never be able to shed any more light on the infiltration of MK.

Since then, Ralph has, indeed, become an enigma in South African history, the one man neither the ANC nor the National Party ever wanted to say much about.

When I was running around doing the research for this book, I had many ANC comrades, some of them ministers, telling me I was kicking a hornet's nest every time I asked them about Ralph.

"Ralph! Of all the things you could have come here today to ask me about, you pick Ralph! That's the one guy no one wants to talk about."

Another warned me that, if I had brains, I would not write about Ralph.

"But McKenzie, you seem to have big balls. So just go for it. Let's see what happens. I wish you well."

As far as I know, the only people who were ever aware of the existence of that list were Jacob Zuma, Joe Nhlanhla, OR Tambo and, much later, Nelson Mandela, when Jacob Zuma told him about what had happened and included the list in a folder of supplemental information and research relating to all the people on it, as well as others, and all the damage they had done to the ANC over the years.

Only Zuma is still alive.

Most of the evidence that had been painstakingly compiled up to that point was indisputable. Zuma used that list tirelessly over the coming years to try to confirm and verify that each name on the list was correct. For example, whenever he would get a confession from someone who Ralph had

implicated, either because Ralph had recruited that person himself or worked with them in some way, Zuma would compare the versions both of them had given. And every time, there would be a correlation. One spy, for example, was seemingly overcome by grief one day and approached Zuma to confess, but Zuma already knew what he was going to confess.

And in this way he became increasingly certain of the list of names.

It's said that Zuma eventually understood that the future president of South Africa needed to know the truth, and that's why he showed Mandela. His reaction was pure shock, and he made Zuma promise never to reveal the list, along with all the other information, and to lock it all away in a safe for at least 20 years – because it had the potential to destroy the ANC.

Zuma kept that promise. He has said that he may well be persuaded to talk after he steps down as president. I hope that happens. South Africa deserves to know the truth, regardless of the cost. And hopefully we will still be capable of believing the old man when he finally cuts through the curtain of lies that have closed around him over all these years as his enemies have worked tirelessly to discredit him.

There have also been the ongoing attempts, well into democracy, from the other side to suggest the ANC was wrong to brand Comrade Fear a spy.

You could see it at the amnesty hearings of Eugene de Kock and the other policemen. The lie that you can find online today that claims Ralph was made to confess but then refused to sign his confession falls into this body of disinformation that was created in an attempt to discredit Ralph's confession before it could ever be made public.

It was done because these spies suspect Zuma knows who they are, and that he knows what they have done. By now it has gone far beyond Ralph, though his confession and that list were Ground Zero as far as unmasking them was concerned.

Zuma one day received a call from a sickly Joe Nhlanhla a few days before Joe fell into a coma for a month and died at Milpark Hospital in Johannesburg in 1999. He admitted he had been wrong and they should have

confronted those fake comrades.

“They are causing more damage in the new South Africa than what they did during our struggle.”

“I know, Comrade Joe.”

“I am sorry, my friend.”

“Yes, Comrade Joe. Don’t worry, Comrade. Everything will be fine.”

# Operation Scrum

In mid-September 1989, a plane carrying ANC cadres Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki from ANC headquarters in Lusaka, landed at an airport in Switzerland. The two disembarked and were immediately greeted by an ANC agent codenamed Fireman. He was tasked with facilitating their travel to Lucerne and ensuring their safety. He ushered them into a vehicle and took them straight to the Palace Hotel, a journey of about an hour by car from Zurich airport.

Zuma and Mbeki had been given a direct assignment by the president of the ANC in exile, Oliver Tambo. They were instructed to meet with two members of the apartheid state who had been sent by PW Botha as what had been among his final instructions before he had been replaced by new state president FW de Klerk the previous month.

The purpose of the meeting was not entirely clear to them, but indications were that the apartheid regime was looking to clear the path for dialogue between the two parties. It's understood PW Botha had personally initiated the contact with Tambo.

The late Alastair Sparks once wrote of the meeting from the perspective of the South African National Intelligence Service, who reached the hotel before Mbeki and Zuma:

“Early on the evening of 12 September 1989, two South African National Intelligence Service (NIS) agents, Mike Louw and Maritz Spaarwater, checked into the Palace Hotel in Lucerne, Switzerland. After an extensive period of considerable clandestine arrangements, a direct meeting had been arranged between representatives of the South African government and the

exiled ANC.

“After two and a half years of talks with the jailed Nelson Mandela and indirect encounters with representatives of the ANC, the government had decided to make direct contact with the exiled ANC so as to sound them out on their willingness to negotiate.”

The car pulled up to Lucerne Hotel and Mbeki and Zuma stepped out at around 8pm. The anxiety and uncertainty was on overload and Mbeki whispered to Zuma in Xhosa: “My stomach is turning.” They were directed to a room where they found the two gentlemen they’d come to see, Louw and Spaarwater.

Sparks described the encounter as follows: “When the ANC delegation came down the passage, talking, the government agents showed themselves, and Thabo Mbeki forthwith walked into their hotel room and exclaimed emphatically, ‘Well here we are, bloody terrorists and for all you know fucking communists as well.’”

Mbeki’s light-hearted comment broke the ice, and immediately set the government agents at ease.

Louw initiated the discussion by explaining that the regime was keen to commence talks with the ANC but first wanted to establish if common ground could be reached on many central issues. They also wanted to gauge what the ANC envisioned for the future and to gain an overview of how they planned to achieve that vision. The discussions between the four men continued well into the night.

Meanwhile, outside the hotel, Fireman was starting to get more than a little unsettled. He ended up visiting coffee shop after coffee within the hotel’s circumference.

The talks between the National Party’s men and the ANC’s representatives continued until 3am, and by then Fireman had long run out of coffee shops with their doors still open.

He must have looked at his watch a hundred times, and was beyond agitated,

as Zuma had assured him the meeting would not run as long as this.

He had not been given the exact room number the men were in and he was now growing seriously concerned for their safety. For all he knew, they could have been abducted. He had no other option, though, than to return and wait at the hotel's entrance.

In the room the discussions were finally drawing to a close. As the men were preparing to leave, Zuma asked if he could share an appropriate Zulu anecdote with his audience.

He told them a story about the death of King Shaka's mother, Nandi Ndlovukazi. Her death affected the king tremendously. He suffered from extreme grief and fell into terrible mourning. In his overwhelming pain, he expected every member of the Zulu nation to mourn her death with the same depth of emotion – everyone in the nation was obliged to express their grief whenever they were in his presence.

The situation got so bad that warriors had to resort to walking around with snuff so they could place it in their eyes to induce tears whenever Shaka was around.

The army was also sent on a berserker killing spree that left hundreds of Zulus dead. Since the nation was in mourning, a barbaric instruction was given to kill any women found to be pregnant, along with their husbands, as pregnancy signified light and new life at a time when the nation had been told to remain in solemn darkness.

Shaka took it even further by outlawing the planting of crops for a year. The nation was thus condemned to suffer increasingly severe privations.

One day, though, a warrior named Gala approached the foot of the mountain where King Shaka was sitting with his warriors. He advanced towards the king, singing songs of praise and adoration for the king at the top of his lungs. But as Gala edged closer to the king, his tune changed. He started to sing that enough was enough. He told the monarch his extreme actions were now bleeding the Zulu nation to death; he called on him to stop the excessive grief as they would soon have to mourn the death of all Zulus

and not just his mother.

As he drew ever nearer, the impis surrounding King Shaka readied their assegais, awaiting the instruction to kill this man who dared display such open dissent.

Unperturbed, the fearless Gala continued to ask King Shaka who would be left for him to rule over when the great Zulu nation was gone because they had not been allowed to plough their fields.

This struck a chord with the king and he snapped out of his funk.

He turned to his warriors and asked them why they had not had the courage to be this honest with him. Instead of killing him, he rewarded Gala by conferring on him the highest order of the Zulu nation, also gifting him with extra cattle and hailing him as the nation's bravest warrior.

Zuma finished his story by telling the men in the hotel room: "We have to be honest with those who sent us here. We have to speak truth to power. We shouldn't hesitate to tell them that our nation is dying."

Spaarwater and Louw were so impressed with the story that they decided to give their newly established agenda the code name "Operation Gala".

Zuma and Mbeki finally exited the building and reached the car just in time to find Fireman desperately trying to make contact with Lusaka to alert them to the fact that the two men he had been entrusted with had been abducted.

Back home in South Africa, De Klerk was at first furious to hear about the meeting. Spaarwater and Louw were interrogated as to who gave it the go-ahead. After they explained who authorised it and showed proof that theirs had not been a rogue mission, the debriefing started.

Alastair Sparks also described it as follows: "Crucially, when Louw and Spaarwater flew home the next morning they had a decisive message to convey to the South African government: the ANC was willing to talk. Hence Louw and Spaarwater reported back to new state president FW De Klerk, and after being at first suspicious, De Klerk before long became relaxed and told

the agents to tell him all about their historic meeting with the ANC.

“From that moment on, Louw thought, [De Klerk] took the ball and ran with it.”

All their reports were compiled and consolidated. A final report was issued. Louw and Spaarwater, however, were never privy to this final report.

It was short and meticulous, and clear in its conclusions. It suggested the ANC was unwilling to accommodate any deviations from the Freedom Charter, particularly on issues relating to the land, but was indeed ready for negotiations.

Most notably, though, it specified that, no matter what, Mbeki and Zuma could not be entrusted to lead the negotiations and would need to be removed by any means necessary.

A comprehensive and top-secret operation was to be launched to ensure that both men would not emerge as players during the negotiation process that would unfold over the coming years. Military Intelligence was to be employed to “handle” this.

And that was how something called “Operation Scrum” was born.

What was notable about the Lucerne hotel meeting was that it was the first time the two sides had officially agreed to meet. Other meetings were to follow in the same hotel.

Mbeki, however, had been meeting on his own with those across enemy lines since as early as 1984. Mbeki always believed a negotiated settlement would have to be reached. His unofficial biographer Mark Gevisser made it clear just how comfortable Mbeki was in the company of white South Africa.

He was with Willie Esterhuyse, the Stellenbosch professor and former Broederbond who had set up the secret meetings, when Mbeki “drew on his pipe and said: ‘Now there is hope for the country. Now there will be peace.’”

Leading a delegation of the ANC, Mbeki had also held informal discussions

with National Party MP Piet Coetser in April 1989 at an Aspen Institute conference in Bermuda.

“He had [already] been speaking to cavalcades of white South Africans – businessmen and Broeders, Afrikaner dissidents and rugby bosses – almost continuously for three years,” wrote Gevisser in 1999.

“Whether with Premier chief Tony Bloom, Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, Willie Esterhuyse or the 50 Afrikaner intellectuals at Dakar in August 1987 (where Mbeki famously declared: ‘Ek is n Afrikaner’), the *modus operandi* was one of seduction; the tools charm, intellect and whisky-soaked camaraderie.”

His actions led to distrust by those in the ANC who wished for a more militant outcome in the transfer of power.

In 1988, South African Communist Party leader Chris Hani had challenged Mbeki, declaring that he had entered into discussions with Afrikaner intellectuals without any authority or consensus from the ANC’s national executive committee (NEC) or national working committee (NWC).

“His comments were received by ‘general acclamation’ and repeated by several people – including Mbeki’s own supporters – in NEC meetings over the following two years,” wrote Gevisser.

Mbeki, however, had been given Oliver Tambo’s consent, and so continued his efforts to interact with representatives of the apartheid government.

In 1990, following the unbanning of the ANC, Jacob Zuma was one of the first ANC comrades to return to South Africa to begin the process of negotiation.

Shortly after his arrival, he was given the file that had been open on him since the 1980s entitled “Kill Zuma By Any Means Necessary”.

He had seen many such documents during his time, and the CIA logo on the file did not even surprise him. However, it prepared him to take extra precautions, which is probably among the reasons he is still alive today.

He confided in Joe Nhlanhla about the file, but made him swear he would not tell Mandela about it, as he feared Madiba would confront De Klerk and it might cause further distrust.

Zuma soon also learnt that he was not the only one who should be killed by any means necessary. Chris Hani had a similar file. Zuma warned Comrade Chris many times to be alert and to not move around without his bodyguards. The last time he encouraged him to be extra cautious about his personal security was four days before his murder, when Janusz Waluś shot him in his driveway in Boksburg on 10 April 1993.

As for Jacob Zuma, he would not need to be shot to be removed from the picture. In his case, all that was required was a man named Cyril Ramaphosa.

Like Jacob Zuma, who is 10 years his senior, Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa was also the son of a policeman. His mother, too, was a domestic worker, with a small liquor business on the side. He was born and grew up in Soweto but matriculated at a high school in Limpopo after his family was forcibly relocated to a bleak neighbourhood bordering a trash dump in Soweto, which had been designated as the perfect spot for Venda people by the apartheid government.

He studied towards a law degree in prosecutions in 1972 at the then segregated University of the North, Turfloop, and became increasingly involved in politics when he joined the South African Students' Organisation that same year, becoming its branch chairman in 1974. While still enrolled in his law studies, in 1974 Ramaphosa was arrested for leading a student protest and was forced to serve 11 months in solitary confinement in Pretoria, without trial.

After his release, in 1975, he was identified as a promising prospect for recruitment into a very long-term plan formulated by the progressive Urban Foundation founded by the super-wealthy corporate barons Harry Oppenheimer, Anton Rupert and Clive Menell. They paid for Ramaphosa's education and took him under their wing in many other respects as well.

Ramaphosa had been introduced to Clive Menell by John and Sarah Woodhouse, who requested that Clive and Irene Menell "care for him"

because the Woodhouses were aware of Menell's project to "collect bright young people".

As Bill Keller of *The New York Times* wrote in a profile of Ramaphosa in 2013: "The [Urban Foundation] invited influential or promising blacks to join in worthy projects for the betterment of African communities. And that is how Ramaphosa acquired an important patron. Clive Menell, the head of the gold-mining conglomerate Anglovaal, recruited him into the Urban Foundation, helped him complete the legal studies interrupted by prison and gave him a measure of credibility with the people who held the real power in South Africa. Clive's son and heir, Rick Menell, became and remains a close friend."

These wealthy benefactors would open many doors for Cyril in the years following their introduction to him and his then girlfriend, Hope, who he married in 1978. The Menells provided material support to Cyril, including resources, financing his studies and introducing him to their powerful circle of friends, who included English and Afrikaans businessmen such as Rudolf Gouws, Anton Rupert and Derek Keys, who was later the finance minister in both De Klerk's apartheid government and Mandela's democratic government.

The June 1976 riots saw Ramaphosa being detained for a further six months at the notorious John Vorster Square Police Station.

In September 1978, despite being an as yet unqualified lawyer, Ramaphosa was appointed to the regional board of the Urban Foundation where he interacted with the leaders of the apartheid regime, civil society, the leadership of business and academia. He attended meetings diligently on the first Monday of every month and was an active contributor who supported the foundation's philosophy.

He finally graduated with his law degree through correspondence with the University of South Africa and completed his articles after joining a small but prestigious law firm. According to Donald Lindsay, it was through the Urban Foundation that Cyril was offered the position at the firm.

In 1979, the Wiehahn Commission, established as a result of business

lobbying, recommended that the apartheid government recognise black trade unions and migrant labourers and encourage them to register in a regulated system of trade union registration.

This opened the way for Cyril Ramaphosa to join the trade union movement despite never having worked as a labourer in any industries that would be unionising, particularly mining, in his life.

He was then rapidly moved through the ranks of the labour movement after joining the Council of Unions of South Africa (Cusa) as a legal adviser.

The young Ramaphosa enjoyed a stellar rise as a unionist. When Cusa went on to form the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), he became the NUM's first secretary in 1982 and organised the conference that led to the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu).

Anglo American had at first not been happy with the prospective mining unions that were emerging. However, when Cyril Ramaphosa met with Bobby Godsell, the head of industrial relations at Anglo American, Ramaphosa biographer Anthony Butler wrote that "Godsell was inclined to make life easy for NUM, readily conceding access to Anglo mines and later agreeing to recognise the union even when its very small membership did not really justify this action".

He was part of the federation's delegation that met the ANC in Zambia in 1986, barely a year after Cosatu's formation.

He briefly went into hiding that same year following PW Botha's declaration of a state of emergency.

Keller, in his *New York Times* profile, correctly pointed out how influential the Urban Foundation had been in shaping Ramaphosa's thinking: "[It] taught him useful skills for dealing with powerful people and gave him an appreciation of business that was not universal in the anti-apartheid alliance."

He, however, wrote that "helping white do-gooders embellish the status quo did not hold his interest for long", because Ramaphosa soon found himself busy with organising and unionising the country's black mining workforce.

But this is exactly where Keller, and many others, totally miss the point: The NUM had itself been the brainchild of the Urban Training Project, from which it also received funding. That project was a subsidiary of the Urban Foundation, which leads you right back to the mine bosses themselves.

The inescapable conclusion, therefore, was that the young Ramaphosa, as leader of the NUM, was implementing a project endorsed by white monopoly capital and which gave the illusion of being there to stand up to exploitative white business, when the true aim was merely to use the labour movement to protest at the state of politics under the National Party and introduce gradual, controlled, well-measured reforms.

And that's exactly what Ramaphosa's NUM did, at least at the start.

Although the ostensible reason for the formation of the Urban Foundation had been to improve the lot of black South Africans in Soweto and other urban areas, Menell once admitted that he and his other wealthy peers had formed it mainly "because we were scared".

*The New York Times* in its 1996 obituary for the late Randlord quoted Menell as saying they had launched their Urban Foundation because: "There was a concern for the country, of course, but there was also a selfish concern for our assets."

The organised new labour unions were tolerated by employers like Menell because they had grown tired of all the violent wildcat strikes and were looking to cooperate with amenable unions so that they could together systematically improve conditions for black workers and also train them into higher-skilled professions. This would be a win-win for both the workers and the mine bosses as it would dramatically increase the pool of skilled workers and lower the costs of having to employ exclusively white workers in skilled jobs that were, by apartheid design, far better paid.

They realised they would thus be able to pay black workers a little more but still far less than what a white worker would accept. This ran the risk of incurring the displeasure of the National Party, but if it could be made to look like the unavoidable outcome of a union settlement, such changes against the racist status quo would have to be grudgingly accepted, even by the most

*verkrampde* Nationalist leaders.

Keller wrote that two major clandestine campaigns to enrol bargaining units in the mining industry had earlier failed miserably, so Ramaphosa was the remaining hope of building a properly unionised workforce that South Africa had never seen the likes of before. He succeeded spectacularly, taking the NUM from 14 000 members at its founding congress to 344 000 members in less than four years.

As Wilmot James once wrote in a history of South African mining: the NUM was so successful partly because of Anglo American's original sponsorship, even making office space available to union staff and granting free access to the hostels. For years, the NUM was thought of as "Anglo's union".

It grew so rapidly, though, that from the mine owners' perspective, they became the victims of their own plan's runaway success. A union of such a scale and influence would be hard to manage, but hopefully Cyril would be able to deliver. As Anthony Butler put it in his biography of Ramaphosa: "The mine owners were concerned that the NUM was not the sweetheart union it had made itself out to be." But in saying that, Butler, like many others who have studied Ramaphosa, also completely missed the point.

Keller came close to seeing the truth when he wrote that, while the NUM's James Motlatsi, "a tough and shrewd former mineworker from Lesotho", was left to "manage the fractious rank and file, Ramaphosa worked the owners".

"[Ramaphosa] used bargaining-table dramatics and back-channel dealing, cool reasoning and threats, oratory and his familiarity with the thinking of white businessmen. Over time, the NUM improved pay and, more important, won pensions, eased the pitiless working conditions, broke the colour barrier that kept blacks from the better jobs and forged a formidable organisation."

Reading that, you could almost be forgiven for being sucked into the spell that has been woven about Cyril Ramaphosa for so long. It can be easy to believe that these arguments he was having across boardroom tables with the mining barons as he "worked them" were not just for show, a theatrical demonstration that would eventually end in both sides getting pretty much what they had wanted from the start. The mines, after all, actually *wanted* to

improve conditions for black miners. They had to create the pretence for the apartheid government that they were at least putting up a big fight to protect the sanctity of skilled well-paid work for whites. So they played their parts in staged fights with Ramaphosa, who benefited by being given the credit for his negotiation skills and uncanny ability to reach settlements and agreements with mine owners.

And with every successful agreement, his reputation and influence only grew.

What they learnt in these sparring matches would prove to be the perfect model for the far bigger negotiations that were to come, the ones that would really matter. When Codesa came, it would be time for the apartheid government to negotiate the terms of its surrender to the ANC. In Ramaphosa, however, white capital had their perfect weapon: an apparent champion of the working class who was capable of delivering to big business exactly what it wanted from the outset without making it all seem too obvious.

If you think about all those agreements signed at Codesa, the soon-to-be-ushered in black government got nothing that it wouldn't have managed to get through the continuing process of armed struggle. It got nothing it wouldn't have managed to get through a more aggressive approach to negotiation. It got only what white business owners had been perfectly happy for them to get in the first place.

And yet, to this day, Ramaphosa is credited with helping to usher in democracy using his fantastic negotiation skills and uncompromising attitude.

But wait, I hear you saying. What about the fact that Cyril led the longest and biggest strike in South African history in 1987, on behalf of gold and coal workers against the Chamber of Mines?

People often mention this strike as evidence that Cyril must surely always have been on the side of the mineworkers. How else would he have allowed such a strike to continue for three weeks, until it had cost the Chamber of Mines R250 million?

But let's remind ourselves that this is same man who was later on the board

of Lonmin in 2012 when the NUM refused to allow its workers, particularly its rock drillers, to go on strike for a better living wage. Those workers were forced to go on a wildcat strike, and 34 of them were gunned down by the police after Cyril had insisted that something needed to be done about the “dastardly criminal” strike.

Forty-five lives could have been saved had Lonmin’s mine management simply agreed to talk to the strikers, who continued to be resolutely ignored by both the mine and the only recognised union on the mine. That union just so happened to be Cyril’s old creation, the NUM. But by then the NUM was so comfortably co-opted by management that it no longer had the trust of any of the workers.

And if management had co-opted the NUM itself, they had completely assimilated Cyril Ramaphosa on to the board.

So, back in 1987, when 360 000 black miners went on strike over wage and working conditions, that was a situation that had gone well beyond Ramaphosa’s ability to control or rein in. In an attempt to break the bitter strike, the Chamber of Mines retrenched about 50 000 mineworkers.

Eleven people died, 500 were injured and more than 400 workers were arrested before an agreement over improved wages and living conditions could finally be negotiated.

It had been a valuable lesson for both Ramaphosa and his unacknowledged patrons.

One man alone would not necessarily be enough to ensure a favourable outcome for the mining bosses and for big business in general.

It was a lesson whose importance was weighed and analysed, so that by the time Codesa rolled around a few years later, great care was to be taken to ensure that Ramaphosa would be able to hammer out the negotiated settlement without being impeded by impassioned revolutionaries with their own ideas of what a new South Africa should look like.

If you are wondering if it would be possible for Ramaphosa to be so

duplicitous, consider this: Writing for the Ramaphosa-loving daily newspaper *Business Day*, Anton Harber once claimed that Ramaphosa had met Harry Oppenheimer for the very first time in 1986 at the first anniversary of *The Weekly Mail*, now the *Mail & Guardian*. According to Harber, the interaction had been “bitterly acrimonious” and Ramaphosa’s “speech was a fierce and rousing denunciation of the mining bosses, the conditions of mine workers and the political situation”.

However, it cannot be accurate that Ramaphosa met Oppenheimer for the first time in 1986, as Ramaphosa had served on the board of the Urban Foundation from 1978 at a time when Oppenheimer was its co-chair. It begs the question then, why would these two men have contrived to make it appear that they were meeting for the very first time, especially as they both ostensibly had a common aim of ending apartheid, albeit for different reasons?

Perhaps the answer can be found in an analysis of the bigger picture of what both men had been trying to achieve. And to do that, we need to go back to 1991, when Ramaphosa first joined the ANC.

According to Mark Gevisser, Cyril Ramaphosa’s recruitment into the party and his election in 1991 as secretary-general did not take place through “internal people, as is often believed, but [because of] returned exiles like Joe Slovo and Mac Maharaj”.

“This was partly to bring UDF [United Democratic Front] leadership back into the ANC, but also, very much, a move to unseat Mbeki as leader of the negotiations process, because they believed the former union boss would be both a tougher negotiator and more accountable to the people.”

He added: “Many from the exile community believe, however, that the real reason was that powerful leaders like Slovo and Maharaj felt that because Mbeki was impervious to their patronage, they needed another young leader to take under their wing.”

The apartheid regime, big local business and imperialist foreign countries and corporations could not risk having Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma as leaders in the ANC’s negotiating team. They wanted them out altogether or relegated

to one of the less important negotiating teams.

Their fear stemmed from their analysis and intelligence work about these two leaders, with the conclusion being that they were serious about economic liberation for black people, but had also been too greatly influenced by the master negotiator and more radical thinker Oliver Tambo.

Business, particularly those represented by the Oppenheimer, Menel and Rupert families, also was not comfortable with the idea of Mbeki and Zuma at the negotiating table. They had no leverage over or relationship with either of these men, and their biggest fear was that they were going to lose everything at the upcoming talks.

They needed someone more pliable, who seemed credible but who wouldn't actually upset the status quo, and who they could later reward.

That meeting in Lucerne had disquieted not only the apartheid government but also the plutocracy, who feared that Zuma and Mbeki would prove to be dyed-in-the-wool black nationalists who believed that land and economic control should be passed to black hands.

The Randlords and their contemporaries threw many names into the hat to determine who they would feel most comfortable dealing with as the representative of black people at any upcoming talks between the apartheid state and the ANC. Clive Menel insisted that they should look no further than Cyril Ramaphosa, a man of good standing in the UDF and who had made a prominent name for himself in the labour union movement. He assured them they had already effectively adopted the young man and paid for his university through the Urban Foundation. They'd also worked with the NUM to establish common ground through bargaining forums and knew that Ramaphosa was a man who could be reasoned with.

Although he was not promoting a pro-white or even pro-capitalist agenda, Ramaphosa was a cautious and calculating man who had already accepted some of the basic economic realities of South Africa. He would never choose to revolutionise the system, but would be happy to adopt a position of gradual reform over time. Such gradual reform was music to corporate South Africa's ears. As long as their land and other ownership rights could be safeguarded,

the rest could be up for discussion. The rich Afrikaners in the room, especially the Rupert family, were particularly worried about their wine farms, which occupy some of the most scenic and productive land in the world and contribute to a multibillion-rand wine and liquor industry.

So an expensive and meticulous operation was set in motion to replace Mbeki and Zuma and ensure the installation of Ramaphosa. Military Intelligence, through Operation Scrum, remained the lead in the operation. South African intelligence had soon realised after that meeting in Switzerland that they did not have enough expertise and skill in-house to successfully execute such a historic operation. So they sought intelligence input from America's CIA, Britain's MI6, and Israel's Mossad in a plan that ultimately spanned three continents.

Meanwhile, the ANC leadership, operating in the relative power vacuum of OR Tambo's stroke and the resultant focus on Nelson Mandela, stayed mum over the upcoming conference in 1991.

The delegates, media and public at large were even kept in the dark about the form the conference would adopt, including whether it would be consultative or elective. It turned out to be elective, and the people who were elected at that conference would end up creating a legacy that would define South Africa's future for decades to come.

Operatives in Operation Scrum knew that the success of their operation depended heavily on who would become secretary-general; it was widely accepted among most of the rank and file of the ANC that Alfred Nzo would remain as secretary-general, since he had occupied the position with distinction since 1969, seeing the ANC through some of the most difficult moments in its long history.

He was still healthy and of sound mind and most comrades agreed that Nzo deserved to be the man who would oversee the administrative load of shepherding the ANC from liberation party into governing party.

However, he found himself opposed by the young upstart from the UDF, Ramaphosa. To illustrate the audacity of that moment, one need look no further than a man who knows all about youthful audacity, Julius Malema,

but who also has a keen appreciation for the history of the ANC and its traditions.

Speaking at a press conference in 2017 as the leader of the EFF, Malema said of Ramaphosa, in summing up his political career: “No, he won’t be president. He must just forget. You know, Cyril told Kgalema [Motlanthe], when he contested for deputy president [in 2012], that he’s standing because he’s going to fight corruption. What corruption did Cyril fight? He banna!

“Cyril loves positions. It’s about himself. He resigned the secretary-general position of the ANC because he was not made deputy president after the Oppenheimers assured him they had spoken to Mandela, [that] he was going to be the deputy president of the country.

“But leave that,” Malema said, adding in a tone of continued disbelief: “Cyril Ramaphosa stood against Alfred Nzo [in 2001]! That was something unheard of in the ANC because in the ANC ... the real ANC ... positions were contested according to generations. And a younger generation would not have contested against a senior generation. So Cyril’s contestation against Alfred Nzo demonstrated that the young man had an ambition for power and he could do everything in his power to destroy that legacy [of the ANC].

“As if that was not enough, when they did not make him deputy president [later], he left the ANC. Cyril Ramaphosa was not at the inauguration of Nelson Mandela! The most historic day! He was bitter that he was not going to be made deputy president. How can you entrust such a person with such a huge responsibility, who thrives on me ... and me alone?”

But back in 1991 in Durban at the party’s 48th national conference, Ramaphosa was playing his part perfectly, still assured that he had been handpicked by the economic powers to be the next deputy president since Walter Sisulu was just too old to convincingly serve in the position.

Cyril Ramaphosa then surprisingly emerged as the new secretary-general with Jacob Zuma – a man, like Nzo, who was Cyril’s senior both in years as well as in political background and experience – as his deputy.

Comrades from exile were furious, but UDF-aligned comrades and Joe

Slovo's Communists celebrated the result.

As disciplined cadres, most ANC comrades kept their displeasure to themselves and accepted the outcome. It was important, they said, for the ANC to continue to present a united front in the face of serious problems still besetting South Africa, and there was nothing much they could do. But Harry Gwala could accept no such thing. The outspoken firebrand made a lot of noise about what had just gone down, and told the party elders that Nzo's ousting was a travesty.

Zuma, in particular, tried to calm him down, but he was talking to a man who understood only too well just how suspicious the whole scenario had been. Cyril Ramaphosa was not even meant to have been a candidate for election; the ANC had understood he'd merely been attending the conference as a non-voting delegate. Gwala demanded to be shown proof that Ramaphosa had ever even been an ANC member.

Zuma eventually gave up; there was no calming down this dual member of the ANC and SACP. Not on that day. Gwala understood, instinctively, that what had happened was about something more important than just whether the much-respected Nzo had lost in an elective conference. It was about the very heart and soul of what it meant to be an ANC and alliance member, and his deep suspicion troubled him until his death in 1995. Joe Slovo and other Communists were furious at Harry Gwala, who they eventually dealt with in 1994 when he was expelled from the SACP, partly for what many believed had been his defiance in 1991.

Now that Cyril was in a position of day-to-day influence where he could effectively take over the running of the ANC's affairs, he wasted no time in ensuring that the palace coup would be complete.

The very day after the congress, the operation to remove Mbeki and Zuma entered its most sensitive stage.

It was determined that Nelson Mandela, the president of the ANC, Thomas Nkobi, the treasurer-general, Thabo Mbeki, the ANC's chief negotiator, and Jacob Zuma, the head of intelligence, would be invited to both the UK and the USA so that Ramaphosa would not be impeded in his plan.

Many in the ANC have long called what happened next a “palace coup.

Early in August 1991, as soon as Mandela, Nkobi, Mbeki and Zuma were safely out of the country, a National Working Committee (NWC) meeting was convened.

The NWC as an elected structure is expected to carry out the decisions and instructions of the NEC and ensure that provinces, regions, branches and all other ANC structures, such as parliamentary caucuses, also carry out the decisions of the ANC.

Never before, and never since, was an NWC meeting about to be used to undermine the very principle of its own existence though. What Ramaphosa did that day was nothing short of a complete violation of the trust that had been placed in him as the secretary-general.

As soon as the meeting was under way, Ramaphosa tabled suggestions for a number of new deployments in the ANC, and the committee approved all of these proposals, chief among them that he would replace Thabo Mbeki as the ANC’s chief negotiator. At the time, Mandela was travelling in North America, while Zuma and Mbeki were together in Cambridge attending a conference about constitutional matters.

Once the NWC gave Ramaphosa’s tabled proposals the go-ahead, they were soon ratified by the NEC, the highest decision-making body in the ANC between national conferences. The only problem with the NEC signing off on this seismic change in what was going to happen at Codesa was the simple fact that the person with the most authority in the NEC, the president of the ANC himself, Nelson Mandela, was not there.

Zuma was the first to become aware of what had happened. As the head of intelligence, he had already been warned that he would be removed, he just didn’t know how or when. It would be nearly impossible unless Mandela himself authorised it.

He did not think it would happen while both he and Mandela were out of the country on opposite sides of the world, and very far from South Africa in a huge geographical triangle of betrayal.

Zuma always travelled with a small, slightly worse-for-wear portable radio that he still owns today.

During a break at their conference, he told Mbeki that he wanted to go and listen to the news. He was aware that BBC's *Focus on Africa* report was about to air, and he was listening as the newsreader announced that Thabo Mbeki had just been removed as the leader of negotiations and replaced by Cyril Ramaphosa, while Jacob Zuma was no longer the head of intelligence for the ANC. He had been replaced by Patrick Mosiuoa "Terror" Lekota, a man who would famously go on to start his own political party, Congress of the People, in 2008 in protest at Jacob Zuma's ascension to the presidency of the ANC at Polokwane.

This same Lekota also caused an uproar at the end of 2017 when he declared that, in his opinion, white people had never stolen the land and they won it fairly at the negotiating table with the ANC.

If something like that cannot show you that Operation Scrum picked its people carefully, then nothing will convince you.

But back then, in 1991, while listening to that BBC report, one can just picture a younger Zuma – a more war-hardened Zuma who still had some hair on his head and a beard – holding that little radio, his head snapping back in disbelief.

He immediately went to find Mbeki to tell him what had just been reported.

"Hey, Moena! A decision has been taken by the NWC." He relayed the details, but Mbeki just shook his head.

"No, they are mistaken. I can understand that *I* could be removed as the chief negotiator, but *you* are the chief of intelligence. See if you can get hold of the chief."

When Zuma got hold of Mandela on the phone, he soon regretted it. Mandela snapped at him in anger, telling the younger man that he should not call him to peddle nonsense. Mandela assured him he had signed off on no such decision, and there was no way it could have happened. It was impossible.

But the news bulletins were full of it. It had indeed happened.

When Zuma and Mbeki landed back in South Africa, one of the first people Zuma spoke to was Harry Gwala. He conceded how right Harry had been all along.

“If nothing untoward was going on, why wait for all you guys to be absent from the country before such a big decision was made?” Harry wanted to know. “This thing could never have happened while all of you were here.”

“Never,” said Zuma. “Someone cannot steal the food out of your mouth while you are chewing it.”

“Yes, Comrade. Your plates were left unattended to here. Your enemies have stolen all your chicken.”

They could only laugh.

Zuma told him that he wished Joe Nhlanhla had listened to him.

“We would not be in this trouble now.”

When Harry asked him what he meant, Zuma told him it was a long story.

A combative Zuma wanted to know from the NWC how they could have felt it was appropriate to take such important decisions while all of them had been out of the country.

The NWC did not have a ready answer for him. They had simply acceded to the suggestions of the secretary-general, who was entitled to table such changes and have them voted on. Everything had been done by the book.”

“No. It was not,” Mandela informed them, but by then the world had reported on the outcome and it was *again* decided it was important to present a united front in the upcoming negotiations with the National Party. The ANC did not want their old enemies to think that the party was divided.

How naive that decision was when you have the benefit of hindsight to look back on it now. The National Party, of course, knew only too well just how

divided the ANC was. After all, they were the ones ensuring that those divisions existed.

Operation Scrum was a concerted effort that went far beyond just ensuring a favourable settlement at Codesa. It came into being so quickly because the apartheid government knew that they were running against the clock in almost every area of governance.

Aside from Codesa, those who were part of this operation would need to ensure a host of other outcomes, including:

- That South Africa's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes would need to be dismantled in time to ensure that a black government would not have access to any weapons of mass destruction.
- That as much incriminating evidence about the orders given at the highest levels during apartheid was utterly destroyed. They undertook to find, shred and destroy all sensitive documents of the apartheid state and format and destroy every hard drive in an event Terry Bell and Dumisa Ntsebeza have called the "Paper Auschwitz".
- To ensure that, both pre- and post-democracy, all the infiltrators who were still working from within ANC ranks would be moved into positions of authority and influence in every major part of society, including parliament, the country's courts, the business sector, the media, the executive branch of government, civil society organisations ... you name it. This was to be done as quickly as possible and in ways that would be hard to reverse by using every means necessary, from bribes to threats and lobbying, positive media coverage and using every channel available to discredit whoever might attempt to occupy positions that had been earmarked for these people.
- Sympathetic editors and influential journalists "pushing the party line", wittingly or unwittingly, needed to be in place across the media spectrum, so great care and effort was to be taken to ensure that those controlling the news agenda would "sing from the same song sheet", especially when it came to the importance of emphasising the need for the independence of business interests from state control and the inevitable horrors that might ensue from "communist-style" nationalisation and land expropriation. Privatisation and

neoliberalism were to be the mantra that drove this.

- Operation Scrum was also keenly interested in ensuring that whatever information was going to be revealed at the upcoming Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) would always be carefully managed, monitored and controlled, to ensure that the most damaging secrets were never revealed, that individuals of true strategic importance and possessing the most valuable information would either not appear in front of the commission at all or, if they did, would do so in such a way that nothing too incriminating or embarrassing for apartheid's senior leaders emerged. Ultimately, the TRC was meant to be an exercise that, on the surface, looked progressive but would never be allowed to probe too deeply.

Operation Scrum was very successful in dismantling the nuclear weapons programme, along with the more minor programmes that had attempted to create stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons.

South Africa still has the distinction of being the only country in history to have voluntarily given up its nuclear weapons after entering the exclusive club of nuclear-enabled powers.

Six nuclear weapons had been assembled by the 1980s, and another was still under construction when the programme ended in 1989. All the bombs were dismantled and South Africa acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons when the South African ambassador to the United States signed the treaty in 1991. South Africa under the ANC was praised globally for playing a leading role in the establishment of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty in 1996, becoming one of the first members in 1997.

As for the Paper Auschwitz, that was nearly as successful.

There has never been a better description of this than Terry Bell and Dumisa Ntsebeza's in their book *Unfinished Business*, which opens with the following paragraphs: "As the prospect of a democratic transition in South Africa drew close, tons of files, microfilm, audio and computer tapes and disks were shredded, wiped and incinerated. In little more than six months in 1993, while the political parties of the apartheid state negotiated with the

representatives of the liberation movements, some forty-four metric tons of records from the headquarters of the National Intelligence Service alone were destroyed. There was so much material that state incinerators could not cope: the furnaces of private companies such as the steelmaker Iscor also had to be used. Into these flames disappeared the last echoes of the voices of thousands of victims. It was a paper Auschwitz, an attempt to eradicate all evidence of the nightmare memories of the tortured and the living dead, to obliterate all trace of those victims whose physical remains lay scattered countrywide in unmarked graves.

“Into the flames too went the files of the frightened ones, their craven acceptances of compromise and collaboration etched in dry officialese, but still sweating fear from every syllable. There were also the records of the venal individuals whose greed had driven them to verbal betrayal and beyond. The pasts of thousands of part-time whisperers of secrets and betrayers of trust were turned to ashes. Who and what they talked about, to whom and why, was either vaporised in the furnaces, or shredded to strips, then sold by the kilogram to companies such as Nampak and Sappi to be pulped. A new eco-friendly generation would pen its own secrets on the recycled remains of much of a nation’s memory.

“This was not the first time that the facilities of private companies had been made available to a state keen to purge the national memory of surviving evidence of the past. Such disposals were, of course, purely business transactions, with no questions asked. This was the nature of the relationship of South African business to the state. It enabled business representatives later to appear before the TRC, to plead ignorance of gross human rights abuses, and even to deny that they had in any sense profited from a system which had, at the very least, guaranteed for decades a cheap and malleable labour force.

“Evidence of the destruction of archives surfaced in 1991 at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) forum where government and antiapartheid representatives eventually agreed their compromise for a transition to a non-racial parliamentary democracy. Inquiries about the taped talks in 1988 between then president PW Botha and Nelson Mandela were made at the Codesa talks in the barn-like World Trade Centre building

alongside Johannesburg's international airport at Kempton Park. They drew the response that the NIS had destroyed the tapes. This brought immediate demands, especially from anti-apartheid representatives, to halt the destruction of state records, to keep the national archive reasonably intact.

“However, there was relatively little protest. For it was not only the governing National Party leadership and the generals, brigadiers, colonels and foot soldiers in various arms of the security apparatus that the destruction served. There were also the various informers and collaborators in business and civil society as well as within the various anti-apartheid structures for whom the burning and shredding of files promised an end to fears of discovery. Among the negotiators on both sides at the historic Codesa talks were individuals whose future careers depended on records of the past being lost.”

Despite the success of what Bell and Ntsebeza so eloquently described as to what happened in the destruction of all this documentary evidence, there were still some things they could not destroy. For example the financial records of MK collaborators who had been paid by the state long before the end of apartheid would still pop up unexpectedly years into democracy.

You can imagine the surprise of MK commanders who became generals in the new defence force post 1994 when they discovered that many of their comrades had been collecting a military pension from the apartheid state going back to the 1980s, 1970s, or even earlier.

Their names were still on the system and were carried over on to the new Treasury's database in the 1990s. There are a few other such examples of embarrassing information coming to light. As for how successful Project Scrum was in getting preferred people into positions of power throughout society, that is almost another whole book.

All that should really be pointed out at this stage was how black economic empowerment played out in those early days of BEE, when the Cyril Ramaphosas and Tokyo Sexwales were given their seats at the table. It was pure tokenism to avoid real change. US author Malcolm Gladwell has described this kind of thing as an advanced form of “moral licensing” in society, which he defines as the idea that when a door opens for an outsider,

it usually just “gives the status quo justification to close the door again” to everyone else.

So for the selected lucky few, the rewards were substantial, but their presence at the boardroom table offered a licence to white monopoly capital to feel better about itself and continue without really transforming.

Gladwell offers the example of how some of the Nazis were fond of expressing their love of the poet Berthold Auerbach, “because they think they’ve demonstrated their open-mindedness by loving this one Jew, they feel free to act in the most despicable way to other Jews”.

While comrades who were on the right side of white business were having a fine life in democracy, those who were too radical and outspoken were targeted ruthlessly.

One can offer many examples, but firstly, and most importantly, there was Winnie Mandela, who was always deeply feared by the apartheid regime. They falsely accused and found her guilty of the murder of Stompei Sepei. She was also found guilty of fraud and “stealing” from the ANC. Comrades were wondering why the legal system and the media suddenly cared about someone who was stealing from the ANC, but it didn’t really matter what Winnie had done or hadn’t done, only that she had done something wrong. The journalists even counted how many days she had missed in parliament when she was supposed to be working. What was important was that she was discredited, especially after a journalist overseas claimed she had accused her ex-husband, Nelson Mandela, of selling out. She denied ever saying that.

She was simply too outspoken and could not sit on the truth unlike many other comrades, and so became used to being accused of malfeasance and crime.

Tony Yengeni, too, made the mistake of being too outspoken in NEC meetings about the many concessions blacks were making. He simply had to be removed and destroyed politically because he was a danger to the new, emerging order. He remains the only government official to have served time in jail for the arms deal even though 31 other people received the same discount on a car that he was sentenced for corruption on.

I have written elsewhere about him in this book, so I won't rehash the same points here, but I remember how Comrade Tony was painted as a corrupt, money-hungry fashionista always chasing pretty women. When I was younger and more naive, I confess I also believed it was right that Yengeni went to jail.

Then there's Allan Boesak who also always way too outspoken for his own good. He agitated for the face of Cape Town to change dramatically. He demanded that huge changes be implemented, but he, just like Tony, paid a huge price. He was accused of stealing donor funds and the charges ultimately proved so ridiculous that it was very easy to give him a presidential pardon.

Many outspoken comrades have suffered similar fates. I could mention Julius Malema and his former comrades in the ANC Youth League as just another example.

He illustrates the point that although Operation Scrum may have ended, in many ways it still continues as a perpetual motion machine that still enforces the laws, written and unwritten, of the status quo.

The final big task of Operation Scrum was the neutering of the TRC.

Frank Meintjies from the South African Civil Society Information Service wrote in 2013 about the TRC and Codesa that his concern was that "we are not openly discussing the flaws of these vehicles of transition".

He said the TRC "explored reconciliation not through punishment, but through trying to build a story about gross crimes against humanity and political reform. As far as individuals went, the TRC sought to combat impunity and rebuild a culture of accountability. For victims of gross violence it aimed to uncover hidden truths of what happened and assist families in getting 'closure'. As part of the process, commitments were made to victims of gross violence about reparations and, at least in recommendations towards the end, regarding broader reforms and changes."

He pointed out, though, that because "it could not bring itself to examine wider exploitation and systematic oppression, the TRC's work was

inadequate”.

“The government has also failed to follow up and prosecute the perpetrators of violence who did not apply for amnesty. In addition, it has not fully implemented recommendations for reparations for victims of gross violations. Government has paid reparations – a pay-out of R30 000 – to less than a quarter of victims of gross human rights violation.

“But the TRC’s bigger failure is that it failed to address the more collective loss of dignity, opportunities and systemic violence experienced by the oppressed. No hearings were held on land issues, on the education system, on the migrant labour system and on the role of companies that collaborated with, and made money from, the apartheid security system.

He quoted Mahmood Mamdani as writing: “The TRC held individual state officials criminally responsible, but for only those actions that would have been defined as crimes under apartheid law. It distinguished between the law-driven violence of the apartheid state – pass laws, forced removals, and so on – as legal if not legitimate, and the excess violence of its operatives as illegal.”

And as for Ramaphosa himself, to this day he remains something of an enigma. His unofficial biographer Anthony Butler once wrote of him that he had friends from different areas of life, sometimes in complete opposition to each other, and he preferred to keep them apart. So he would meet with his old friends from the University of the North on one day and his old white business pals on another to play golf with them.

“And each of those different groups of people believes that Cyril is one of them or is sympathetic towards them.”

Political economist Patrick Bond in the *Mail & Guardian* slammed the man in 2013, describing him as the epitome of corporate-state collusion, the man who ran a “constitution-making process whose Bill of Rights uniquely granted mega-corporations – “juristic persons” – the same human rights we mortals should enjoy”.

Ramaphosa publicly promoted the calls for relaxing exchange controls, “a

policy that contributed to our becoming the world's most risky emerging market by the time of the 2008-2009 crash, according to the Economist, because vast sums of rich white people's loot, not to mention the financial headquarters of our largest companies, soon vanished offshore".

Bond identifies this as one reason our foreign debt is now "five times larger than in 1994".

He called Ramaphosa's own wealth accumulation "dubious", as it was linked to the "Sam Molohe Bakery tragedy" and the "Brett Kebble JCI farce", not to mention "obesity-inducing fast foods, exploitative banking and the company called the 'unacceptable face of capitalism' by British prime minister Edward Heath in 1973 – Lonmin".

If you're wondering what the Sam Molohe Bakery tragedy was, it was once described as the most acrimonious fight to ever hit black business in South Africa.

Molohe was a high school dropout from Ga-Rankuwa who became a self-made millionaire during apartheid. He had the distinction of being the first black man to own a bakery in 1978 and became involved in a bitter civil claim with Ramaphosa, who became the head of the Molohe Group, controlling it with Nedcor, FBC Fidelity, The Business Bank and Mercantile Bank. Ramaphosa sold it, allegedly benefiting personally from the R300 million sale to the Rebhold Group while "Bra Sam" was left with little to show for it. There were serious allegations that the shares should have been sold for far more, as much as R1 billion, if it hadn't been for insider collusion.

In 2001, Molohe declared that he was "going to fight Ramaphosa all the way, until I get back what is rightfully mine," but the matter eventually went quiet and was dealt with in a press statement from Ramaphosa that "with the finalisation of the liquidation of the Molohe Group all the outstanding issues regarding Mr Molohe have been resolved and finally laid to rest", said Ramaphosa.

If you analyse the particulars of what Ramaphosa and his white partners actually did to poor Bra Sam, it's beyond heartbreaking. And the strangest

thing about it is how little has ever been written about one of the biggest corporate muggings of a black man in the history of South Africa, done with the full complicity of another black man.

Ramaphosa's response was that Sam had been present at all the board meetings "where unanimous consent was given by the directors, including Molohe, for the disposal of certain of the businesses to Rebhold". Ramaphosa added that Molohe had signed away his own shares as security to the banks.

By the time that happened, it was not the first time Cyril had convinced a black person to sign away everything that was rightfully his. You could argue that what happened at Codesa was the embodiment of millions black people all signing away their claims to their birthright.

## The con of Codesa

Much has been written in celebration of the “miracle” that allowed for a peaceful transition to democracy in South Africa. But was it really a miracle? And is everything about it worth celebrating?

The truth is not quite as simple as the Hallmark card that so many people – many of them well meaning – have tried to reduce post-apartheid South Africa to.

What went down in those early years of negotiation between the ANC, the National Party and big business was probably the last thing most of those who’d spent decades in exile or imprisoned in the struggle would have expected and hoped for, but most just came to accept it. Still, if you ask many MK comrades today if this was what they had spent their lives fighting for, I’m yet to meet any who say yes ... at least not without giving a long pause first.

This, though, is the South Africa we now have. And for some, it has worked out wonderfully. If your name is Cyril Ramaphosa, for example, you can revel in your nearly overnight status as a billionaire after being welcomed into the elite club of capitalist overlords. A handful of others have also been anointed with wealth and power in our new South Africa in which the economy is so often treated like a god before which we must supplicate whatever radical political notion we may ever have had. It’s no coincidence – obviously – that Ramaphosa was central to brokering the eventual agreement on what form the new South Africa and its economy would take – an economy that has rewarded him handsomely in return.

Claire Robertson of the *Sunday Times* described the moment in 1993 when

the ANC and the National Party agreed on the future of the country.

She wrote: “It began terribly late and took place in an echoing hypermarket of a room. No hymns or anthems marked its passing. But at fourteen minutes past midnight on Thursday, November 18, the plenary session of the negotiations finally killed off centuries of white rule in South Africa ... Those gripped by this irritating country from birth or out of a horrible fascination kept watch as South Africa’s future was sealed in the dead of night.”

She said that as the evening wound up Cyril Ramaphosa stood in the “shadows above the hall,” commenting on how tired he was. He still exclaimed: “But it’s a good package. We got a good deal.”

In the years since, though, many have questioned how good a deal it really was.

The story of South Africa that we are always told to concentrate on is the one about the political power shift from the conservative, racist, Afrikaner-dominated apartheid government to the liberal, nonracial, black-dominated democratic government. That is a good story, sure, and it is celebrated every year in endless ways. But what about the other story, of how economic control of the country has remained largely unchanged? In fact, it became an economy that has benefited white South Africans even more handsomely than it had under apartheid, and left most black South Africans to continue to play second fiddle.

Changing the government, as it turned out, was always the easier challenge, difficult as it was and sweet as that change felt. Political change, one must of course admit, brought with it untold improvements and freedoms, and amid all the corruption scandals we hear about almost every day, the ANC government has still managed to achieve a lot through its control of political power. It has used that power to improve the lives of millions, and we should never forget that.

So before we dig a little deeper into the nature of the deep economic compromises the ANC agreed to, let’s acknowledge some of the biggest improvements to people’s lives over the past 23-plus years: the electrification

of about 7 million more households than in 1994; far greater access to water for most South Africans; the settling of about 80 000 land claims benefiting nearly 2 million people; the building of as many as 3 million free houses for the poor, 9 million children in no-fee schools where they are often fed for free; improved healthcare; the provision of 17 million welfare grants; improved sanitation; and a black middle class that is now believed to be larger than the white middle class (even though they are drowning in debt and are heavily burdened by “black tax”).

But our biggest problems are also not going away.

Unemployment, and especially black unemployment (31.4%), is higher than it has ever been (overall, officially at nearly 28% at time of writing, unofficially even higher). Most of our people survive on scraps every day. We see regular and violent service delivery protests, and police brutality and torture.

Perhaps most concerning of all is that growth in our economy is nowhere near the level it should be today, and much of that is thanks to the greed and stupidity of the very same ratings agencies who are today breathing down our neck and downgrading this country to junk ... when it was largely their role in the 2008 financial crisis that plunged us and most of the rest of the world into crisis in the first place.

The current government also has to look in the mirror and take the blame for many of our problems, especially at state-owned enterprises, but the reality is that the legacy of colonialism and apartheid was never only a political one. The point of colonial occupation was always first and foremost an economic one. The Anglo-Boer War from 1899 to 1902 took place primarily because the British government wanted to control the gold and diamond fields of South Africa’s interior. The Afrikaners opposed and fought them primarily for political reasons, not because they themselves wanted to control and run those mines. The Afrikaners wanted self-rule and the land in their “Fatherland”. The British wanted control of the greater economy and the mining riches in particular.

That conflict between Englishman and Afrikaner was settled in an uneasy truce in 1910 with the Union of South Africa, and you could say the

Afrikaners finally prevailed over their former conquerors in 1948 when the National Party came to power, installing apartheid with it.

There was a general sense of shock for more than just the black population when the National Party took power in those elections – big business, too, was caught by surprise and left dismayed, along with the majority of English speakers.

What followed was years of political intervention by the apartheid government to substantively change the economic position of the Afrikaner – people who lagged behind their English-speaking white counterparts in almost all areas: jobs, such as on the railways, were reserved for Afrikaners; they saw themselves take over far more positions in the civil service; and, perhaps most importantly, big companies such as Sanlam, Old Mutual and Rembrandt enjoyed massive state support to equip them to compete with big English businesses on level terms. Federale Mynbou (later renamed to Gencor), for example, gradually increased its mining holdings until 1975 when a partnership with Anton Rupert's Rembrandt group allowed it to become South Africa's second-biggest mining house after Anglo American.

The early years of apartheid were boom times, with a strong gold price compensating for the fact that our economy was a simplistic one that relied (like so many other African states) on the exports of minerals and raw materials extracted through a reliance on cheap black labour. The National Party also subsidised farming more than ever before and enjoyed a boost in agricultural growth and exports.

At first, for big British companies like De Beers and Anglo American, it was business as usual and the profits continued to mount. But all of this obscured the growing problem that apartheid was, from the outset, economically unsustainable. All the National Party had really cared about was to raise the income and standard of living for most Afrikaners, who had been lagging behind their English-speaking counterparts socially, economically and culturally. It managed to do that quite quickly, within the first decade, but they struck a wall from the 1980s onwards because the system could never sustain itself. When South Africa entered a recession, it was a problem the apartheid government would never be able to solve.

It was a problem that big business itself was the first to recognise because it threatened sustainability and their profits – even the big Afrikaner conglomerates began to call for the reform of “grand apartheid” and replace it with a political system that would be better for business. Johann Rupert’s father, Anton, as chair of the wealthy Rembrandt group was in 1966 even suggested as a more moderate alternative prime minister candidate as part of the “Verwoerd must go” campaign largely driven by business interests.

It was obvious that the reform of apartheid would be required, but when Verwoerd was assassinated that year, the NP chose another apartheid hardliner, JB Vorster, to enforce an uncompromised vision of apartheid.

The result of that was ever-increasing economic catastrophe for South Africa.

The country needed far more skilled and semi-skilled labour than it was producing (in 1969 it was estimated the country was short of 47 000 professionals and semi-professionals to fulfil the growing demand in the manufacturing and technical sectors, and the white labour supply was simply inadequate).

South Africa continued to struggle to move away from being an exporter of raw materials to becoming a manufacturing power. It also desperately needed a bigger domestic market – but apartheid, by law, ensured that blacks remained uneducated and unskilled, useful only as cheap labour – the very thing that was no longer all that useful in an age when even the old labour mainstays of mining and farming were being mechanised.

Government did its best to prop up the impractical system of apartheid, even offering businesses financial incentives to set up factories and other manufacturing-related businesses on the borders of the Bantustans in a futile attempt to stop black migration to “white cities”. These incentives were invariably abused, simply enriching unscrupulous businesspeople even further and draining state coffers.

The administration costs of running the unpopular apartheid system, especially the increasing costs of funding the Bantustans themselves, kept mounting while the gold price dropped. The economic picture grew even more dismal when more countries started exporting gold in the early 1980s

and South Africa's share of world gold production dropped rapidly – from 51.9% in 1980 to 32.5% in 1986.

Apartheid was bad and would increasingly be terrible for business.

Despite this, in the 1970s South Africa remained a popular choice for foreign investment thanks to its higher interest rates. As late as 1974 the average American corporation received an 18% return on investment in South Africa when, in the same year, Britain could only offer 8%. Much of this was thanks to the gold price rising rapidly in the 1970s – an economic prop that would never be able to hold forever.

In the years that followed, the economy began to reel from dwindling capital inflows and a sharp drop in real metal prices (estimated to be 45% lower in 1989 than they had been in 1962).

In the 1960s, investors had already begun to withdraw capital in response to the Sharpeville and Langa killings. The apartheid government imposed stricter exchange control regulations and the balance of payments eventually recovered to the point that the manufacturing sector was growing in the mid-1960s at nearly 12% per year.

But the 1980s were dire for apartheid as large foreign firms began to disinvest, inflation hit unprecedented levels of over 20% and the ensuing recession saw the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs and a major depreciation of the rand. By 1987, 250 foreign companies had withdrawn from South Africa.

In 1986 the apartheid government was able to get its international creditors to freeze \$14 billion of its foreign debt until 1990, but it still had to find nearly \$8 billion to be repaid between 1987 and 1990. But its total foreign reserves of R4.93 billion at the end of 1988 were less than 30% of 1980's levels, and by October 1988 its gold reserves could only support six more weeks' worth of imports.

In a word, the apartheid government knew it was broke – and fast running out of options.

It would need to save the economy somehow, even if that meant giving up political power. And ultimately that was what the negotiations with the ANC represented: a way to save, retain and grow white economic power at the cost of relinquishing political power.

The 40-year experiment of demonstrating the inherent superiority of the white man and his politics had failed, and it would only become increasingly obvious how big a failure it was.

Having their faces rubbed in that failure was the very thing the white government was determined to avoid.

Before the last apartheid president, FW de Klerk, gave his speech in parliament in February 1990 announcing the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC and PAC, he spent his December holidays in 1989 contemplating how he would be able to phrase his speech in such a way as to hide the fact that both the white-owned political system and its economy had its back to the wall.

He wrote afterwards: “The key decision I had to take for myself was to make a paradigm shift ... I realised that we would have little chance of success in the coming negotiations if we did not grasp the initiative right at the beginning and convince the important players that we were not negotiating under pressure, but from the strength of our convictions.”

But the truth was that they were negotiating under pressure and the ANC had far more leverage at the time than we are today often allowed to realise.

There was undeniable collusion occurring between the NP and ANC’s negotiators to ensure a result that would leave the private sector with most of the control of the economy, leaving the democratic government with severely limited political control. We can see the effects of that even today: the moment the ANC government tries to do anything politically that the overpowering influence of “the market” does not like, the result is absolute pandemonium: the rand drops as capital takes flight and commentators regularly remind us that government’s “bad” decisions are “hurting the poor most”.

The true power in this country remains with those who control the economy, and anyone who thinks differently is just fooling himself. Ultimately, the ANC has been kept in line by big business – and that’s precisely what the ANC’s negotiators knew they were agreeing to at the start of democracy.

Nelson Mandela himself said in a speech in 1991 that: “The economy of this country always has and will continue to remain central to our struggle for national liberation. On the one hand the black majority is desperately fighting to redress historical injustices and present inequalities and on the other the white minority government is using every means at its disposal to maintain economic power in the hands of the whites and big business in particular. The intention is of course, to ensure that whites continue to enjoy a privileged lifestyle. While engaging us in the arena of political negotiations the government is implementing economic strategies that go well into the future and might even tie the hands of a democratically elected government. The aim is of course to make it as difficult as possible for a new government to implement policies of redistribution and socioeconomic justice.”

So they knew what was going on, and they agreed to it anyway.

From the start, De Klerk’s hope was that he could trade in political hegemony for far more important economic power.

He and others in the NP calculated that by involving numerous political participants they could complicate the situation to such an extent that they would be able to prevent a radical outcome from negotiations. They championed the importance of the “free market” with minimal state intervention. Neoliberal market freedoms and deregulation were constantly sold to the ANC as the best and only ways to achieve clear economic growth once overseas investment could be attracted.

An elaborate system of checks and balances would prevent a future ruling ANC from being able to implement just about any unilateral decision.

The NP and big business sang the song that economic growth would ultimately solve all problems, allowing the black population to get rich through growth and not radical state intervention or the redistribution of existing wealth.

In manoeuvres designed to pre-empt the radical restructuring of big corporations once the ANC came to power, from 1990 onwards, most of the big corporations in South Africa were quick to sign black people up into executive and management positions. They also transferred some of their assets to black-owned consortiums.

From 1990 onwards, the ANC's leaders were constantly assailed by messages trumpeting the superiority of neoliberal economics – both from local businesspeople and the media, as well as international factions. And the ANC had never placed much emphasis on its own economic theories and policies during the struggle years, and so was unable to rapidly present many of its own progressive economic strategies as a counter to those it was being inundated with from government, local business and international financial and diplomatic institutions.

De Klerk had also known only too well that the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 presented an opportunity to seek and establish an economic balance of power in South Africa.

In return for being allowed into the global financial club, the ANC came under increasing pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), and the Consultative Business Movement to drop its old inward industrialisation programme and accept an investment-led, export-orientated growth strategy.

The end result was a clear acceptance that most of what was in private hands would remain in private hands.

In the late 1980s the NP had already begun to implement neoliberal economic policies to link large sections of the South African economy to international business – with the primary intention of ensuring a radical economic programme would be very hard to implement for the ANC.

When Mandela was released from prison in 1990, he told his followers he believed in the nationalisation of South Africa's main businesses.

“The nationalisation of the mines, banks and monopoly industries is the policy of the ANC, and a change or modification of our views in this regard

is inconceivable,” he said at the time.

As Andrew Sorkin wrote in 2013 in *The New York Times*: “Two years later, however, Mr Mandela changed his mind, embracing capitalism, and charted a new economic course for his country.”

The big change came in January 1992 during a trip to Davos, Switzerland, for the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum. There, he was persuaded to support capitalism and globalisation.

“I came home to say: ‘Chaps, we have to choose. We either keep nationalisation and get no investment, or we modify our own attitude and get investment.’”

The biggest change for him had come, according to the future Reserve Bank governor Tito Mboweni, after he met leaders from the Communist Parties of China and Vietnam.

“They told him frankly as follows: ‘We are currently striving to privatise state enterprises and invite private enterprise into our economies. We are Communist Party governments, and you are a leader of a national liberation movement. Why are you talking about nationalisation?’”

It was a pivotal moment in history, and the die was cast.

Despite the “billions of dollars of investment from large companies outside the country”, Sorkin wrote, “the results raise more questions than answers about its success. The gap between the haves and have-nots is now higher than it was when Mr Mandela became president. Inequality in South Africa is a real and growing issue.

“Mr Mandela may have ended apartheid and years of awful violence, but his dream of creating a country that, as he said, is ‘a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities’ may still remain a dream that capitalism and free markets have yet to solve.”

Although China said what it did to Madiba, the point to keep in mind is that China did not open itself up to the free market in a way that would have

allowed its economy to be raped by the globalised free market system.

What you find today in China, unlike in South Africa, is a form of capitalism often referred to as “state capitalism”, allowing the government to own the economy substantially, which is the very opposite of what has happened in South Africa.

The year before his big change of heart, Mandela knew the party would need to “increase the capacity of the ANC and the entire democratic movement in the field of economics”, because he knew they were being outplayed – but even though the ANC tried to set up a system that would see a strong private sector working closely with a strong public sector, it was naked neoliberalism that won the day, and which the ANC signed up for, hook, line and sinker.

In August 1993 it seemed to many that an NP-ANC agreement was doomed to failure. A general strike had seen about 4 million workers staying at home and a peaceful demonstration led by Mandela saw as many as 100 000 people marching through the streets of Pretoria.

In September, the ANC’s leaders started to take the mass action campaign to the homelands and led a cross-border march to Bisho, the then capital of Ciskei. When Ciskeian soldiers shot and killed 28 marchers, it seemed that the peaceful transition to democracy was nothing more than a pipe dream.

But then, curiously, it emerged that ANC secretary-general Cyril Ramaphosa and the NP’s minister of constitutional affairs Roelf Meyer had been busy with “secret talks” all along, and had come to an “understanding”.

It took only one more meeting before the so-called Record of Understanding was reached. From this, the floodgates were opened, a new interim constitution was finally drawn up and democratic elections took place on 27 April 1994.

As you drive through the south of Johannesburg and reach Soweto today, you are confronted by giant human-made mini-mountains from the massive old gold dumps. Those dumps are difficult-to-ignore evidence of the fabulous wealth that was extracted on the backs of exploited black labour, disposable lives that often perished in a network of tunnels that runs to as much as 1000

kilometres.

Much of that gold or the money paid for it is gone today. What was meant to be South Africa's sovereign wealth has long been spirited away – just as you can see the biggest jewels in the British crown on display at the Tower of London today after they were cut from the 3 106-carat Cullinan diamond discovered near Pretoria in 1905 and given as a gift to King Edward VII. The UK has made billions from charging an entrance fee to view those jewels. South Africa makes nothing from it still – and that is a story repeated in many forms throughout our history, and which continues to this day.

The ANC had an opportunity to reverse this trend or at the very least slow it down. But it agreed to an economic path for the country that only accelerated its impoverishment while making a lucky few unimaginably wealthier along the way.

Today, we rarely hear about the central role a small group of rich white men were playing in the design of our democratic state in those early years.

Sampe Terreblanche wrote in his 2012 book *Lost in Transformation* how mining mogul and former Anglo American and De Beers chairperson Harry Oppenheimer had secret meetings at his big old mansion in Johannesburg from 1991 onwards where he and other wealthy men and their handpicked intellectuals and ANC confidants did their best to plot their way out of the economic mess the country was in – amid their own feeling of panic of what might happen to them when the bullying racist enforcers in the form of the National Party government was no longer there to safeguard their questionably acquired assets and their control over the “means of production”.

What I am talking about here was not some sort of conspiracy. These people were not sinister Illuminati types. They were what they seemed to be and were trying to achieve what anyone else in their position would have. They were determined to keep and use the very same wealth they and their parents and grandparents had amassed through the spoils of colonialism and apartheid to increase the odds of making even more riches – even though they may have been wondering if they were about to lose all of it to the “*swart gevaar*”.

You can't blame them for at least trying this. In their place any of us would have done the same. They were not only allowed to get away with it, but they got way more out of the deal than they themselves probably imagined they would.

True revolution would have seen many of the billionaires minted during apartheid and even before it arrested and tried for their collusion with the apartheid state. They would, at the very least, never have been allowed to move their fortunes offshore with ease. The trillions that are now apparently stashed in private accounts as part of the so-called investment boycott of the current government we keep hearing about would have been flushed out long before anyone could even think of something as cheeky as a boycott.

That was probably always too much to ask for. But it wouldn't have been hard for the ANC to at least do a little better at the negotiation table.

So what did the ANC eventually agree to? Or should we say, what did they give in to?

Wits political economy professor Patrick Bond has named 12 compromises the ANC signed off on at Codesa (the Congress for a Democratic South Africa), which he published in *The Conversation*.

He named them in 2016 as follows (his words):

- The repayment of the US\$25 billion [R350 billion at the current exchange rate, not taking into account interest] apartheid-era foreign debt. This denied Mandela money to pay for basic needs of apartheid's victims.
- Giving the South African Reserve Bank formal independence. This resulted in the insulation of the central bank's officials from democratic accountability. It led to high interest rates and the deregulation of exchange controls.
- Borrowing \$850 million from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in December 1993, with tough conditions persisting for years. These included rapid scrapping of import surcharges that had protected local industries, state spending cuts, lower public sector salaries and a decrease in wages across the

board.

- Reappointing apartheid's finance minister Derek Keys and Reserve Bank governor Chris Stals, who retained neoliberal policies.
- Joining the World Trade Organisation on adverse terms, as a “transitional”, not developing economy. This led to the destruction of many clothing, textiles, appliances and other labour-intensive firms.
- Lowering primary corporate taxes from 48% to 29% and maintaining countless white people's and corporate privileges.
- Privatising parts of the state, such as Telkom, the state-owned telecommunications company.
- Relaxing exchange controls. This led to sustained outflows to rich people's overseas accounts and a persistent current account deficit even during periods of trade surplus, and raising interest rates to unprecedented levels.
- Adopting the neoliberal macroeconomic policy [known as] Gear. This policy not only failed on its own terms, it also caused developmental austerity.
- Giving property rights dominance in the constitution, thereby limiting its usefulness for redress.
- Approving the “demutualisation” of the two mega-insurers Old Mutual and Sanlam. It was the privatisation of historic mutual wealth for current share owners.
- Permitting most of South Africa's ten biggest companies to move their headquarters and primary listings abroad in the late 1990s. The results are permanent balance of payments deficits and corporate disloyalty to the society.

Do yourself a favour and read through that list a few times, as I have. Bond calls them “the dozen biggest devils that hobbled Mandela's economic legacy”.

Few, if any, of those “devils” were the kind of thing that would have led to war of any form, but what a difference it may have made for the poor and the future of South Africa if just a few of them had not been agreed to.

That foreign debt, for example, should have been, at the very least, completely forgiven or heavily discounted. We are talking here about money that had been loaned to a completely illegitimate government, which had then used it (when they weren’t just squandering or outright stealing it through blatant corruption) to further oppress the masses.

And yet the ANC – knowing full well it was inheriting a bankrupt, fiscally mismanaged state – agreed to repay this same money that had been so brutally used as a weapon against them and the people who were about to vote for them.

Imagine the following scenario: A murderous psychopath decides one day he would like to build a house of torture and slaughter. He goes to the bank with all the plans for this place and presents it to the bank’s management, detailing how he will have walls that close and crush people, spikes dropping from the ceiling, swords flying out of walls and so on, along with fully installed acid baths to dispose of the bodies. Let’s say he sells them on the idea because he plans to sell tickets to rich sadists to watch the show, or something like that.

The bottom line is that the bank is impressed and agrees to lend him the money.

Now suppose you somehow fall victim to this man and his house but manage to survive. You go on to sue the owner of the house and the courts eventually find in your favour, proclaiming you the victim. As part of your damages settlement, they award you the house – except they rule that you still need to repay whatever amount is still outstanding on the loan to the bank.

You may say this comparison is unfair, but the countries and institutions who were lending money to the apartheid government had no possible way of claiming ignorance. They knew only too well what was going on in all this land south of the Limpopo. The ANC in exile and outspoken government critics such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu were begging the world for year after year to impose the harshest of possible sanctions on this country, which

would have included stopping lending them money. Yes, there were sanctions, but were they ever enough?

No. Because the loans kept coming. And they kept coming because South Africa could not be allowed to fail as an ally in the not-so-openly-discussed Cold War of the West against the Soviet Union.

So the West knew what they had been funding, even though they were often completely two-faced about it. You cannot reasonably expect to be repaid your “investment” if you knowingly “invested” in a crime. I cannot give money to a drug dealer and then sue the man when he fails to repay me. It would be my own fault for being complicit in a crime and I’d have to write the money off.

Let’s not forget that the United Nations classified apartheid a crime against humanity in 1973, a full 20 years before the ANC agreed to repay the funders of that very same crime all their money. All that apartheid-era debt was finally repaid in 2001, which made all the credit ratings agencies happy and prompted them to improve South Africa’s credit ratings scores to celebrate (which should tell you quite a lot about credit ratings agencies).

To make the point even more clearly: it was the eventual refusal to keep rolling over South Africa’s debt in 1990 that finally forced the apartheid government to approach the ANC for negotiations – even though De Klerk did his best to make it seem that he wasn’t being forced. But the writing was on the wall.

Previously, these same international funders had been only too happy to keep rolling over all that debt. Imagine how much sooner apartheid could have ended, how much sooner Mandela and all the many other prisoners of conscience suffering in apartheid’s jails could have been released if these backers of apartheid had merely stopped writing out their cheques a whole lot sooner.

But that’s not what happened, and they were never made to account for it, or even to lose a single cent. We should not be celebrating anyone who acquiesced to that. And that is just one of the twelve devils.

Let's next consider the \$850 million loan the ANC agreed to take from the IMF to help kick-start our broken economy. Truthfully, the developed world should surely have been lining up to offer aid packages to South Africa and the ANC, but the West obviously had little faith in this band of mostly black supposed communists and their ability to run a country. So they were willing to give some money, but with the kinds of terms and conditions that should have made the ANC's negotiators baulk and say: "No way. This is an insult."

That didn't happen though, perhaps because they thought they had no other choice. Or perhaps there was something in it for them. Perhaps we should ask the chief negotiator, Ramaphosa.

And so the protections extended to local industries evaporated, state spending was cut and a country already famous for its deplorable wages was forced to cut them further. In effect, our freedom to decide how we would run our macroeconomy was outsourced to the IMF.

When I was asked several years ago by a friend from Norway (which is famously socialist) why it is that South Africa has such an American-style economic system (which doesn't work well in a place with such a small middle class) my answer was simple: "That's what we signed up for at Codesa."

Writing in 2013, Frank Meintjies said of Codesa that it "did nothing to rearrange economic power".

"It was silent on the need for ownership changes in major corporations. It sent no message about the need to reverse injustice in land ownership.

"Generally, for the liberation movement and activists in the struggle, the political transition was meant to create a platform for further transformation. They would use democratic space, as well as measures such as a land reform, to create a critical mass in favour of ongoing and far-reaching redress.

"Twenty years on, there have been some socio-economic improvements and small dents have been made into poverty. More people have been employed, even though unemployment remains high. And government has significantly rolled out services such as piped water and electricity.

“But economic inclusion of the majority has not taken place. Inequality is rife. The stock exchange reflects the continued concentration of economic power in white hands. According to Duma Gqubule, the black majority directly owns less than 10 percent on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Furthermore, less than 10 percent of land has been transferred into black hands. Mazibuko Jara has argued that with the current rate of transfer, it would take a further 30 years to reach government’s target of 30 percent of land transfer to black people.

“And so, twenty years on, South Africa is at another stalemate. Although we have a legitimate government and levels of violence in no way match the early nineties, we are once again witnessing scenes of well-armed policemen facing off against protestors. The country is rocked by a wave of strike action and there are ongoing service delivery protests. Much of the community-level mobilisation is around bread-and-butter issues – but there is also growing mobilisation around bigger issues such as demands for ‘return of the land’ and nationalisation of the mines. The emergence of the Economic Freedom Fighters is no accident – it is riding on the deep sense of injustice felt by many regarding exclusion from land ownership as well as the negative impact of mining companies on nearby communities.”

Ramaphosa should tell us how he could have facilitated such an obviously skewed deal and then still take credit for being a “skilled negotiator”. He won for the ANC and the people of South Africa only what they were going to get anyway following any democratic election. But he gave away just about everything else.

Had the ANC not come to the rescue of the country and its economy, the results for white privilege and white monopoly capital would have been dire. It’s hard to find many of the recipients of this showing much gratitude for it though, because there remains an undeniable sense of entitlement and arrogance in the white community.

To compare another big moment in history: After the end of World War 2, the USA provided massive financial aid to Europe so that it could rebuild itself after most of the continent’s cities had been flattened. Even the one-time big enemy Germany (West Germany at that time) received the equivalent of about \$15 billion in today’s money (\$1.6 billion in 1948) from

the USA through the Marshall Plan. It was only expected to repay a portion of that money, while most of Europe was given 50 years or more to repay the loans (and in many cases never repaid anything). By 1952, partly thanks to this easy cash, most of Europe had recovered to pre-war economic levels, or was doing even better. In return for the rebuilding, these countries agreed to remove trade barriers, modernise their industries and turn away from communism, but they did not allow their financial institutions to be micromanaged by America.

In South Africa, however, the ANC was willing to let an apartheid finance minister and Reserve Bank governor continue to hold the purse strings. The Reserve Bank was allowed to be independent, with Ramaphosa and the other drafters of our constitution writing that same autonomy into our highest laws.

What has this independent Reserve Bank given us in return? Some of the highest interest rates in the world, which harms everyone who needs to borrow money in our society. This is just another way of saying you take from the poor and give to the rich. It's little wonder our banking system is so regularly praised by the world's financiers, who themselves live in countries with interest rates of 1%, 2% or even less.

Once again, Ramaphosa should tell us why he was so keen to ensure this happened.

The deregulation of exchange controls that was also so easily agreed to meant the rich have been able, over the years, to move their fortunes abroad with ease and little accountability.

The dominance of property rights in our new constitution is also hardly an accident. That alone was evidence enough of white capital telling the ANC it needed to rubber-stamp their ownership of just about everything of value in this economy, regardless of how they came to own it.

What did the ANC get in return? You could say "a lot, they got to run the country. They get to collect all the taxes and decide how they'll be spent. That's a lot."

True. But did they really need to be granted access to that power through the negotiating table? Was the opportunity to be able to contest free and fair democratic elections really something the ANC had to just about beg for and then show a world of gratitude for when it was finally granted?

Obviously, for white business and the white population in general, it was a huge relief that it panned out like that and Mandela turned out to be a friendly old man in a Springbok shirt – but we could just as easily have had an ANC that was tougher and less compromising, and that did not confuse the word ‘reconciliation’ with ‘capitulation’.

You can see photographs today of Mandela smiling with his old friend Harry Oppenheimer, who he and many others in the ANC openly admired. When Oppenheimer passed away in 2000, Mandela called him “monumentally instrumental in helping this country to be the economic leader it is today”.

That was very true – perhaps truer than most of us could ever realise.

In his tribute, Mandela praised the man and his family for their commitment to democracy and philanthropic spirit. He said Oppenheimer’s “contribution to building partnership between big business and the new democratic government in that first period of democratic rule can never be appreciated too much”.

Thabo Mbeki also praised the late Oppenheimer for having “bequeathed to our country not only an industrial empire spanning the width and breadth of Africa and the world, but also major legacies in the fields of education, the arts and community development” as well as being a “pioneer of reconciliation”.

The then minister of finance, Trevor Manuel, credited Oppenheimer with pioneering “the economic expansion from the mining to manufacturing industries that became so crucial for South Africa’s growth”.

To me, these tributes (which are clearly honestly meant) demonstrate the supreme cunning of all those who fall under the label of “white monopoly capital”. They successfully managed to convince the very same group of “native Africans” whom they had always looked down upon as an inferior

race, century after century, that indeed they were friends, and on the same side.

There's no doubt that Oppenheimer was a charming and genial man and that he always openly opposed apartheid. He was a committed liberal supporting the likes of Helen Suzman, and a founding member of the Progressive Party, which today takes the form of the Democratic Alliance.

What many people gloss over, though, was that Suzman was never in favour of giving all black people the vote. She wanted a return to selective enfranchisement – a solution that would mean only the “good blacks” got to vote.

Oppenheimer and other richly seductive liberals like him were the perfect example of how confusing things must have been for the ANC during the years of transition – because they must have seemed like clear allies against the more obvious enemy, the apartheid government.

But for former minister Ronnie Kasrils (yes, the same man who was the last person who was seen with Ralph), he professed horror at what had happened. Writing in *The Guardian* in 2013, Kasrils called the ANC's economic deal a “Faustian pact” (a deal with the devil), which sold out the poor. He wrote that the ANC's optimism had “overlooked the tenacity of the international capitalist system. From 1991 to 1996 the battle for the ANC's soul got under way, and was eventually lost to corporate power: we were entrapped by the neoliberal economy”.

He described the taking of that IMF loan as something that they had rationalised as a “necessary evil” after “we had lost faith in the ability of our own revolutionary masses to overcome all obstacles”.

“We believed, wrongly, there was no other option; that we had to be cautious, since by 1991 our once powerful ally, the Soviet Union, bankrupted by the arms race, had collapsed.”

The end result, he wrote, was that: “All means to eradicate poverty, which was Mandela's and the ANC's sworn promise to the ‘poorest of the poor’, were lost in the process. Nationalisation of the mines and [the] heights of the

economy as envisaged by the Freedom Charter were abandoned. The ANC accepted responsibility for a vast apartheid-era debt, which should have been cancelled. A wealth tax on the super-rich to fund developmental projects was set aside, and domestic and international corporations, enriched by apartheid, were excused from any financial reparations. Extremely tight budgetary obligations were instituted that would tie the hands of any future governments; obligations to implement a free-trade policy and abolish all forms of tariff protection in keeping with neoliberal free trade fundamentals were accepted. Big corporations were allowed to shift their main listings abroad.”

Referring to Sampie Terreblanche’s revelations, Kasrils confirmed that South Africa’s mineral and energy leaders and the bosses of US and British companies met regularly with young ANC economists schooled in western economics who were reporting to Mandela. He said they were either “outwitted or frightened into submission by hints of the dire consequences for South Africa should an ANC government prevail with what were considered ruinous economic policies”.

Either that, or there was something in it for them.

Terreblanche has called these ANC concessions “treacherous decisions that [will] haunt South Africa for generations to come”.

He’s right, too.

The end result is the status quo that prevails today, with most of our best and brightest black minds either squabbling over the “only game in town” for them: politics and the spoils of politics and all the corruption our current political system encourages and thrives on, or they have been co-opted as bit-part players in the private sector where they make up the numbers and play their assigned roles but truly do not control the movement of vast sums of money and the profits that are still accruing to all the established players.

Aside from them, there is the small pantheon of BEE-enriched individuals and their companies who make it seem as though things have really changed, when really it’s just an Animal Farm-type makeover of: “Meet the new boss. Same as the old boss.”

Andrew Gavin Marshall once wrote: “We are ruled, though it may be difficult to imagine, by a small dynastic power structure, largely consisting of powerful banking families, such as the Rothschilds, Rockefellers, and others. They emerged in controlling the financial system, extended their influence over the political system, the educational system, and, through the major foundations, have become the dominant social powers of our world, creating think tanks and other institutions which shape and change the course of society and modern human history.”

And if the negotiators of Codesa needed counsel from someone closer to home, there were the words of Ghana’s first independence president, Kwame Nkrumah, who warned in the 1960s: “The result of neo-colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. Investment, under neo-colonialism, increases, rather than decreases, the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world. The struggle against neo-colonialism is not aimed at excluding the capital of the developed world from operating in less developed countries. It is aimed at preventing the financial power of the developed countries being used in such a way as to impoverish the less developed.”

In the recent debate about the so-called evils of “white monopoly capital” that has dominated the headlines – with the Ramaphosa faction in the ANC going so far as to say there isn’t even such a thing as white monopoly capital, it’s important to point out that the debate should not be reduced to an “us-and-them” fight. It’s true that white monopoly capital got almost everything it wanted out of the democratic deal and have never been made to account. To make matters even worse, big apartheid-era bailouts in the 1980s by the Reserve Bank of major apartheid-era corporations including Bankorp (today Absa), Rembrandt (Richemont), Sanlam, Daimler Chrysler, Armscor, Nedbank and First National Bank have been left unchallenged to this day.

The democratic government in 1997 commissioned the British investigating firm Ciex to look at this apparent theft of R26 billion in state money during apartheid. Ciex recommended that much of the money could indeed be recovered and was even willing to do the recovery itself – for a hefty fee.

Former British spy Michael Oatley has since revealed that it was Nelson

Mandela himself who decided against recovering the funds – because he did not want to alienate the Afrikaners with whom apparently secret deals were agreed to prior to democracy.

Oatley told the *Sunday Times*: “When he learned of it, President Mandela ruled that moving against Absa, and effectively the Afrikaner financial nexus, was inconsistent with his policy of reconciliation [and with] secret pre-change agreements,” he says. “By then, of course, Absa had made itself the ANC’s best friend.”

Oatley had also compiled further reports about apartheid-era bailouts, with detailed recommendations on how the money could be recovered, and even drew up specimen criminal charges to be brought against the former Reserve Bank governor Chris Stals.

An investigation started by former public protector Thuli Madonsela in 2011 into why the money was never recovered was continued by her successor, Busisiwe Mkhwebane, in 2016, who has since been attacked by big business, the Reserve Bank and the media for even daring to investigate the matter at all.

White monopoly capital and its crimes are a sleeping dog that does not like to be disturbed.

It’s not a simple “us-and-them” fight though. The reality is that we are all still in this country together, and the true solution to what ails us today seems to be as distant as it must have felt in 1990.

But solutions can be found – once we have overcome the lies of our past, the lies we continue to tell ourselves about who we are today and when the arrogant monopolies that hold our economy ransom are taught a little bit of proper humility and gratitude.

That’s a tall order though – but at the very least we should be conscious of the true scale of the challenge.

The only real explanation that makes sense of the “good deal” Ramaphosa reckons we got as a country was that the ANC negotiators ultimately

colluded with the former oppressors to ensure not the best deal for the country and its people, but for themselves.

And when you look at all the many rewards given to Ramaphosa and the others in the first great wave of BEE, tell me you really don't think that's true.

It's extraordinary to think that, nearly 24 years after the fall of apartheid the country is still having to honour contracts that were agreed by the apartheid government. One of the most famous of those is the electricity-supply deal granted to BHP Billiton and Anglo American in 1992, and which remained secret for years. The true nature of these onerous Eskom contracts only started to properly come to light around 2010, and it took major court action by Media24 to be allowed to even look at the contracts that the former government entered into with BHP Billiton (an Australian company) and Anglo American.

Electricity expert Chris Yelland explained the deal in 2011 as having been signed when Eskom had a lot of surplus power and agreed to allow large, intensive users such as BHP Billiton's Hillside, Bayside and Mozal aluminium smelters and Anglo American's Skorpion Zinc to receive electricity at preferential rates.

In the case of BHP Billiton, they agreed on a complicated, secret formula based on the aluminium price in London, the dollar-rand exchange rate and the US producer price inflation rate.

It suited BHP because it sold the aluminium on the world market for dollars and the deal removed the foreign-exchange risk. If world aluminium prices went down, so would its operating costs in South Africa.

By 2010 the effect of that was that Motraco, the electricity distribution agent to the Mozal aluminium smelter in Mozambique, was paying only 12c per kilowatt-hour for electricity while it was costing Eskom at least 28c/Kwh to produce that power. It now costs Eskom far more to produce power and yet the secretive cut-price deals with the smelting firms remain and, in the case of BHP Billiton, are likely to only expire in 2028.

On 31 March 2009, it was estimated that Eskom was still likely to lose billions on these contracts.

A more recent estimate has suggested that nowadays BHP Billiton may be paying as little as 17c/kWh or 22c/kWh while households pay as much as 120c/kWh to 140c/kWh. The losses Eskom suffers from these secret deals need to be made up somewhere else, and they are doing exactly that ... from tariff increases levelled on ordinary local customers, who are in effect subsidising the profits of big multinational firms.

As Yelland asked in 2011: “Why should thousands of GWh of locally produced electricity be sold below cost for export by a foreign-owned company in the form of aluminium ingots, while security of supply in South Africa is threatened and local industry is starved of electricity? Does it really add value to the South African economy when bauxite is mined and refined to alumina elsewhere, then shipped to South Africa to take advantage of subsidised electricity purchased below cost to convert it into aluminium ingots for export? Does aluminium production in this way really contribute to jobs in South Africa, when staffing at the smelters is relatively low and there are no upstream and few downstream value-adding activities?”

The fact that such a secretive deal could have been entered into during the dying days of apartheid and still be a millstone around South Africa’s neck until 2028 – a full 34 years into democracy – is more of an indictment of the people who agreed on the handover of power to the ANC than it is of the apartheid-era managers of Eskom.

In 2013, Viola Manuel of the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry wrote: “One cannot blame BHP Billiton for negotiating its electricity deal with Eskom. The Australian company had the foresight to see that, in the long term, the risk-sharing arrangement would work in its favour.”

It appeared to make sense for Eskom in 1992 to set up a deal when the dollar was worth less than R3, as it brought increased electricity sales and paved the way for a R60 billion investment in smelters – but the deal was negotiated with short-term thinking in mind, while the contract would have to play out over decades.

In the early years of the contract, Eskom profited handsomely from the deal, especially when the weaker rand in 2001 saw the dollar costing R13.81.

An extension to the hillside smelter was also built around that time and the electricity tariffs in that deal were even more favourable to BHP. As new smelters came online, the then chief executive of the National Electricity Regulator of South Africa (Nersa), Xolani Mkhwanazi, approved the electricity deals for the smelters despite being warned against it and also approved the extension of BHP's Hillside contracts by eight years to take them to 2028.

Astonishingly, right after arranging this wonderfully favourable deal for this foreign company, Mkhwanazi took a job with them within months of leaving Nersa. Mkhwanazi has chaired BHP Billiton in South Africa since 2005. He can also be found in the boardrooms of many other bastions of white monopoly capital, including construction giants Murray & Roberts (one of the big beneficiaries of the World Cup stadium collusion).

As a final point, let's be clear that the land is the reason many died, many were imprisoned, and many joined the struggle to take up arms. Disputes over land have led to many wars, the most famous being the ongoing war between Palestine and Israel.

The people who colonised my people wasted no time in taking the land and sharing it among the oppressors. My people saw their land being developed, mined and used for agricultural purposes. They suffered the even greater injustice when they were forced to pay rent they could not afford and work the land for money that could buy very little. They saw huge wealth being extracted from under this land, never to share in it.

Generational wealth has been built upon this land, which was never the coloniser's to begin with.

Today, after engaging in a revolution in which many perished, my people are still landless. One cannot help but wonder if the dead who cannot see the humiliation of winning the revolution without getting any of the spoils of the revolution are not in fact better off. It's like winning a boxing fight and still seeing the loser wearing the prized belt.

We are being told today that issues around the land are not important, because the focus gets placed on agriculture and the examples of emerging black farmers who have not been successful. This is used as a way of trying to dissuade us from demanding the land back. Our people who have worked the land since the time it was robbed until today are being told they don't have enough experience in working the land.

But billions are being extracted through mining, and billions are being collected through surface fees paid to the owners of the land on which that mining takes place. We hear very little about that.

Codesa brilliantly insulted our people by offering a willing buyer, willing seller model, but where will someone who is struggling to put food on the table be able to pay for vast tracts of land, no matter how willing he may be to buy the land.

Land is about identity, about pride. The land debate cannot only happen when looked at strictly through an economic lens.

We are the only people who won a revolution and still ended up without the land. The land should be returned. Don't be fooled, don't listen to the many reasons and excuses.

# MaNtuli

The story goes that, one sunny afternoon in Musgrave, Durban, two Zulu women were going about their shopping at one of their favourite boutiques while two shop assistants kept a hopeful eye on them.

They didn't notice that a lighter-hued gentleman who would turn out to have an African-American accent was about to interrupt their conversation.

The man they would soon be referring to as the "American fellow" walked up to them holding a few expensive dresses.

"Ladies, I humbly apologise for disturbing your conversation. I need your advice. My wife is never happy with my choice of dresses. Would you kindly advise me as to which dress she would appreciate the most?"

It is said that one of the women, born Nompumelelo Ntuli, but popularly known as MaNtuli after her marriage, answered first, in jest.

"You would have to pay us."

The man replied: "I promise to pay for a day's shopping if these dresses impress her."

Not really believing him, but enjoying the spontaneity of the moment, the ladies chose a nice dress or two and, in apparent keeping with his intention to fund a day's shopping for them, he took their phone numbers and left the store.

He called the next day, apparently very happy.

“She loved the dress! It’s time for me to keep my end of the bargain. I have already called the shop; you can go and choose a few dresses for yourself. All you have to do is let me know when you will be going.”

MaNtuli apparently didn’t question how unusual all of this was. She was already more than just a little charmed and, before she knew it, they met at the store, she chose her “reward” and saved his number and his name, which he told her was “Bill Harvey”.

What she didn’t know was that this had been no chance encounter, and the man knew just about everything worth knowing about her. She’d been watched for months, and her every naive weakness, preference and dislike catalogued and analysed.

Bill knew precisely what to say to her and how. In the face of a true professional, the “young wife” was about to have not only her own world turned upside down, but potentially a whole country’s too.

MaNtuli had become Jacob Zuma’s second current wife in his fourth marriage on January 8 2008. It was a low-key affair that took place when she was 33 and he 65, in effect double her age.

She had already borne Zuma two children and would later give him a third – although that birth was soon to be shrouded in rumours of infidelity and the death of a state bodyguard.

As for their wedding, anyone half familiar with ANC history would know there is no date more auspicious than January 8, as that was the day in 1912 when the South African Native National Congress, later to be shortened to the ANC, was formed in Bloemfontein.

It’s no more than coincidence that Zuma’s fourth marriage took place on the birthdate of the ANC, but many interpreted it as a sign of good fortune for Msholozzi, who had recently triumphed over years of adversity to become the ANC’s 13th president.

Within days of that Saturday, Zuma was to deliver his first January 8 statement as the new leader. It was an address that struck a hopeful note,

claiming that the party's 52nd conference had "served to rejuvenate and invigorate our membership" and "also to unite the movement, providing a valuable platform to attend to the difficulties experienced in recent times".

The statement proposed that unemployment would continue to be lowered, the economy would be transformed "to serve the interests of all our people" and the "agrarian revolution" of the land would speed up. It even ended with a congratulatory message to South Africa's first black Springbok coach, Peter de Villiers.

But no one was thinking about politics that weekend. A few high-profile guests attended the wedding, including chiefs, a mayor and a "close business associate", Erwin Ulbricht, who would be in the papers again in time to come for allegedly buying a house for MaNtuli in Morningside in Durban.

The planning for the wedding had been a closely guarded secret, with the Zuma family claiming to have known nothing about it the week before it happened in an attempt to keep it out of the papers. A select few journalists were nevertheless allowed to cover the event and there are numerous photographs of the bride and groom in their traditional outfits and takkies.

At the wedding, Zuma danced and sang in an open field next to his house at midday, wearing the traditional ibheshu.

He and his family received humble gifts, including blankets, from the bride's family. MaNtuli was, in the main, given banknotes pinned to a wrapping around her head, as well as to the rest of her outfit.

With Zuma's first wife, MaKhumalo, described as too shy and reserved to fulfil many of the duties of a First Lady, it was suggested that MaNtuli would probably end up taking on the mantle along with the next bride-to-be, Tobeka Madiba.

MaNtuli had actually skipped the queue to marry Zuma, as Tobeka was meant to wed the father of her three children in 2008 already – but that had been delayed due to the never-ending rollercoaster of Zuma's political career.

So MaNtuli got the nod first and the ANC president was soon to learn that this pretty, plump Zulu daughter of the KZN soil who had smiled at her broadest at her wedding when bedecked in bank notes would turn out to be the First Lady of Scandal and Drama.

We didn't have to wait long for the first of several of these scandals: it followed soon after MaNtuli's former private bodyguard, Phinda Thomo, was discovered in a bloodied bath in his Soweto home in December 2009. He had allegedly shot himself in the head. It was later widely speculated he had killed himself due to the complications of his having had an affair with MaNtuli, who allegedly fell pregnant with his child, a son who was born in August 2010.

Thomo's friends described the handsome, fearless bodyguard with his megawatt smile as a "ladies' man" who feared no one. Thomo's mother doubted the official version that her son – who had once also guarded Fikile Mbalula and then Julius Malema – was the kind of man who could ever have committed suicide.

Thomo quit as MaNtuli's private bodyguard six months before he died, without telling those close to him why he left. Many of the funeral goers at Thomo's funeral noticed that MaNtuli was sobbing openly, to the point that she seemed even more grief-stricken than his family.

In 2010, an anonymous letter from "concerned family members" was faxed to several newspapers containing sensational and damaging allegations of MaNtuli's affair. The Zuma family responded by saying the letter was nothing more than a smear campaign by the president's enemies masquerading as family members and contained no truth whatsoever.

Much later, in 2014, a Tanzanian man living in South Africa, Steven Ongolo (also referred to in reports as Steven Masunga), was arrested and sentenced for extortion for sending a threatening SMS to MaNtuli in which he claimed he would expose the truth about her third child not being Zuma's and that the death of Thomo had been suspicious. He claimed to have evidence that he had been paid by MaNtuli to kill Thomo. The Tanzanian was sentenced to three months in jail or a fine of R10 000 after he pleaded guilty to three counts of crimen injuria in the Durban Regional Court.

As for other scandals dogging MaNtuli, the most famous of them included a media report in 2010 that she had had an affair with the legendary screen actor Joe Mafela, a relationship that allegedly produced a son in 1997 when MaNtuli was only 23 years old and Mafela 55 and long married.

The actor, who died in a car accident in 2017, told the *Sunday Times* he had no idea how to deal with the issue.

“Where do I start explaining this to my wife and children? I don’t want to tear my family apart. The matter is very sensitive. These things happened years ago before she even met the president. I don’t want to be in the president’s bad books.”

*The Mercury* also reported in 2010 that MaNtuli had spent the Christmas of 2009 on her own after being kicked out of the Zuma household just days before Christmas after being accused of cheating on the president with her bodyguard.

“Following this revelation, MaNtuli was not allowed to go to Nkandla as she had offended the ancestors and the Zumas. She was eventually accepted back after a traditional ritual was performed months later,” the paper reported.

By this time, Jacob Zuma had also finally married Tobeka Madiba-Zuma, in January of 2010. At that wedding, MaNtuli was conspicuously absent. *The Mercury* reported: “She [had] embarrassed and upset all the Zuma family. She was accompanied by elders back to her parents for guidance. The family was very angry with her.”

Two of MaNtuli’s brothers told the paper the family elders had met in April and a goat was delivered to Zuma’s homestead as reparation. At the time of this report, the then still pregnant MaNtuli was on a state visit to India with her husband after attending an Afro-France summit with him in France.

It seemed MaNtuli just couldn’t stay out of the papers. There were further reports that she had flouted labour laws and mistreated, abused and exploited at least three domestic workers at her Morningside home in Durban.

One of them, a woman named Sbongile Ngobese, told the media, after

winning an unfair dismissal case against MaNtuli, that her boss had treated her like “an animal” and she would “tell us we were peasants who did not matter”.

Ngobese told *The Mercury* the First Lady had once refused to eat the food she had prepared for her, or to touch any of the clothes she had cleaned, since “MaNtuli had an irrational belief that she [Ngobese] was practising witchcraft at the instigation of the president’s new wife” [Tobeka].

The other two workers had similar complaints, though all three had nothing but praise for Zuma himself, whom they credited with showing them great respect whenever they had encountered him. As for the tempestuous MaNtuli, there was no love lost between them. MaNtuli, who had not attended the hearing, lost her Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration case against Ngobese. She was found guilty of unlawfully dismissing her employee and given 14 days to pay Ngobese a paltry R16 000 for eight full months of work.

Aside from the 2014 Tanzanian extortioner story, MaNtuli appeared to have kept her nose clean and out of the media for a while and the family probably felt the worst was behind them.

All that was about to change. Because the “American fellow” apparently knew exactly how soft a target she really was.

A friendship between her and Bill Harvey ensued. Based on the fact that MaNtuli may have believed her handsome young friend was himself a married man, and obviously flattered by the attention, she allowed herself to be swept off her feet with flowers, shopping and lots of attention.

Soon their romance escalated to such a level that she must have felt she was truly in love. When you’re the second wife of a president who’s already been married six times and who married his fourth current wife, Gloria Bongekile Ngema, in 2012, it’s not hard to disappear for long stretches of time; to go where you think you won’t be noticed and to live a private life.

Or so you may think.

She and her paramour became inseparable. Life seemed blessed, and they told each other they wanted to spend the rest of their lives together. The only thing standing in their way was the small matter of the fourth democratic president of the republic of South Africa.

Then, what complicated it still further, was that MaNtuli allegedly fell pregnant. That, apparently, had not particularly been part of the American fellow's operational plan.

The child's DNA could have been traced back to an individual, and an instruction came through to the operative that she should be made to "abort immediately".

In effect, what was being destroyed in that abortion was more than just an unborn child. It was future evidence of a crime that had allegedly been long in the making.

By this stage, Jacob Zuma had already been made aware that MaNtuli was pregnant. Depending on who you talk to, he may even have known that she was being unfaithful to him.

She called him a few minutes after meeting her boyfriend to inform him she had lost the baby. She was advised to do it telephonically to avoid deep questioning from uBaba, because he did not like to discuss sensitive matters over the telephone.

That call was, as Zuma no doubt feared, intercepted and it, too, was mentioned in the files I was given.

MaNtuli's husband listened and then told her to get some rest.

"We can be rid of him," her boyfriend allegedly proposed to her not long afterwards.

"Don't be mad, he has a lot of bodyguards," she said. "You will die."

It's said that he told her: "I have friends I can approach for help. It can happen."

“You’re crazy.”

The boyfriend, however, returned with a master plan. Bill Harvey had “found something”, he assured her, that could make the old man die peacefully in his sleep.

“You just need to put a few drops of this in his tea or any liquid.”

She was hesitant. He told her his friends had promised to give them R10 million if she was successful.

“We could start a new life, a life without having to look over our shoulders. No one ever needs to know you killed him. They’ll never find the poison and, even if they do, they’ll never be able to prove it was you. We can be free. Just think about that. Free forever.”

MaNtuli did not agree immediately, and he left her to ponder the plot on her own, but then finally, reluctantly, she gave in. The inducement was just enough.

She could live the life of her dreams with a younger man she truly loved.

He made her promise she would never tell anyone – at which point she assured him she’d only told one family member, who would assist her.

Her boyfriend was livid.

“Don’t worry,” she tried to reassure him. “I trust my family member completely.”

They had a fight about it and he stormed off. The risk of discovery had simply reached an unacceptable level and he apparently asked to be pulled from the mission. It was nearly aborted, but he was eventually instructed to go back.

Flowers and money once again did the trick and all was forgiven. The love and murder plan was back on track.

When he handed her the poison, which would later be determined to be ricin,

he told her: “Inject him, or, as a last option, put it in his tea or any other drink.”

“Can I put it in his bread?” she asked.

“You probably can, it even works in a cigarette. Why bread?”

“I’m the only person who makes his cornbread the way he prefers; he will never fly without sending one of his guys to come collect his bread and amasi.”

A week passed before she received a call that she should bake cornbread and prepare amasi, a popular fermented milk that tastes almost like yogurt. She made it the traditional Zulu way, by storing unpasteurised cow’s milk in a calabash or hide sack, eventually separating out the thicker amasi from the watery umlaza.

She is then believed to have added the substance she’d been given and probably tried not to think too much more of it – no doubt praying it would all be over soon.

However, what followed was a long decline in the state of her husband’s health. There was nothing overly dramatic about it, but what followed was a year in which President Zuma’s health and appearance went from being the subject of a few questions on social media to eventually generating full-length articles in newspapers speculating about what might be wrong with him.

At the 2014 state of the nation address, he looked shockingly unsteady and thin. It was to remain a constant and increasingly loud question during 2014. In June, reports emerged that he had been discharged from hospital, but the presidency reassured the nation that the number one citizen had been sent home on Sunday, 9 June, to rest for a few days, and would be fighting fit again soon.

“The president will continue to rest for a few days and will work mainly from home during the rest period,” Minister in the Presidency Jeff Radebe said in a statement.

It was described as being part of nothing more than his standard major medical examinations every year, with the first one in January and the second in June. Doctors apparently also blamed a “demanding schedule” and had simply wanted him to be hospitalised this time for a “thorough check-up”.

Zuma had indeed just come through a punishing national and provincial election period, as well as managing the transition to a new administration, so it was understandable that he would be tired.

Radebe, however, denied reports that the president had been forced to make certain “unscheduled visits” to hospitals in Durban earlier in the year.

No doubt, he was very tired, as he’d been working overtime in the run-up to elections, to prove to the ANC he could still bring in the votes in the wake of the very damaging Nkandla scandal.

*City Press* reported that when Zuma was released from hospital, he complained of neck pain and the ANC leadership ordered him to take a break for a few days. He had not even managed to get through a prepared speech to the NEC. The paper added that the president had “attended and addressed at least 60 government functions in the first four months of [2014] ahead of the May 7 elections ... and showed signs of great fatigue and strain towards the end of his campaign. By the time his second inauguration rolled around on May 26, he looked lacklustre and, at the announcement of his Cabinet, and shortly afterwards, barely cracked a joke with journalists as he is known to do.”

ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe confirmed that Zuma was simply exhausted. He joked with journalists that he sometimes fell asleep on his couch while watching television “with the face of the president [on TV], and when you wake up at four in the morning you say it is this man that makes me so tired, and you look at his face on your T-shirt – so it was punishing for everybody”.

There were questions, though, about what might really have been wrong with Zuma. It was known that he had diabetes. Others speculated that he may have contracted HIV from Fezekile Kuzwayo, a young HIV-positive women who had once accused Zuma of raping her at the height of his legal embattlement,

though he was eventually acquitted in court.

In 2012, longtime journalist Douglas Foster, in his book *After Mandela*, confirmed that Jacob Zuma was suffering from chronic diabetes, and it may have explained some of his health challenges. In the research for that book, Foster had been given access to Zuma that few others enjoyed.

He wrote that, for Zuma, getting overly tired was particularly taxing, as it amplified his diabetic condition: “When I caught up with the new leader a week later at Luthuli House, Zuma looked like a markedly different man. He seemed slightly shell-shocked by the pace of his campaigning, and a little bloated. You could tell with a glance that he was a man of sixty-seven now.

“His friends knew what the public hadn’t been told. When Zuma got overly tired, he experienced drops in blood sugar from a health condition, chronic diabetes. I had seen this happen in the midst of his visit to the United States, at a reception at the South African ambassador’s house. There, he had leaned back into his couch, the whites of his eyes showing, distant and not entirely cogent.”

A possible combination of diabetes and HIV would be particularly dangerous, some speculated. Maybe that’s why Zuma was looking so haggard? Some believed these rumours.

Regardless, the largely unpublicised fact of Zuma’s diabetic condition was both a complication and a huge distraction in the poisoning attempt on his life. His diabetes would always be the obvious culprit if he was feeling unwell for whatever reason, and would also serve as a convenient red herring for those looking to exploit it as cover for the poison plot.

One can also never be sure when Zuma’s bouts with ill health were simply due to his diabetes, or something else. And this was a factor his enemies were only too aware of.

By the start of August, concerns about the president’s health persisted, which was why some of those assigned to look after Zuma were unhappy that the president’s primary physician, Dr Harold Adams, was not going to be on an upcoming flight to the USA with them.

Dr Adams wanted to be with South Africa's athletes in Europe over that week instead as he was responsible for more than just the wellbeing of the president – he had been on the board of Athletics South Africa (ASA) for years, at one point controversially so. In 2009, the chairman of parliament's sports portfolio committee, Butana Komphela, had vowed to ensure that Dr Adams would be removed as one of President Zuma's doctors after the fact of his deployment by the surgeon-general to the presidency came to his attention.

Komphela said he had been disgusted at the way the ASA had handled the global controversy that erupted around the gender testing of world 800m women's athletics champion Caster Semenya.

Dr Adams had been the one to arrange the initial gender tests on Semenya and had cautioned the ASA against letting Semenya race after the tests showed she had three times more testosterone than a "normal" female. Komphela accused Adams of having leaked Semenya's test results to the media. But despite this member of parliament's bold statements that he could "100% guarantee that this man will never be my president's doctor", Adams was still the lead physician to Zuma five years later.

In his absence on the trip to America, Adams' deputy, Dr Kagiso Zachariah Motene, the second in charge, would be relied upon to ensure Zuma stayed healthy throughout.

It also just so happened to be MaNtuli's turn to accompany Zuma on his next trip abroad at the start of August 2014.

The trip had been scheduled so that Zuma could take part in the first US-Africa Leaders' Summit, billed as the largest event any US president had ever held with African heads of state and government. It was also the first time a US president had brought so many African leaders together under one roof.

Obama had announced he was looking forward to "further strengthening ties with one of the world's most dynamic and fastest-growing regions" over the three days of the event, which was to last from Monday, 4 August, to that Wednesday.

Zuma was to meet International Relations Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Transport Minister Dipuo Peters, Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies and State Security Minister David Mahlobo in Washington on the Sunday night for a briefing.

An important part of the agenda was discussions about the African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa), which enabled 39 eligible sub-Saharan African countries to export products duty-free to the USA, and which had seen total African exports to the US more than quadruple and US exports to sub-Saharan Africa more than triple since 2000. Agoa was due to expire in 2015 and a new deal needed to be agreed on fast. Rob Davies wanted it to be extended for another 15 years.

Of all the times South Africa's head of state could have fallen badly ill, this summit was among the worst imaginable.

For the first 8 000km leg of the flight over, they landed *Inkwazi* in the city of Las Palmas in the Atlantic Ocean's Canary Islands, 150 kilometres off the Moroccan coast of North Africa.

They were meant to stop only for a refuel, and planned to go straight to Washington for the summit. But it was in Las Palmas that the president first began to show obvious signs that he was far from fine. He had never before acted in a claustrophobic manner, but he felt suddenly too confined in the cabin and unhappy about being on the plane. He developed a fever.

There was a bit of debate about whether they should take off again, but Zuma assured them his symptoms would probably pass and they just needed to lower the temperature in the cabin. After take-off, they duly made it cooler, only for him to then start to complain that he was feeling cold.

They turned on the heat, with Zuma constantly saying that it was still too cold, until, apparently, everyone else said it was starting to feel like a sauna. For Zuma it was still not hot enough, although his throat felt like it was burning and he was increasingly pained.

The president was lethargic and unable to think and act normally. His limbs felt tired and heavy. He asked for blankets, until just about every blanket on

the plane had been piled on him – and still it was not enough.

Dr Motene suggested the best thing would be to inject the president with a suppressant, to allow him to calm down and sleep.

MaNtuli appeared to show great concern about her husband's welfare, and told staff to bring him more tea. As had been done on the first leg of the journey from Johannesburg to Las Palmas, they delivered the tea to the couple's bedroom door, from where MaNtuli dutifully took it further.

After Dr Motene administered the suppressant, Zuma finally drifted into an uncomfortable sleep. When he woke up, he felt considerably better, and his wife ensured that she made him another cup of tea to warm him up.

By now, they were in Washington, and Zuma was due to attend the briefing at 8pm. Worrying about his physical state, his aides insisted that the president should leave strictly at 9pm so that they could get him back to the hotel and ensure he didn't exert himself any more than strictly necessary. Despite a very enthusiastic Minister Nkoane-Mashabane still wanting to talk, they soon had Zuma back in his hotel room. The president said he was still suffering from the strange symptoms of having a cold fever with a hot throat. George, one of Zuma's longest-serving and most trusted aides, gave him a glass of ice water.

MaNtuli was keen, then, to have her husband retire to bed, and she told the people fussing about him that they should go and rest. They refused, saying they wouldn't be able to sleep peacefully while the commander in chief was in such a precarious state.

"Just bring everything I need to make him some tea. I will do everything and give it to him. You don't need to worry. He'll be okay."

However, George, overcome with worry, stayed, to ensure the president took his normal dose of meds, including those for his blood sugar, as well as the suppressant that had allowed him to sleep on the jet.

The next day, Zuma was able to attend to his engagements at the summit, though he looked a little the worse for wear. At one point, he suffered a

sudden dizzy spell and was attended to by doctors at the White House, who expressed serious concern.

There is a press photo of the Obamas flanking the Zumas in the White House's Blue Room just before they took their places at their tables for a banquet dinner that Tuesday evening. In a country notorious for preferring tall presidents, both the Obamas seem to tower over the diminutive-looking Zumas. MaNtuli reaches not much higher than Michelle Obama's right shoulder and stands as straight as she can. Her right hand overlaps with Zuma's left, though they don't touch. In the photo, she is beaming, with almost as sunny a smile as those first captured by the media on her wedding day.

Zuma, too, offers a broad smile, but knowing the truth of what he was suffering at that moment puts a different, rather poignant, complexion on his diplomatic cheerfulness. Here was a man putting on a very brave face. Although he looks perfectly normal in the photo – though still far thinner than the Jacob Zuma of previous years – those who know him well insist he looks drawn and suddenly older. His skin also looked far more ashen than the Zuma of old.

Following the summit and thanks to constant treatment of his symptoms by Dr Motene, Zuma appeared to feel temporarily better; the coast was clear to fly home again, or so they thought.

The return flight was, if anything, worse.

Once again, they tried everything to keep him warm, but the president's body felt almost like death. The only option once more appeared to be a sedative-induced sleep until they got back to Pretoria.

When they reached home, it wasn't long before Zuma's aides received a call, at 10pm, from MaNgema, the wife Zuma had wed in 2012. She was sick with worry.

“Call the doctors. He is dying.”

George ended up having an argument with both of Zuma's doctors over

whether to take Zuma to hospital. Dr Adams professed concern about unwanted publicity: “What will the media say?”

“What will they say if he’s dead?” George countered. I worry about the life. The media can write what they like, as long as he’s still alive.”

But Dr Adams allegedly wanted to continue his treatment on his own, or had some sort of other plan. George called Carlos and instructed him to help with getting Zuma to the Mediclinic Heart Hospital in Pretoria for some discreet attention by the private doctors and specialists there. They wanted to keep this particular admission out of the papers this time, though that was not Carlos or George’s biggest concern.

Prior to their departure, George called the head of security, without success, then tried everyone else he could think of. He soon got hold of his colleagues Motsamai and Shiburu – who was on leave but agreed to come because George had told him it was “a matter of life and death”. George instructed Carlos to pick them up.

The three of them soon arrived in a Mercedes Viano minibus. They carried the frail-looking Zuma, who was wearing a tracksuit and wrapped in a blanket, to the car. This proud man they were so used to struggling to keep up with – who stuck religiously to his exercise regime, who ate well, never drank and was legendary for having meetings late into the evening only to be chirpy and ready for anything again the next morning – was withering before their eyes.

When they arrived at the Mediclinic Heart Hospital in Arcadia they had to shield his face to have him admitted. Despite the medical attention he received overnight, he wasn’t getting any better, and the doctors didn’t seem capable of figuring out what was wrong. The next morning, his motor responses, particularly the use of his hands, were badly affected. Zuma couldn’t shave himself. He needed help to be taken to the toilet.

His aides decided to discharge him and think of another plan. They first of all took him back to the presidential house, Mahlamba Ndlopfu, a stately Cape Dutch-style residence completed in 1940 for the state president, near the Union Buildings.

Though the house's name was changed from its original label, Libertas, to the Tsonga phrase that means, "The New Dawn", for Zuma and those who cared for him, it felt more like the twilight after sunset.

The president's grand room started to look more like a hospital ward. Anyone walking in there could have been forgiven for thinking they'd just stepped into an intensive care unit. Everyday staff at the main state house were not allowed to see him. Most of his kids broke down when they came to visit him.

His daughter Tutu appeared to be the strongest of them.

According to those close to the scene, Zuma's condition would improve and then suddenly deteriorate again, often after a visit from Dr Adams. They couldn't help but notice that when Dr Motene looked after Zuma, he felt better, and when Dr Adams took over, he seemed to get worse.

Around this time, Dr Motene told Zuma's aides that he'd been given a job offer by one of the country's biggest mining companies. It was an incredibly generous offer by all accounts, topping R7 million per annum. The company sweetened the deal with unheard-of benefits, such as free flights and other perks.

Dr Motene's primary difficulty was that the company had somehow also ensured that his wife received a leaked copy of the job offer. The doctor found himself in constant rows with his wife about it; he nearly lost his marriage. Curiously, the mining giant never made the same offer to anyone else – almost as if it had been tailor-made for Dr Motene. The doctor admitted to both Carlos and George that he was in financial constraints and had been seriously considering taking the job – but he also felt deeply conflicted about leaving the old man in his current state.

"I would have gone in a heartbeat if uBaba was okay, but not like this."

The aides begged Dr Motene to stay, prevailing upon him that he had a moral duty to ensure that the president recovered. Maybe after all of this was over, he could think about a career move like that. Dr Motene agreed. He would stay at his post.

One evening, while Zuma was hooked up to a drip in that room at home, MaNtuli insisted that she wanted to get more personally involved in looking after her husband. Needle and syringe in hand, she wanted to administer his regular dose of insulin into the saline drip running into Zuma's arm, but George stopped her.

"Madame first lady, you don't have to do that. I will take care of it."

She professed a desire to do it and said she knew how. She told George that he would not always be around. It was important that she also learn how to do it. Unlike George, though, she had never received any medical training.

"No, no," he told her. "It's fine. I'm not going anywhere. Not while uBaba is like this."

He took the syringe from her and said that he would administer the dose himself. When he did, though, he started from scratch, since he had no assurance that MaNtuli had filled her syringe according to protocol. Her dose was discarded and George only thought about it again once they got to Russia, something he realised was a desperate solution that they at least needed to try.

He came to Zuma and said: "Baba, when you sent me to Russia for training, I got injured there. If I'd been injured in South Africa in the same way, it would have taken me a year or two to recover. But in Russia it took me a month. So I trust their medical facilities. Those people are our friends. Let me take you there."

He was referring to a bad spinal disc fracture he'd sustained during paratrooper training in Russia.

Zuma agreed, and George, along with one of Zuma's sons and Dr Motene, made the trip east. They started first at a Russian hospital that was part of the Medsi group, before the president spent a week at the Central Clinical Hospital in Moscow, also called the "Kremlin Hospital", "Kremlyovka" and the "Kremlin Clinic".

It is described online as "a heavily guarded facility seven miles northwest of

the Kremlin in an exclusive, wooded suburban area. It is considered to be the best hospital in Russia and one of the best hospitals in the world.”

The facility is guarded by the Federal Protective Service and services the political, business, cultural and scientific elite of Russia, as well as representatives of the diplomatic corps. Private patients who can afford its services are allowed access to it, but its fees are well beyond the means of most people.

Here, Zuma was placed under the care of three doctors, led by a certain “Dr Sergey”, and another male and female physician.

George gave them Zuma’s medical history, including the medication the president was on to manage his blood sugar levels, but he was unable to provide them with the president’s medical file despite the fact that he had asked Dr Adams for it previously.

He and the doctors discussed the case as thoroughly as they could.

What the Russian doctors found particularly perplexing was that Dr Adams had been giving Zuma corticosteroids, which to them didn’t make sense. It implied that the president may have been suffering from some kind of allergic reaction or inflammation and that the action of his immune system needed to be suppressed. But that didn’t seem to be the case.

The Russians finally concluded that Zuma had been poisoned with a toxic cocktail containing, among other things, ricin. Obtained from castor beans, it is among the most toxic substances on earth and is most famous for being used to kill the Bulgarian dissident Georgi Markov while he had been living in exile in London in 1978.

On September 7 of that year, while Markov was waiting for a bus near Waterloo Bridge, he felt an impact on the back of his right thigh. He noticed a man bending down to pick up an umbrella, but thought little more of it. Markov was soon taken to hospital with a high fever, and died three days later.

The autopsy revealed a tiny sphere made of a platinum-iridium alloy in the

Bulgarian's thigh. The sphere had been drilled to contain a small amount of ricin and was presumably fired from an air gun hidden inside the assassin's umbrella.

Ricin causes cell death by interfering with protein synthesis in cells. It is at its most deadly when inhaled or injected, but – and perhaps this was among the factors that allowed Zuma to survive – the gastrointestinal tract does not absorb ricin nearly as effectively.

The poison, popular among murderers, has claimed many lives, though there are just as many survival stories. In the USA, Debora Green, a medical doctor, attempted to poison her husband using ricin in his food. He repeatedly fell violently ill and, despite numerous hospitalisations, his doctors could not pinpoint the source of his illness. It was only after Green set fire to their family home and burnt it down – in the process killing two of her children – that the cause of her husband's ill health was finally determined.

Had she injected him with the same poison, as had happened to Markov, he would never have had a chance.

Another factor that had probably improved Zuma's odds was that he'd always lived such a healthy life, steering clear of cigarettes and alcohol. As a result, he had a more resilient liver than most.

Whatever cocktail it was that Zuma's enemies had decided to use to end him, it was not meant to kill suddenly – which would have been far too suspicious. The president was meant to show gradually worsening symptoms of illness, which would finally claim him, with the toxic dose being increased towards the end. The explanation could then be ascribed to some sort of natural cause, and everyone would be able to testify to the fact that Zuma's health had indeed steadily worsened.

As to whether anyone would have had to be bought off or threatened to make the autopsy results state nothing suspicious in the final report, it's hard to say, but much of the circumstantial evidence suggested that was the plan. Even if the truth were to have been revealed to government, it's unlikely that state security would ever have allowed the information to go public.

Such a medieval-style killing is not supposed to happen to the leader of the most advanced economy in Africa and a member of the powerful Brics bloc of emerging economies. It would have been an indictment of the state and have turned South Africa into a laughing stock. It was not supposed to happen. And yet it almost so nearly did.

There was much shock and debate around who had actually administered the poison. In the years since the Russians' diagnosis, neither MaNtuli nor Dr Adams have been allowed near the president again.

When State Security Minister David Mahlobo was sent to evict MaNtuli in January 2015, he arrived at Nkandla with Zuma's younger brother Michael Zuma. MaNtuli was summoned with her mother and Mahlobo confronted her with the facts. She denied everything. Mahlobo's men scoured her bedroom, including the closets and drawers, but found no poison. As they searched her room, she was lying on the bed with her children, telling the agents, with an air of scorn: "Ja, you won't find anything."

Some of those close to Zuma were later upset that no one had searched her person or looked in the bed sheets. Either way, she would never share a bed with her husband again.

Eight months passed before the first reports confirmed that MaNtuli was indeed no longer living at Nkandla. Her lawyer told the media that Mahlobo's reason "for instructing Ms Ntuli-Zuma to leave" had been because "there was an alleged 'sensitive matter' that needed to be investigated" and she "was not allowed to be present during the said investigation".

*City Press* reported that same month that MaNtuli had allegedly admitted to knowing about the plot to poison the president.

They claimed that "four well-placed sources" in law enforcement and in the family had confirmed she was about to be charged with conspiracy to murder. They added that authorities were "on the trail of her alleged accomplices, which *City Press* has learnt includes a flamboyant KwaZulu-Natal businessman".

"Three of the four sources confirmed that other local and foreign individuals

were also on investigators' radar."

Law enforcement sources also told the paper MaNtuli had made a statement to investigators and her affidavit contained "some very interesting names".

They wrote: "This [plot] was big," said a source familiar with the investigation. Another well-placed law enforcement source said: 'It's true. She is going to be charged with conspiracy to commit murder. She hasn't been charged because we haven't been able to nab the man [or] people who are behind the plot.'"

To date, she has not been charged.

Soon after this report, her lawyer issued a statement in which he said she continued to deny involvement in or to have any knowledge of any plot to poison her husband.

"Our client has not 'crumbled and confessed' to having any knowledge of any plot to poison her husband," Roux was quoted as saying in a *News24* article.

The next year, in June 2016, weekly tabloid *Sunday Sun* reported that the first lady was now facing serious personal difficulties after her expulsion. The paper managed to speak to residents in the Hermannsburg area near Greytown in KwaZulu-Natal, who said that MaNtuli was living "under cover" in the rural area. It turned out that her three children were enrolled in school there.

An induna in the area told the paper MaNtuli had been looking for land to build a house, but he wanted her to follow the correct procedures and not expect any "special treatment because she's MaNtuli".

Zuma's brother Michael was later quoted as saying he did not know where his sister-in-law was living but that she was still allowed to visit Nkandla with the children.

"Sometimes I see her when she brings the children to visit. There is no bad blood between the two families," he was quoted as saying.

Even Zuma has spoken publicly about the scandal at a cadres' forum gathering in KwaZulu-Natal in August 2017.

"I nearly died, because they did poison me. They managed to find someone close to me and I know it," he said. "The person they used was so innocent," he added, without mentioning MaNtuli's name.

Zuma has always survived on a larger portion of luck than 10 people normally get in a lifetime. He's had to cash in every bit of that luck over the past few decades.

And when you hear details of some of the other attempts on Zuma, you realise how lucky he's actually been.

Aside from Carlos, and aside from the poisoning that sent him to Russia, I am aware of at least one other poisoning attempt that had the potential to kill not only Zuma but the entire top leadership of the ANC. Some ANC comrades who travelled from the Eastern Cape once to see President Zuma in Nkandla have said that they remember how he received an urgent call during their meeting to which he listened with the greatest attentiveness. The comrades immediately saw his face change and he hurriedly asked for a pen. He wrote a phone number down on a piece of paper and thanked the caller.

Afterwards, he was moved to speak at length about plans by certain foreign interest to see the ANC collapse. He candidly told them about the many plots on his life that he had survived.

One of them was an attempt that was made on Zuma at Luthuli House, the ANC's headquarters in Braamfontein in the Joburg CBD.

The party's top six officials usually try to meet regularly, preferably every Monday, at headquarters. Food was prepared for everyone in the canteen that day, except for President Zuma; his food gets prepared by close family members and is delivered to Luthuli House.

During lunch, as all the officials were eating, an expensive-looking plate of liver was placed right in the middle of the table. No one seemed to touch it. One of the top six insisted that President Zuma should taste it. For a Zulu

man, a well-prepared dish of liver is considered a special treat and this official was praising the taste of it despite the fact that no one had seen him take a bite of it himself. Zuma, too, couldn't help but notice that the liver was untouched. So he ignored his comrade.

The deputy secretary-general, Jessie Duarte, also found the dish a bit peculiar. The Luthuli House kitchen had never made anything like it before. She went to the kitchen and asked the staff if there was meant to be liver on the menu. They were surprised. None of them had prepared it.

The president then asked Carlos and George to leave with the liver and have it tested. Carlos soon reported back that the dish had been laced with enough poison to kill anyone who just had one bite of it.

When Zuma confronted the comrade who'd been so impressed with the liver, he did not deny anything, and merely answered that he could not remember the incident.

The attempts on Zuma are not an attack on him alone but on comrades in the ANC and their supporters who the media has described as the "Zuma faction".

I don't know how many other people in the party have been targeted but the premiers of the two provinces whose support for Zuma as well as Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma are not only well known but the backbone of their power have also been the victims of poisoning attempts. The provinces in question are Mpumalanga, which has the second-highest number of voting delegates in the ANC, and the first is KwaZulu-Natal, which has the most.

Reports that Mpumalanga Premier David Mabuza claimed to have been poisoned in 2015 first emerged in January of 2016 after he gave an interview to *The Sowetan* explaining why he hadn't been at work for three months.

He told the paper on the sidelines of an ANC lekgotla in Centurion that he had been in hospital for most of those three months after letting "his guard down" at his birthday party in Bushbuckridge in August 2015 and eating something he shouldn't have.

He admitted he'd been unable to walk or even stand.

“Even now I still have a problem, I cannot stand for a long time,” Mabuza told the journalist. “I am still on heavy treatment that I do every day after work. The medication makes me free of pain.”

He was first admitted to Nelspruit Mediclinic but then moved to Milpark Hospital in Johannesburg because he did not want to see too many visitors. Milpark was unable to diagnose his problem. He was unable to eat or move, and his weight dropped from 78kg to an astonishing 44kg. He looked like a skeleton and was sure he was going to die.

He said he realised he was dying, and asked for a transfer to Life Little Company of Mary Hospital in Pretoria, where doctors made a diagnosis. “

They found a foreign bacteria in my body,” he said. “They could not define it but it was the cause of the collapse of my system.”

He said his doctors had put him on treatment and he was finally able to stand on his own.

It only came to light much later in the year, though, that Mabuza had needed to travel to Moscow for treatment at the same hospital that had saved Zuma. There was some truth to what Mabuza had told the media about his poisoning, though I suspect a lot of devil has gone missing in the details.

The truth was that Mabuza had asked to be transferred from Milpark to the Little Company of Mary hospital, but the doctors there were just as clueless as to what might be wrong with him. He couldn't walk, he couldn't even hold a spoon. It was hopeless.

He only asked to leave Milpark after one of the doctors there had told him: “I don't know what's wrong with you, Premier. I don't want you to die in my hands because it's going to be a problem. Why don't you just resign from your position and go home? You will recuperate faster when you don't have to worry about politics.”

Mabuza, sick as he was, had been disgusted by the comment. He was not

about to give up the premiership, so he asked his PA, Jasmine, to arrange the transfer to Little Company of Mary in Pretoria.

When he got there, though, the doctors eventually also had to admit they could not diagnose him.

That's when he made contact with "the old man" for the first time. By now, Zuma had been receiving calls from a few comrades in Mpumalanga who were complaining about Mabuza's extended absence from work and were making requests to Zuma to ask him to get Premier Mabuza to step down.

Zuma told George that Thursday to go and take a look at Comrade DD.

"You have the eyes. Go."

When George got there he saw an almost exact replica of the condition that had afflicted Zuma, and so George told Comrade DD he needed to get to Russia as fast as possible.

"All these doctors in South Africa have told me I have no chance of surviving. Do you think I will live?"

George told him he would not be able to fly on a commercial jet, but one way or another George would ensure he got to Russia. A private flight was arranged for him after DD was sneaked out under the noses of his own bodyguards, who only realised later that the premier was gone. They drove him to Grand Central airport and from there he travelled straight to Moscow.

He managed to walk on the airport tarmac with the aid of a walking stick and was taken to the Central Clinical Hospital in the woods outside the city. The doctors soon confirmed that Mabuza had been poisoned by the exact same cocktail they'd found in Zuma.

DD is a shrewd politician with a deep love for the ANC. He has for years been on a unity crusade in the party, even speaking to comrades who've left the ANC to "return home" – even though some of these same people had had a fallout with him or his leadership.

He has consistently outperformed his peers within the party, and has grown Mpumalanga to becoming the second-biggest province in terms of branches and voting delegates, surpassing the former ANC stronghold of the Eastern Cape.

He's also made politics very tough for the opposition in his province, who know they stand little chance against him at the polls. He's been the subject of much false reporting, including allegations from a former premier and rival, Mathews Phosa, who has alleged that DD Mabuza was an apartheid spy. Other stories in the press have speculated that he is behind the spree of political killings in Mpumalanga, but no investigation has been able to deliver any proof, with every case turning out to be nothing more than hearsay.

The story of Willies Mchunu's poisoning was even more extraordinary, because no one even knew that he had also been targeted for elimination. At that point, no one even suspected something might be wrong with Comrade Mchunu.

However, I came across his name in the intelligence files and passed on the message to Zuma's guys, just to be sure.

George gave Mchunu a call in Durban and asked him if he was absolutely certain that he knew where his food was being prepared at all times. It turned out Mchunu had an allergy and always had his food specially prepared for him each day at the provincial legislature in the city. As far as George was concerned, that only made it a lot easier to poison him.

Comrade Willies then said something that had George on the very next flight out of Joburg to Durban. The premier had been experiencing strange bouts of sickness, with a cold fever and a painful hot throat.

When George met him it was obvious Mchunu was on the same slippery slope, but at least he didn't look too bad yet and could still walk without trouble. He was flown straight to OR Tambo International, and spent a night in a hotel room at the Intercontinental, where he started complaining about feeling too cold, and slept under a huge pile of blankets.

He ended up spending two weeks in hospital in Russia, until he, too, was completely cured.

At this point, the Russian doctors were probably starting to wonder how many more poisoning victims George was going to bring through their doors.

It's no coincidence that KwaZulu-Natal, like Mpumalanga, has been the capital of politically motivated killings over the past few years. These provinces back Zuma and they and their premiers have been identified in a project simply called "Destroy the ANC", because without either of these provinces under their current leadership at the ANC December conference in 2017, little would have stood in the way of foreign powers getting exactly what they wanted out of South Africa. Mabuza and Mchunu were also nearly made to pay the price for South Africa's membership of Brics.

*Inkwazi*, the president's jet, also appears to have been targeted on more than one occasion. As concerns about the safety of the presidential jet increased, his team started chartering flights for Zuma, sometimes at great difficulty and often resulting in reduced comfort. Media attention in the president's increased travel costs dominated headlines in 2016, with several sources from within the SA Air Force talking to journalists about the fact that *Inkwazi* was being used so infrequently, or even at all, even though there was supposedly nothing wrong with the plane.

In 2016, Erika Gibson of *Rapport* wrote: "There was very little wrong with presidential jet *Inkwazi* when it was announced that President Jacob Zuma was 'stranded' in Burundi. Officials at Bujumbura airport confirmed, though, that *Inkwazi* had developed a 'minor' fuel leak."

On another occasion in 2016, when Zuma was on a state visit to Saudi Arabia in late March of that year, airport staff in Riyadh noticed that *Inkwazi* was leaving a trail of leaking jet fuel in its wake as it made its final approach.

After they landed, were disembarking and removing luggage, airport officials asked them what was wrong with their aircraft. Ground crew got to work assessing the plane and reported back to Zuma's security team that they had been very fortunate indeed. At any moment, their jet could have exploded. Just a few drops of fuel into any of the engines would have been fatal.

Perhaps just as concerning was the fact that they may easily have run out of fuel en route.

No one could say exactly when the fuel system developed the leak.

Not long afterwards, in May, the presidential jet featured for the second time in a week in a government statement after it “developed technical problems in Qatar resulting in the use of an alternative aircraft”.

Just a few days earlier, Zuma had been in Uganda, and Water Affairs Minister Nomvula Mokonyane said that the plane had malfunctioned. In September 2016, around the time of the biennial Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) expo at the Waterkloof Air Force Base, a technician made a further alarming discovery while checking the presidential jet’s rudder.

He noticed a completely full bottle of water jammed into the space. He removed the bottle and reported it to his immediate commander, who then tried to cover up the story.

Zuma’s staff were, however, contacted by an air force major, who told him the young technician had found something but was afraid that if he didn’t talk about it and something happened to the president, he was not going to be able to live with the guilt. He feared for his life, but was reassured that nothing would happen to him.

When the technicians took a closer look, it turned out the brand printed on the bottle was of a commercial product that could only be purchased overseas and wasn’t even available on the South African market.

The rudder is at the heart of any plane’s hydraulic system. When a civil aviation expert was asked what may have happened to the First Citizen’s jet in the event of it flying with such a bottle of water jammed into that particular spot on the plane, the answer was not comforting. The aircraft would reach 35 000 feet and the water in that bottle would freeze rapidly to -51 degrees Celcius, causing it to expand quickly to 10% more in volume. It would then explode violently.

The impact that would have on the rudder and the hydraulics system could

even be as devastating as an actual explosion with a bomb. Without the rudder, the plane would not be pilotable and a crash would be inevitable and any investigation would also be unlikely to produce any conclusive evidence.

You can go YouTube and look up videos of frozen bottles exploding. They truly do sound like bombs going off.

George went to talk to the technician who'd found the bottle and he was shown pictures of it and a video. The matter was reported to Chief of the Air Force General Zimpane Msimang, who is yet to release a report into it.

The story of the bottle did not make the papers, but since then the president and his staff have steered totally clear of using the plane.

By August of 2017, a report emerged that the air force's budget for VIP flights for the financial year had already been used up, and that R25 million was to be spent to rent a plane of the same size as *Inkwazi* for Zuma's trip to China for the Brics conference, and then on to New York.

The defence department had spent more than R97 million between 2015 and 2018 on VVIP flights, while the budgeted amount was only R74 million.

DA MP Kobus Marais complained bitterly about it in a statement: "This is what happens when President Zuma refuses to fly on the perfectly functional presidential jet."

Zuma's would not have been the first "perfectly functional" jet of a leader in a developing country to go down in flames.

John Perkins' bestselling book *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* details his life as an economic adviser and strategist for American corporations through his employer, the little-known consultancy firm MAIN. The book caused great controversy when it was first published because it revealed the inside story of the West's, particularly the USA's, use of the global economic status quo to create a financial planetwide empire in fealty to corporate interests.

He wrote in 1982: "Economic hit men (EHMs) are highly paid professionals

who cheat countries around the globe out of trillions of dollars. They funnel money from the World Bank, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and other foreign “aid” organisations into the coffers of huge corporations and the pockets of a few wealthy families who control the planet’s natural resources. Their tools include fraudulent financial reports, rigged elections, payoffs, extortion, sex, and murder. They play a game as old as empire, but one that has taken on new and terrifying dimensions during this time of globalisation.”

When his book was published in 2004, Perkins added weight to what many had always suspected: the Ecuadorian president Jaime Roldós was assassinated by the US because he had taken an uncompromising position against global oil companies, stating simply that the oil wealth of his poor, Latin American country would have to benefit the people and not America’s wealthy oil barons. He was not communist; he was no extremist. He had promised his people he would put their interests first, and for that they elected him.

Perkins wrote: “Early in 1981, the Roldós administration formally presented his new hydrocarbons law to the Ecuadorian congress. If implemented, it would reform the country’s relationship to oil companies. By many standards, it was considered revolutionary and even radical. It certainly aimed to change the way business was conducted. Its influence would stretch far beyond Ecuador, into much of Latin America and throughout the world.

The oil companies tried to get their public relations companies to vilify Jaime Roldós “and their lobbyists swept into Quito and Washington, briefcases full of threats and payoffs”.

Roldós stood firm and expelled the missionaries who had been paving the way for big companies to move in to jungle areas by rehousing native people, which was in effect just getting them off the land under the pretext of development help.

“Only weeks after sending his legislative package to congress and a couple of days after expelling the SIL missionaries, Roldós warned all foreign interests, including but not limited to oil companies, that unless they implemented plans that would help Ecuador’s people, they would be forced to leave his

country. He delivered a major speech at the Atahualpa Olympic Stadium in Quito and then headed off to a small community in southern Ecuador.

“He died there in a fiery airplane crash, on 24 May 1981.

Eyewitnesses claimed that Roldós had been forewarned about the attempt on his life and had attempted to take precautions, including switching to a decoy plane at the last moment after one of his security officers convinced him to. That was the very plane that blew up.

He was replaced by a president who granted special visas to the missionaries and, by the end of that same year, had launched an “ambitious program to increase oil drilling by Texaco and other foreign companies” in his country.

Perkins described how Omar Torrijos [the leader of Panama], in eulogising Roldós, had referred to him as a brother. He confessed to having nightmares about his own assassination too, and saw himself “dropping from the sky in a gigantic fireball”.

Despite these nightmares, Torrijos was not intimidated by the new Reagan administration in the USA, and also expelled the missionaries, just as Roldós had done not long before. Even more importantly, he stood resolute behind a refusal to buckle to US’s demands to renegotiate Panama’s Canal Treaty, which ensured that the canal would benefit Panama’s economy substantially.

Wrote Perkins: “Two months after Roldós’s death, Omar Torrijos’s nightmare came true; he died in a plane crash.”

Quite simply: The US and its agencies could not allow Torrijos to serve as a role model for “a new generation of leaders in the Americas, Africa, and Asia”.

In 1981, that new generation of African leaders included Jacob Zuma, who at that time was a member of ANC’s national executive committee in 1977 and serving as deputy chief representative of the ANC in Mozambique, a country still grappling with the turmoil of the years following independence from colonial Portugal in 1975.

# Brics

Do not underestimate the power of the Brics (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) bloc and the change in the balance of world power that it represents.

Especially for Africa, Brics represents the first major opportunity in centuries to break the grip of colonialism and post-colonial oppression for the continent. Jacob Zuma understands that, and the West is none too happy about it either.

In numerous interviews he has given on the subject, it's obvious he understands what is at stake. The world and its economy is at a cross-roads, and for the first time an alternative is becoming available that could challenge the centuries of oppression the developing world has had to endure.

Finally, the ANC's old friends in the form of China and Russia, along with Brazil and India, have reached the point where they will be able to offer developmental finance to the world without the onerous conditions the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are notorious for imposing.

Zuma already warned Western corporations in 2013 that they should abandon their colonial approach to Africa. He told *Russia Today*: "We had to fight the anticolonial wars to free ourselves. They were bitter wars. Very bitter.

"When Africa became free there was no arrangement to make them develop. They were left as they were."

The armies of former colonial countries could still be found throughout Africa, he pointed out, adding the sardonic question: "What do they want there?"

“You still have the mentality that they look at you as a former subject when they do business with you. The fact that we have not shifted in terms of how the economic relations are – that’s a bigger problem. The companies that dominate these [African] countries come from the former colonial countries. In no way do you have the indigenous companies growing to be in charge.

“So that’s the kind of relationship that’s very skewed – it’s not balanced – and there’s been no effort from those who have the means to help balance the relationship.”

Zuma skewered the West completely while employing the diplomatic understatement of the century: “At times there’s a bit of interference with what Africa is doing.”

He referenced Libya and the years of crisis and destabilisation that could have been avoided had the West agreed to the African Union’s plan to have Muammar Gaddafi relinquish power.

“The Africans were there with a roadmap out of the crisis, but they thought the best thing would be to bomb Libya out of this world – knowing very well we don’t agree. That is using their colonial position against those they colonised.

“We have ended up with that region totally undermined, and they [the West] are no longer there to solve the problems.

“That’s the relationship I’m talking about. The AU with a clear roadmap was undermined by Western countries. That’s a reality.”

Asked whether he believed whether the Western countries who had abandoned their colonial projects, leaving broken economies in their wake, were morally indebted to fix these historical problems, Zuma was unequivocal: “Of course, yes. They messed up Africa. They are not just indebted, they should have corrected their mistakes. But in the majority of cases they sucked the wealth of the continent into their countries and made their countries rich, and did not develop Africa. They did nothing.

“If things were equal they would have said ‘let’s do something to develop

these free Africans'. But they just abandoned Africa.

“And [today], China is not colonising anyone. Europe had a conference to discuss how to colonise Africa. They took a resolution collectively. China has not done so. China is coming to do business with Africa.

“It’s the wrong equation to say China is coming to colonise Africa. China has brought better development in a short space of time than what the colonialists did in decades, if not centuries.”

He made it clear that Africa had been trying to diversify its trade so that the continent could move away from the imbalanced relationships it still suffered with Europe, which was based primarily on ongoing postcolonial influence and the West’s grip on economic power.

“We have been trying to do so. We are in the process of that. Brics is just one of the steps to allow the continent to look after itself more than [looking after] the partners it works with.”

When asked what would make Brics’ New Development Bank different, Zuma said: “You know for a fact that there’s a hue and cry from the developing countries that the established banks or financial institutions today are very discriminatory. They are not allowing other regions of the world to participate. There’s been a lot of debate about the need to transform the financial institutions. They are resisting. In the manner in which they are dealing with those who need to be helped, they are using the rules that were established decades and decades ago, but the world has changed. These institutions have not changed with the world.”

Offering an indictment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, he said: “There would be very few countries, if any, who would be able to say that as a result of them approaching these institutions they were able to grow and get out of trouble. There are very few that you could think of.

“This [Brics] bank we have agreed to establish is going to operate differently. It’s going to focus on the developing world ... on the economic development of the Third World. It’s going to look at, for example, engaging in massive

infrastructure development in Africa in different countries as a collective in the continent.”

Critical projects and economic growth plans for Africa had been around for a long time, but there had always been the problem of how to fund them, “precisely because of the rules [of the IMF and World Bank] that I’m talking about”.

“The Brics bank is going to be user-friendly to the developing countries. Very deliberately. So that it is helpful to develop economies. The kind of conditions they are going to place are not there now, but certainly they will be designed to help those countries that are in trouble out of those troubles.”

The Brics bank, says Zuma, will not be restricted to only the concerns of the five member countries but would look to assist the entire developing world.

“This is a new bank that reflects the changed world that’s going to be dealing with people differently than the banks that are dealing with the kind of thinking of the old world.”

If you don’t for one moment think this is actually radical thinking by Zuma that is indeed a major threat to the established world order, read on.

In August 2017 Zuma famously told his supporters in Phongolo in the north of KwaZulu-Natal: “I was poisoned and almost died just because South Africa joined Brics under my leadership. They said I was going to destroy the country.” He didn’t make clear who “they” were.

“Since we fought for freedom why can’t we fight for complete freedom? We are being attacked because we are asking for economic freedom.”

Whether Zuma survives to see the Brics project through or not, Africa is in desperate need of more than just a sign that its centuries of oppression are going to end. It needs radical, concrete change, and it needs it now.

First it was slavery and then industrial-scale colonialism. As Zuma has pointed out on numerous occasions perfectly accurately, the Berlin Conference of 1884 to 1885 formalised and regulated European colonisation

and trade in Africa and carved most of the continent up into European possessions for exploitation and control.

Says Zuma: “If you looked at the [colonial-era] map, the roads and rail began where the mines were ... to the harbours. Nothing more.”

Even in the postcolonial period, at the point when Africa was supposedly declared “free” – especially from the 1960s onwards – richer countries came to understand that giving aid to poorer countries, especially those in Africa, was not simply a generous gesture. It could be used to impose control. They could buy the loyalty of poorer countries by giving them aid. By the 1980s, everyone was using the same language of aid – that richer countries must donate money to poorer ones in order to alleviate poverty and promote development.

But it didn’t work out that way.

The World Bank and the IMF became the primary decision-makers in the matter of where aid money went and it openly favoured those countries that liberalised their economies and, in effect, did exactly as they were told. The aid always came with firm conditions and most global donors imposed their own economic and political policies on developing countries in return for the “aid”. To this day, the World Bank and IMF still call the final shots on where most of the world’s aid should be spent, and how.

Much the same goes for loans. African countries have long taken huge loans from richer countries, but the positive evidence of where and how that money has been spent in African countries is hard to find. The problems are two-fold, since many corrupt African leaders have been only too happy to mortgage the wealth of their nations, placing future generations in debt bondage ... and these debts have to be paid, and so wealth flows out of Africa each year.

So there has been African complicity in the undermining of the continent. But that is precisely how the West operates in Africa. They install their henchmen and ensure they keep them in power. Beware the African who is all too keen to talk to the IMF and World Bank, and who considers Western corporations his friends.

The effect on Africa has been nothing short of utterly devastating.

Years ago, the European Network on Debt and Development estimated that \$600 billion flows from poorer countries to richer ones each year, but very little ever makes its way back to the poorer countries. The same organisation revealed that a third of all aid was simply an accounting trick, with money moved from one donor ministry to another, calling into question whether the \$130 billion or so “given” as aid every year is even real.

Aid figures are falsely inflated in many other ways, too, such as via debt cancellations and spending on refugees and foreign students in donor countries. Almost half of all official development aid gets tied up in paying for “products and services” offered to poor countries by richer ones (a lot of it in “consulting fees”, where consultants from rich countries are paid to advise clients from poor countries on how to spend what little aid money remains after the aid agencies have taken their cut, defrauded even more and after the regimes running the countries have looted as much of it as they can).

Development aid and loans were supposed to build the continent and develop it, but since more than \$2.5 trillion in aid over the last fifty years has not really improved the conditions of living in Africa for most of its people, what has been the point?

Africa has continued to make richer countries richer, and become inexorably poorer itself. It suits richer countries to keep the poorer ones in poverty. Poorer countries use less of the world’s diminishing energy resources. They pollute less. They do not pose great military or security threats to the balance of world power. They remain sources for primary natural resources that can be extracted and resourced from badly run nation states incapable of setting up secondary or tertiary industries and service sectors that would cut into global industrialised market share.

They also offer enormous pools of cheap labour that can be exploited by transnational corporations.

The 2012 Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report revealed that the richest 200 people on earth now have more money combined than the poorest 3.5 billion

people combined (that was half the world's population, by the way).

In what twisted reality can 200 people have more than 3.5 billion?

Inequality between poor countries and rich countries has only been increasing, according to the United Nations Development Program.

Global Financial Integrity calculates that up to \$900 billion flows out of the developing world into Western accounts each year through trade misinvoicing, and Raymond Baker has estimated another \$900 billion flows out through abusive transfer pricing. Developing countries pay \$600 billion each year in debt service, according to the World Bank's International Debt Statistics databank, much of it on the compound interest of loans accumulated by illegitimate rulers long since deposed. Developing countries also lose about \$500 billion each year as a consequence of trade rules imposed by rich countries through the IMF and World Bank. Land exceeding the size of Western Europe has been grabbed from developing countries by corporations from rich countries in the past decade alone. The value of that land is estimated at about \$2 trillion flowing from poor to rich.

Add all of that together and the \$130 billion rich countries transfer to developing countries each year starts to look like the kind of money we should be inclined to start looking at with a smirk and the standard response: "You know what? You go ahead and keep that. We'll be fine."

An Oxfam report has suggested: "The richest 1% has increased its income by 60% in the last 20 years, with the financial crisis (of 2008) accelerating rather than slowing the process."

Jacob Zuma sums it all up when he says: "We are very cautious with the Western banks, because the experience in Africa is that the more you got help, the more you got into trouble.

"We have had difficulties. Even the help you get has had so many strings attached. They don't give to you and say, 'Okay, do what will help you. They want to dictate, as well, what it is you should do. And this is a problem.

"It has conditions that will keep you dependent all the time. That's what we

are trying to take ourselves out of. And we believe that an alternative bank like Brics does provide an opportunity for us to have a bank that we can deal with at a level where we're satisfied, where we're not looked down upon ... I am certain we are going to go where there is more advantage and possibility than where there is less of that.

“If you don't realise things have changed, you are going to be left behind.”

Indian-American economist Ravi Batra put it quite simply: “The theories offered by economists rationalise the self-interest of big business and the wealthy. Such theories claim to benefit society and the public's well-being. But they do just the opposite: they make the great mass of people poorer while making the rich fabulously richer.”

Brazil, Russia, India and China had their first summit in 2009 in the wake of the 2008 crisis. They wanted to discuss the economic situation and how to reform financial institutions, as well as how they could improve cooperation and play more of an active role in global affairs.

The mere fact alone that these countries then announced that the world needed a new global reserve currency that would be “diverse, stable and predictable” led to a fall in the value of the dollar, which has been running scared ever since.

South Africa joined the group in December 2010 after a formal invitation, and Zuma attended the 2011 summit in China as a full member. By March 2013, during the fifth Brics summit in Durban, the member countries agreed to create a global financial institution that would rival the western-dominated IMF and World Bank. In September that same year, China committed \$41 billion towards the pool; Brazil, India and Russia \$18 billion each; and South Africa \$5 billion.

In July 2014, the governor of the Russian Central Bank claimed: “If the current trend continues, soon the dollar will be abandoned by most of the significant global economies and it will be kicked out of the global trade finance.”

Zuma has said: “Brics as a bank is very big, backed by strong countries, and

is establishing its regional office in Africa in a serious sense. All other big economies ... they've never done so. It says something about how Africa must be helped. That in itself indicates something.

"I think it could worry some people."

He pointed out that the moment the bank begins to invest on a large scale in countries with growing economies, the benefits that would normally have accrued to the traditional players would help to grow the Brics bank instead. And that cycle would only grow and compound, further enriching the Brics bank and weakening the World Bank and IMF.

Following a trip by then US president Barack Obama to India in 2015, the former US assistant secretary of Treasury for economic policy, who had worked under Ronald Reagan, Paul Craig Roberts, admitted that the US government was "very disturbed about the formation of Brics".

He described Obama's trip (the first ever by a US president to India) as an effort to disturb the relationships among Brics, with the possibility of these countries abandoning the US dollar posing a "direct threat to the exchange value of the dollar", which would disempower America to be able to "control all the outcomes" worldwide.

"So it [America] will do whatever it can to break it up.

"They [Brics] are purposely trying to create a trade system in which the role of the dollar disappears, because that means the demand for the dollar falls, and then the currency falls, and that helps accelerate the loss of the role of world reserve currency for America."

Ex-Indian foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal told *Russia Today* that the West's problem with Brics centred on Russia and the fact that America had still not overcome its "Cold War mentality".

"Russia looms very large. It's still the largest country in the world despite the fact that the Soviet Union collapsed. It has very powerful strategic forces, it still has considerable influence globally and is sitting right next to Europe where there are small countries."

Just as importantly, Brics has, at the suggestion of Russia's president Vladimir Putin, been keen on developing an alternative credit ratings system to the current big three from the USA – Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings – all of whom have been hard on Jacob Zuma's presidency and management of the economy.

Zuma, in turn, has questioned both the approach and the motives of these agencies.

"You don't in fact know what it is that people [at the ratings agencies] look at because you are not part of it in any way. You also need people who can look at these things in such a way and with an understanding that is more balanced. We could then understand some of the causes of some difficulties.

"It's not to say they should not be there. But you need other people to look at things differently. Because, generally, they've got a particular way of looking at Africa. We've got a particular way of looking at them. We need some balance somehow.

"At times, the reasons why they downgrade or don't downgrade ... we don't agree at times with the reasons. At times they are reporting unfairly. At times they just get influenced by the media and how the media reports.

"We want something that is very objective, very scientific and realistic. We're not saying they're not, but at times when we're trying to find out what [the ratings agencies'] reasons are, we realise, for example, that whether the economy is going or not – if there is a big strike or protests, even before you can see if it's had an effect on the economy – they already have a view. And on the basis of their view, they take a decision.

"They don't even look at how you solve the problem. So in my view you do need different approaches to look at these matters so that you could have some people – particularly people who come from a different background – who will look at it differently and perhaps arrive at a slightly different conclusion.

"It will be healthy if that was happening."

What he said there was putting it mildly. The ratings agencies are all based in the USA, and are the merciless enforcers of neoliberal policy. If you don't dance according to the free market principles that primarily favour Western investment, expect to be downgraded, whether you are capable of paying your debts or not.

It is economic warfare.

They have created a monopoly, holding about 95% of the global market. S&P and Moody's hold 40% each and Fitch has 15%. For the most part the media plays right into their hands, elevating them and affording them the superiority to maintain this uncompetitive environment to the detriment of the nations, companies and investors they are meant to serve.

This would be fine if they had a track record that made them deserving of their dominance, but they don't. Their decisions are largely unregulated and have often been shrouded in controversy. Some of their decisions display a concerning lack of true understanding of the markets. Their predictions have left many economies in financial turmoil and upheaval. This has left many to not only question their reliability, but the very need for their existence. Their credibility has been tainted by one too many recent blunders. In 2009, Moody's released a report titled, "Investor fears over Greek government liquidity misplaced"; fast-forward six months and the Greeks were seeking a bailout. Several key reports have been released asking: "Who rates the credit rating agencies?"

There have been increasing calls for radical reforms to the industry, citing their questionable track record along with the inherent conflict of interest in the credit raters' business models. Ratings agencies cannot match the large bonuses paid by banks and hedge funds, which puts them at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting the greatest and brightest financial minds. More often than not, they find themselves in a situation where the people they employ to rate the securities are not nearly as smart as the people who devised it.

The main conflict of interest, though, stems from the fact that they are paid by the very companies whose securities they are supposed to rate. Under such conditions it is easy for objective decision making to be overridden by the

temptation to give inaccurately higher ratings to ensure returning business. A former senior president at Moody's, who resigned after working at the agency for 11 years, claimed that the organisation's senior management interfered with analysts' independent assessments. He was quoted as having said in a filing to the US financial regulator, the Securities and Exchange Commission.

“This salient conflict of interest permeates all levels of employment, from entry-level analyst to the chairman and chief executive officer of Moody's cooperation. The goal of management is to mould analysts into pliable corporate citizens who cast their committee votes in line with the unchanging corporate credo of maximising earnings of the largely captive franchise.”

The most well-known example of their flaws was felt across many financial markets, including right here in South Africa, during 2008 US sub-prime mortgage crisis. Nobel prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz described the ratings agencies in this instance as, “the party that performed the alchemy that converted the securities from F-rated to A-rated. The banks could not have done what they did without the complicity of the rating agencies.”

Essentially if the agencies hadn't knowingly overrated the financial products that were based on worthless mortgages, the banks wouldn't have bought the risky debts.

The credit agencies had one job: to warn investors about the risks of the deteriorating sub-prime loans and US securities linked to the housing market. Their very mandate required them to warn us of this pending crisis and they didn't. They failed dismally. Or did they? As it turned out, when they should have been telling us to take our money and run, they were accepting huge sums from investment groups and banks to maintain the false AAA ratings. The agencies' inflated ratings failed to account for the greater risks associated with structured products and they knowingly sacrificed quality ratings to improve their own financial standing. Moody's is reported to have earned \$881 million by 2006 from structured finance, which was more than all its 2001 revenues combined.

An internal email from an S&P employee that was presented as evidence during the US government investigation into the financial crisis shows how at

least some employees were aware of their direct financial gains associated with the risks of rating collateralised debt obligations (CDOs). The email read, “Let’s hope we are all wealthy and retired by the time this house of cards falters.” That tells you everything you need to know.

Following findings of intentional fraud on the part of S&P, they released a statement in which they said they did not admit or deny any of the charges. They did, however, agree to pay the US government, along with the states of New York and Massachusetts, a combined \$77 million to settle the charges of inflating the ratings of mortgage-backed securities.

One can also not ignore the now infamous allegation of blackmail by Moody’s. The German reinsurer Hannover claims they were offered a “free rating” by Moody’s in exchange for payment for a similar service in the future. At the time, Hannover was already paying two other agencies for ratings, so they refused Moody’s offer. Clearly not a fan of rejection, Moody’s continued with the “free ratings” through a series of lowered assessments of the company. Despite these attempts at intimidation and blackmail, Hannover continued to reject offers for service by Moody’s. This led to a lowering of Hannover’s debt to junk status, making investors take flight and resulting in a loss of \$175 million of the company’s market value in a matter of hours. That was bullying and blackmail, pure and simple.

After several less-than-pleasing experiences with the ratings agency trio, the Russian government has taken action. Russian authorities have accused the Big Three of deliberating underestimating their country’s economy. They have seen that they are indeed tools of American financial capitalism, as stated by Finnish politician Olli Rehn in response to S&P’s downgrade of the €440 billion European Financial Stability Security bailout. When Russia’s sovereign rating was downgraded as a result of Western sanctions, they imposed new accreditation laws that the major rating agencies refused to sign up to.

Russia responded by creating a new rating agency called ACRA.

Russia is not the only country under attack from these agents of the West. With rating agencies facing increasing geopolitical pressure, we’ve also seen sovereign credit rating downgrades dished out to China and Hong Kong. This

only highlights the true political and financial agendas of the agencies. How else can one explain how a country like China, which has more capital than the US and which holds about \$1.2 trillion in US debt, can be downgraded. It's clear that these countries and their allies are becoming too influential for the liking of the established West. The IMF cannot allow a financial powerhouse like China to introduce rivals on the global stage, such as the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank without at least attempting to use their weapons, the agencies, to destabilise them and thus hang on to their dominance a little longer.

As Brics continues to grow and as the Zuma administration resolves to remain committed to their allies, we can expect continued negativity and downgrades from the agencies. We have already witnessed S&P and Fitch downgrade our credit rating to full junk status. Moody's is yet to follow suit and is notably the only one that has yet to rate South Africa as junk since the advent of democracy. On a recent visit, the IMF mission leader, Anna Lucia Coronel, painted a bleak picture for South Africa, a country that has shown less submission to the West in its recent policy suggestions.

She said: "IMF staff anticipate that the subdued economic growth of 0.7% projected by the authorities for 2017 is not likely to improve much in 2018. Growth would recover only gradually in the medium term unless the pace of implementation of structural reforms accelerates quickly enough to prompt a clear recovery in business and consumer confidence."

The local agents of the West are well aware of the factors that are at play here and this is why they aggravate the onslaught on Zuma and his administration, proposing their "New Deal".

The overrated ratings fit their long-term political and social plans just fine.

But what makes the big three ratings agencies matter more than anything else is the power of the dollar. And the threat against the dollar from Brics is stark.

The USA found itself in the lucky position after World War 2 to be able to pick up the pieces and turn itself into the undisputed global superpower, a position it contested for with the Soviet Union for about four decades before

it stood above it all triumphantly, powered by the dollar.

It all started long before the war, though, as General Smedley Butler, a former US Marine Corps Commandant, admitted in 1935: “I spent 33 years in the Marines, most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism.

“I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1910-1912. I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City [Bank] boys to collect revenue in. I helped in the rape of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street.

In China in 1927 I helped to see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested.

I had a swell racket. I was rewarded with honours, medals, promotions. I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate a racket in three city districts. The Marines operated on three continents.”

After World War 2, the US dollar steadily became the global currency and, most importantly, a reserve currency for much of the world. Particularly from the 1970s onwards, when the world was bullied by Richard Nixon to move away from the gold standard, to a reliance on the dollar, it meant the USA was now the undisputed banker of the world and could create value simply by declaring that value existed. The world wanted its dollars, and the USA was only too willing to keep printing as many dollars as would be required in exchange for whatever the USA desired.

Reserve currency status has allowed America to spend far more, year-in, year-out, than it has raised in tax and export revenue. Unlike the rest of the world America has not had to worry about a balance of payments crisis for decades. It can simply pay for imports in dollars that its Federal Reserve can just print. As a result, there's virtually no limit to how much the USA can spend and the status of the dollar has allowed Washington to bully the rest of

the world both financially and through the funding of foreign wars.

In 2014, however, an article by Liam Halligan in The Telegraph recognised that the Brics summit in Brazil that year was the clearest sign that the dollar's reserve currency status is on the ropes.

“It's long been obvious the Brics are coming ... tomorrow is almost today. Consider that Brics collectively hold sway over 50% of global currency reserves, rising to almost three-quarters if you take the emerging markets as a whole. The G7 nations between them control only 20% – and less than 8% if you exclude Japan.

“Based on such balance sheets, we're now seeing institutional change. The new Brics Development Bank, modelled on the IMF, will have a \$100bn currency reserve available to lend around the world, giving distressed debtor nations an alternative to the ‘Washington consensus’.”

Halligan recognised that Brics countries have had to pay money into the IMF for years, and have increased their contributions substantially over the decades, and yet have been “denied additional influence over what happens to the money”.

“Belgium has more votes than Brazil, Canada more than China. Modest reforms giving the large emerging markets more power, agreed with much fanfare in 2007 and again in 2010, have been stalled by Washington lawmakers. The Brics have now called time, setting up their own rival institution.”

For America, the party is almost over, and popular cryptocurrencies like bitcoin are only hastening its downfall.

“The US currency accounted for just 33% of all foreign exchange holdings in 2013, on IMF numbers, down from 55% in 2001,” wrote Halligan. “The world's emerging giants now have thumbscrews on the West.”

The fall of the US dollar and, by extension, America itself, will come with economic pain for the world, and precipitate a financial crisis that will make the 2008 disaster look like a picnic. For America in particular there will be

massive inflation, higher interest rates and major increases in the cost of food, clothing and petrol.

But a new order will emerge, and South Africa's alignment with Brics is a strategic manoeuvre that could shield South Africa in a way that we may find ourselves crediting Jacob Zuma's presidency with for generations to come.

It's likely you have never known a world in which the USA was not the dominant force, the de facto controller of the world.

So it may be hard to imagine any of that changing. But any reading of history should teach us that empires can fall relatively quickly after years of gradual decay.

The day it will no longer be allowed to repay its debts in dollars will be catastrophic for not just America, but the West as a whole. It could herald a new age in which the formerly downtrodden countries will be the new global giants.

By aligning with Brics, Jacob Zuma has looked far beyond the present day and the petty politics of our time. He has set South Africa up as the African beachhead for a continent on the rise. The fact that the New Development Bank has a regional headquarters in Johannesburg will ensure that South Africa becomes a focus point of influence and authority.

It may sound outrageous, but we may yet live to see the USA and Europe having to approach Africa and the rest of the developing world for aid. There's no reason the shoe cannot be on the other foot, and the long view of history has also taught us that no one is ever on top forever.

For now, the world continues to live in the shadows of a summit that took place in early July 1944, when delegates from 44 countries gathered at the Mount Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, where the current system to regulate the international monetary and financial order after World War 2 was agreed upon.

But there are new summits now, happening every year, and each one is becoming increasingly more important than that distant meeting more than 73

years ago.

China is set to surpass the USA as the number one economy any day now, with some economists predicting China's economy will be three times larger than America's by as early as 2040.

They may not be showing their panic, but trust me, the US government is very concerned, and should be.

And many may have scorned Zuma when he revealed that the assassination attempts against him were linked to his partnership with Brics – but when you consider how much of the world's fate rests on what will happen within the Brics grouping, as well as how each of the member countries relate to the rest of the world going forward, should we really just be treating these numerous assassination attempts as little more than the normal thrust and parry of politics? As Zuma himself might ask: "Come oooooon."

And then consider the character and history of the man who has been waiting in the wings since 2012, ready to take over at a moment's notice should anything untoward happen to the president.

Do you really believe that man, with his particular record of "negotiating" with the West, would show nearly the same enthusiasm towards the Brics countries and hold the West's feet to the fire in the way that Zuma appears to have no qualms about?

In August 2017, Zuma told a cadres' forum meeting that he knew the liberation movement was under attack.

"The issue of the unity of the alliance, who ever thought that one day the alliance would say the kind of things they are saying? No one. Why? The amount of money that has been poured to destabilise South Africa, you will never believe," said Zuma.

He said the money being used against the country had turned comrades he used to know against him, but said we "will leave it there" because he was wary of saying too much in the presence of the media.

He referenced the poisoning attempts against him and declared: “Our revolution is under attack. I know that we are under attack, no matter how bright and eloquent some people are, I know that and I often have a heart to heart with myself, just like Jesus, and say ‘Please forgive them, lord for they know not what they do,’” said Zuma to rapturous applause.

At this point, of course, before we get too many romantic notions about Brics and the possible good it might do, it may be good to remind ourselves that even if the USA stops being the dominant neocolonial force in the world, that doesn’t mean that the ultimate nature of global capital will change.

America took over the mantle of power from Great Britain, but that didn’t change much in the end. Much the same could happen with China, and South Africa has itself been accused of behaving like a neocolonial power in Africa through its banks and other multinationals. Christo Wiese, for example, today has Shoprite stores all the way through Africa right up to Nigeria, and is only planning to build more.

Researcher Andrew Gavin Marshall once explained that: “States, most especially the large hegemonic ones, such as the United States and Great Britain, are controlled by the international central banking system, working through secret agreements at the Bank for International Settlements, and operating through national central banks [such as the Bank of England and the Federal Reserve] ... The same international banking cartel that controls the United States today previously controlled Great Britain and held it up as the international hegemon. When the British order faded, and was replaced by the United States, the US ran the global economy. However, the same interests are served. States will be used and discarded at will by the international banking cartel; they are simply tools.”

Jacob Zuma must know only too well that the bulk of his problems stem not from the fact that he is a supposedly awful president with a history of corruption. They stem from the fact that he remains rooted in his liberation ideologies and that he remembers who South Africa’s true friends were during the struggle. Quite simply, Jacob Zuma is the last choice that white monopoly capital and the neoliberal market economies would have wanted as president.

He knows it too. He knows that if he simply cosied up to Western imperialism and picked Europe and the USA over Russia, China, India, Brazil, the rest of Africa and most of the developing world then his problems would probably evaporate. He would, in time, even become the darling of the media in South Africa as our credit rating improves along with the strength of the rand. Economic growth would be restored and perhaps even surpass its levels under

He should have been finished off in 2005 already when Thabo Mbeki fired him for supposedly being corrupt in an Arms Deal with the West that Mbeki himself actually facilitated and in which Jacob Zuma was a minor player.

He should then have been destroyed by the allegations of rape against him.

Thanks to the endless attempts of civil society and the opposition to treat him like a criminal, he has had to spend vast chunks of his time as president in fighting the ongoing legal battles against him in a bid to simply stay out of jail, which he has managed to do and will continue to do.

It's when he speaks isiZulu and addresses those he considers his friends that you often hear the real Jacob Zuma and his views, such as when he addressed a Cadres' Forum gathering at Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga last year.

He pointed out the obvious: that it was China, Russia and other eastern socialist countries that assisted the ANC in defeating apartheid. The West had been the enemy, and it's obvious that the president still sees his old foreign enemies as the enemy today.

"Our foreign enemies don't love us. They give our own comrades a lot of money to destroy the ANC."

He pointed out that the ANC had sent OR Tambo to ask for support from foreign countries for the armed struggle against the apartheid government. When he went to Western countries to ask for help "they refused because they were friends of those who oppressed us".

This is a simple fact that is so often lost in the mythology that swiftly grew up around Mandela and the transition to democracy.

The Soviet Union (Russia) offered financial aid to the ANC. It helped to train the ANC's soldiers in modern warfare.

“They are the ones who fought for our liberation, not the West. The Western countries who are seen to be showing us love today are the ones who supported and loved the apartheid regime.

“The reason they now want to destroy the ANC is because we have now strengthened our friendship with those who helped us.”

He made it clear that it was too difficult a thing to so easily turn your back on your friends and become friends with those who didn't want to help you.

“That is the reason the West is crying so much.”

South Africa's membership of Brics has been a major thorn in the side of the ANC's old enemies. “If you don't know, you will believe the lies of those who speak for those countries.

“Some of them are even wearing ANC uniforms.”

Jacob Zuma's discipline as an ANC leader has never allowed him to speak out and name even one double agent in the ANC – but don't for one moment think he doesn't know who they are, or at least doesn't have a very clear notion of their network and how they operate.

But he has kept these secrets, knowing he would probably only be ridiculed further by a hostile press who would not want to see any sand thrown in the eyes of their darlings, not coincidentally also the darlings of the West.

Nothing illustrates the fervent hatred of Russia more than the concerted media response against any nuclear deal with Rosatom, Russia's state-owned nuclear agency.

It's generally accepted that Russia's nuclear power technology is among the best, if not the very best, in the world. We know that most of our old coal power stations are on their last legs and burning coal cannot be defended at the cost of further global warming. We know that nuclear power in the long

term is the most reliable form of power and comes in far more cheaply than coal. We also know that renewable power will not be able to supply all South Africa's power needs.

It's nearly impossible, though, to find a single positive story in our media about the benefits that could accrue to South Africa by partnering with Russia. That should be no surprise, though.

If the UK or USA were the ones bringing us a nuclear power station or two, you can rest assured that the PR spin machine would have been working in overdrive, and the media would have felt far more conflicted about how to report on the deal.

But it's Russia, and that makes it very easy. It's just completely bad.

As I've written before in this book, there's a certain naivety to our media and the journalists it produces. Reading through South African papers and websites it's easy to start to buy in to the kind of narrative they present, which is that there are "good guys" and "bad guys".

The "good guys" are so often presented as the CEOs and other executives and board members behind their flashy corporate logos in their shiny buildings in Sandton who commandeer the JSE and the commanding heights of the economy.

They are presented to us as the brilliant men and women who provide South Africa with a precious economy, jobs and taxes. They're lauded for being so much more efficient and even transparent than our sluggish, inept, corrupt government. We are regularly made to contrast how much better the private sector is in almost every way when compared to the public sector.

Private hospitals funded by expensive medical aids for the lucky well-to-do few are world class, clean, well staffed and run by experts and experienced professionals. By contrast, public hospitals are seen as filthy, overcrowded, under-resourced, understaffed, run inefficiently – even corruptly – and unsustainably.

We see the same thing with public schools versus private schools. We rely

more on our private security now than on our police (and there are more private security guards working in South Africa now than the police and army combined).

There's been a concerted shift for people to go off the grid and leave Eskom (state power) stranded.

Only the poor would dare to use public transport. Private companies such as PostNet have driven the old South African Post Office system to virtual bankruptcy.

As for notions like a state-owned mining company, that has barely even got off the ground despite the passage of 23 years of democracy. Almost all mining, construction and even the maintenance of state infrastructure are done by private firms.

In my discussions with a few top corporate lawyers, I've even come to understand that big companies have even started to privatise the legal system. They no longer want to deal with South African courts – which they see as too slow, inefficient, too open to bribery and expensive – so new contracts being drawn up can now state that in the event of a dispute a private arbitrator will be appointed who will judge the matter.

Few in our privately owned media seem to understand that we live in a world in which it's often very difficult to separate the “good guys” from the “bad guys” and to effectively work on the premise that the private sector is “good” and the public sector is “bad” is naivety at best and active collusion at worst.

It leads to the kind of cognitive dissonance that when the private sector is eventually caught out engaging in tax evasion, transfer pricing, collusion, paying bribes, committing frauds, and so on, this is treated as a mere aberration instead of the order of the day.

Our media basically expects and assumes the private sector to mostly be “clean” and expects and assumes the public sector to mostly be “dirty”. The West is almost by definition superior to the Brics countries and the developing world. But the truth is that the world is not neatly divided between the good guys and the bad guys. In many ways, everyone is the bad

guy in their own particular way and everyone has their skeletons. Our media should not be picking sides – the tragic thing is that most journalists have no idea that they even are picking sides, or that there even are sides.

If the rich in this country could find a way to privatise everything related to their lives – from roads to sewerage – they would probably do it, and would stop paying taxes to government. In effect, the rich would love nothing more than to have their own private government, and leave the poor to choose their own government that could then attempt to look after their interests with whatever scraps may be left to do that with.

That would look a lot like apartheid, wouldn't it? Except it wouldn't be called apartheid, or even given a label at all. It would just be the effect of "market dynamics". No one would be so obviously excluded from the world of privilege on any identifier as crass as race alone. Anyone could be included in the "private group" if they have the right connections and the right amount of money.

Today, you will struggle to find the child of any ANC prominent leader in a government school. You will find it even harder – in fact, you will find it impossible – to find any senior ANC leader admitted to a government hospital. All of them have medical aid, and all of them would insist on being taken care of and kept alive by the private sector.

That alone should be evidence enough that the ANC sold out; that the ANC in fact colluded with white monopoly capital at the dawn of democracy and that, in fact, apartheid never ended and was never truly intended to end.

It merely took on a far more subtle and insidious form, and the vast inequality between white and black has only grown since while being masked by a growing black middle class and the inclusion in the elite of a lucky few who have known how to play along.

Clearly, there are two South Africas today, just as there have always been two South Africas. To believe differently is to buy into the lie.

# Media

If you are even a casual consumer of news in South Africa, you can easily be forgiven for concluding that the primary problem with our country is Jacob Zuma.

Zuma, Zuma, Zuma. It's a rare day that the headlines in South Africa are not screaming his name in one way or the other. Even our bookshops are chock-a-block with titles that are either directly about the president or implicate him in one way or the other.

Truthfully, if you are even half literate and living in this country, it's probably nothing short of a miracle if you don't despise uBaba.

Zuma's links to the Gupta family have clearly also been the gift to our media that simply never stops giving and "state capture" has become the buzzword of our times.

For privately owned media and the readers who follow story after juicy story, it's better than a soapie. Here is a family who aligned themselves to Msholozzi before he was even president, ensuring they were there for him when many others had turned their backs. The Guptas have since benefited massively from their closeness to state power, but it's also obvious that they lack the class, tact, discretion and strategy of the many state capturers who have come before them.

The Guptas have long been knocking at the door of power – long before Jacob Zuma. They were first friends with Thabo Mbeki when he was president, though he would deny that now. They have given money to the Democratic Alliance, and even received a letter of thanks from Helen Zille.

I don't know them personally, nor have I ever met them. What I do know is they were the main sponsors during Jacob Zuma's fight for the presidency of the ANC. They were at the forefront, offering to cover all of his campaign costs.

Everything from the T-shirts the comrades wore to the buses that ferried them to and fro, to the food and drink supporters enjoyed, it was all bankrolled by the Guptas. They did this at a time when most analysts and journalists weren't giving Msholozzi half a chance at becoming president, and the smart money seemed to be on there being a higher probability that he'd be going to jail than the Union Buildings.

The Guptas even availed their personal helicopter to Jacob Zuma and were one of the few rich families who openly favoured and supported Zuma over the incumbent Thabo Mbeki at a time when it was not only unpopular to do so but many would have called such a move downright dangerous.

The fact that this happened should also make it clear they already had money and contacts in government before Zuma came to power. They do not owe all their wealth and success to this one man alone, but the corporatocracy decided that the Guptas needed to be brought back down to size and put back in their place.

(By the way, 'corporatocracy' is a word I have borrowed from another writer, John Perkins, who you will read about later in this book).

The Guptas' demise would serve as a lifelong lesson of what would happen to everyone else who isn't part of the established system of financial power or who doesn't wish to dance to its particular tune. A deep irony of what happened with the PR company, Bell Pottinger, which undertook to improve the Guptas' image was that their strategy of trying to focus on the misdeeds of white monopoly capital in order to either normalise the actions of the Guptas or distract from them was that it had exactly the opposite effect. The Guptas have served as a major distraction from white monopoly capital's own long-accomplished state capture by helping to focus most of the attention on the Guptas and, by extension, Jacob Zuma, alone.

As for Bell Pottinger, they not only lost their former client, Johann Rupert,

but ultimately had their licence to practise public relations suspended in the UK and have been, for all practical purposes, destroyed.

Do the Guptas have a case to answer? It would seem they certainly do and they do seem to have been caught out.

They are keen on business but are definitely not politicians. It's obvious they have very little to no understanding of politics. If they had possessed any real grasp of it they would have never made a decision to land a plane full of their friends and family at the Waterkloof Air Force Base. A sound political mind would have been able to pre-empt the backlash and public outcry that would follow. Had they been more politically inclined, they would have protected their public image by displaying far less arrogance.

The best way to call the shots as a captain of industry is to do it in such a way that everyone thinks you are actually just a humble servant doing your duty by society and helping everyone in the process.

Wise businesspeople and those driving corporate propaganda know that you should always focus on the merits of "job creation", the "improvement of the gross domestic product" and, of course, the holy grail of "economic growth", even though inequality inevitably increases, more people become unemployed and all hope of true social justice and fairness fades.

Had the Guptas been a bit more politically savvy, they would've exhibited more tact in the way they chased and secured government deals. Their numerous loans and grants wouldn't have been taken out so brazenly and every effort would have been made to avoid summoning ministers, MECs and bureaucrats to their now infamous palatial home in Saxonwold.

The Guptas were by no means the inventors of such behaviour. They merely imitated – not altogether successfully – some of the behaviour they had witnessed being displayed by white monopoly capital. The biggest mistake they made was that they did not do a thorough investigation of their landscape. If they had, they would have known not to simply act in the same all-conquering manner white monopoly capital does, because they lacked a crucial line of defence in the propaganda war that is the perpetual saviour of their role model. This has proven to make all the difference in the end. White monopoly capital has had an indisputable stronghold over the "more

credible” private media and this somewhat coerced allegiance has gifted them improved immunity that the Guptas do not enjoy.

From where I sit, the biggest mistake Zuma made was to think the Guptas were his friends. They are not, and were never. They are multinational-wannabe capitalists and, as such, made the calculated decision to use their wealth to help Zuma with the expectation of profiting in return. They parted with their funds on the strict presumption that there would be a return on their investment. And they came calling once Zuma was in power.

The law should take its course with the Guptas. They did, however, manage to teach us a valuable lesson: that the time for those who have been long excluded from having any real say in our economy must end. It is possible to make a dent in a sector that has remained in the grip of white monopoly capital, but do not think that challenging it will ever be easy.

There are many books now that will paint a far fuller picture of the Guptas and what they’ve gotten up to over the years in South Africa. No business family in South African history has ever been subjected to such deep scrutiny and exposure – to the point that you may also be forgiven for concluding that the Guptas are just about the only businesspeople who ever do anything wrong or questionable, or are even capable of doing anything bad. Until the Steinhoff scandal in December 2017, the only time it seemed that you happened to hear about the malfeasance of anyone else in business was when it was connected to the Guptas.

The late Barry Sergeant, however, was a pre-eminent example of a journalist who went against the flow and wrote about the state capture attempts of the kinds of big firms that few in our media have had the courage to write about.

He repeatedly accused the financial services giant Investec of having long perfected the “game of state capture”, going as far as to say that they were far better at it than the Guptas could ever be.

In books and investigative articles, he went into great detail about how Investec and others were party to the many frauds masterminded by the late corporate crook Brett Kebble. Investec was even able to ensure that the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) never pursued them for their role in

just one alleged scam worth nearly R40 billion involving the troubled South Deep mine currently owned by Gold Fields.

He wrote in *Noseweek* in May 2016: “For a decade, South Africa has seen no prosecutions of serious white-collar crime. As a Durban attorney recently put it in private correspondence to a client: ‘The criminal justice system is in a state of collapse, and it would be a senseless waste of money for me to try to make it work.’”

Despite numerous threats by Investec and KPMG (who were also implicated) to sue Sergeant, he showed them the middle finger. He welcomed the opportunity to ventilate the evidence in court, knowing all too well that was the last thing both Investec and KPMG would ever want.

This, by the way, is the very same KPMG who in late 2017 fired numerous staff members and senior managers after the company was tainted in a Gupta-linked scandal. The message was clear: get your hands dirty with the Guptas, and there will be hell to pay. KPMG lost dozens of high-profile clients in the ensuing media fallout.

But did KPMG ever lose a cent or have to fire a single staff member following the numerous revelations against them by Barry Sergeant? Not one. As far as the rest of South Africa and most of the media was concerned, there was no story. It may as well never have happened.

Commenting on the fact that corporate crime is so rarely punished in South Africa, Sergeant once wrote: “Investec, like other big banks and corporates, spends untold millions promoting the illusion that South Africa’s regulations (and laws) are among the best in the world. Beneath its veneer, the niche bank conducts itself in a manner that can only be described as astonishing.”

We know about how KPMG did allegedly dodgy work for Gupta-owned companies, and much was made of the fact that they helped to redirect public money to pay for a lavish Gupta wedding at Sun City – but we hear very little about the apparently endless schemes the consulting company cooked up over the years to allow its big corporate clients to evade paying tax. It would be hard to find a financial services firm that doesn’t also offer this kind of “service” to its well-heeled patrons.

Tax evasion is arguably no different to stealing public funds. It just happens to have been stolen before any tax authority could get hold of it in the first place.

Corporate crime in many guises takes place every day in South Africa, but we rarely read about it.

Most of these firms are enthusiastic in buying advertising in most of our newspapers. There's always a big ad from the banks; a marketing campaign of some sort by the investment houses. All the big companies ensure they regularly splash their shiny logos all over the pages of newspapers, magazines and, increasingly, websites.

When you study advertising you are often told the primary reason companies buy it is because they want to communicate their message to the consumer or build their brand. That's true. What you hear nothing of, though, is that it also buys you influence with the medium of the message itself. Newspapers rely heavily on advertising to survive. They've been getting steadily less of it from the state (which private media has always felt oddly entitled to claim a share of ... mainly, it would seem, because getting a nice fat share of state advertising has just always happened). But increasingly, advertising from the private sector has become critical for survival for a media sector struggling to make the kinds of profits that came easily in the past.

It may be that big companies are just very clever and adept at hiding their tracks, and most financial or investigative journalists are too lazy to look beyond the "usual suspects", but the reality is that they mostly just don't look. They don't care. The argument often seems to be that the readers of news in South Africa only care about ANC scandals, the and business scandals that can somehow be linked to government, which is what makes the Guptas so perennially popular.

But why would the media feel the need to go poking around in the affairs of big corporates and the army of lawyers they enrich who all regularly spend millions on advertising and whose stories most readers supposedly aren't that interested in anyway?

The fact that the NPA also hardly ever prosecutes white collar (financial)

crime in South Africa is also an effective way of keeping it off the media's radar. We are fed the occasional scandal about yet another Ponzi scheme, and smaller investment firms are often subjected to great scrutiny, creating a sense that the law is being upheld.

In 2014, after tracking illegal outflows from 2003 to 2012, the Global Financial Integrity (GFI) monitoring organisation estimated that South Africa was losing about R147 billion a year to the illegal movement of money out of the country. Much of this was happening with the assistance of major, "respectable" financial firms.

The Thabo Mbeki Foundation has also studied this problem and linked its origins to the 1960s, when many multinational corporations set up systems to move their profits offshore as a counter to the "threat of decolonisation".

The result is that profits are regularly moved to tax havens around the world through fake operations to hide the fact that taxes are owed to host countries. They bank on the fact that it's too hard to investigate and takes too long for justice ever to be done.

According to journalist Sarah Evans, the "practice has become so common that at least one auditing firm released a tip sheet to its clients, mostly multinational corporations, to advise them on how to avoid paying taxes without alerting tax authorities". In her *Mail & Guardian* article, she didn't name the auditing firm.

The GFI has estimated that developing countries lost \$6.6 trillion in this way from 2003 to 2012. That's about R93 trillion.

Countries like South Africa and those in the rest of Africa are not poor. They're just being robbed blind. And we barely ever hear about it. The culprits are rarely made to account, and the status quo never changes.

You cannot blame only the media – both government media and privately owned. Our state and other developing countries need institutions capable of stopping these outflows and then publicising their victories, but in the absence of such prosecutions, the spark must come from somewhere – and it's often the media that has the power to shine a light, expose the truth or at

least ask the questions that can increase public pressure on authorities to investigate.

At the very least, the privately owned media would not be party to upholding the illusion that most of our big corporations are responsible contributors to society and that they are far and away the better, more efficient option, and that we should be ever so grateful to them for the taxes they pay every year.

R147 billion. Other estimates have placed illegal outflows of capital much higher, at R300 billion in 2012 alone.

The most damning estimates of how much money is lost to state corruption sit at about “only” R30 billion per year from an overall tax collection figure of more than R1.1 trillion. If these numbers are even close to true, it would imply that financial crimes cost society far more – as much as 10 times more – than state corruption.

The reality is the two are linked, and the state is no doubt party to this corporate corruption – from the state institutions meant to regulate these companies to the NPA that never prosecutes them. They are choosing to look the other way in return for a few handouts here and there from the culprits and the fact that individuals with strong political connections are in bed with these companies and are benefiting.

All of this is a natural and tragic consequence of the collusion that was entered into between big business and the ANC in 1993 which established the economic balance of power in South Africa.

But we mostly only hear about overtly political corruption – never about the corruption of white monopoly capital and how it feeds on the juicy resources that South Africa so clearly still offers to it – until it’s way too late to do anything, such as in the Steinhoff case.

Late in 2017, the Paradise Papers were leaked – exposing numerous big corporations for either being party to major tax avoidance schemes and even tax evasion. Of the South African firms named in the leaks, Cyril Ramaphosa’s Shanduka Group featured prominently.

This was mentioned in passing by our media, and then it went very quiet again. The Paradise Papers were a gigantic leak of 13.4 million documents from the elite law firm Appleby and corporate service provider Eстера. It brought to light damning tax abuse implicating multinational companies, high-level politicians, celebrities, wealthy executives and even members of the British royal family, all of whom have benefited from the global shadow economy.

Glencore, founded by South African Ivan Glasenberg, along with Lonmin, Standard Bank, Investec, Illovo and others appeared prominently in the leaks.

AmaBhungane and the Financial Mail have formed part of the global team of 380 journalists investigating the Paradise Papers, supposedly in the hope of getting authorities to ratchet up pressure on tax havens – but when you compare the amount of exposure given to the Paradise Papers in South Africa, a scandal that has been ongoing since 1950, compared to the Gupta Leaks, the contrast is stark.

Along with a direct link through Shanduka, Cyril Ramaphosa was implicated in possibly approving offshoring deals for Lonmin during his time as an equity stakeholder and a board member. Trevor Manuel and Maria Ramos appear to have tough questions to answer about the offshoring of money for SABMiller and Standard Bank, along with Graham Owen O'Connor for the Spar supermarket group and a slew of white managers for the pharmaceutical company Aspen, which has 71 companies in Mauritius.

It has already been estimated that the illicit money offshored from South Africa to tax havens between 2004 and 2013 amounts to \$209 billion, an amount that could run South Africa for several years. It would easily wipe out the country's debt and leave change for a paid-off nuclear power station from Russia.

And there even more companies that are part of such offshoring arrangements that haven't even been named in the Paradise Papers.

Three of the biggest banking, financial services and insurance firms in South Africa, Sanlam, FNB and Liberty, have also offshored money from South Africa to secret tax havens.

While Cyril Ramaphosa was at Lonmin it transferred over R2.3 billion in fees to two of its subsidiaries, one called Western Metals Sales Limited in Bermuda and another called Western Platinum Limited in South Africa. Between 2008 and 2012, Western Platinum Limited paid \$162 million in “commissions” to Western Metals Sales.

Ramaphosa also held equity stake and board membership at Shanduka, which engaged with Investec to seek advice on dodging taxes on profits made from an energy deal in Mozambique by offshoring money to Mauritius.

To this day, Ramaphosa has not been made to feel even slightly uncomfortable by a difficult question put to him by a journalist about the company he founded being exposed in this way. The Paradise Papers could easily have been a damning blow to his reputation, but that cannot be allowed in this country because he’s been identified as the “business-friendly” candidate and should therefore be protected at all costs.

You may say I’m wrong and big cases of corporate crime are indeed prosecuted in South Africa and the media does its bit to expose it.

The founder of Fidentia, J Arthur Brown, often comes up as an example of how the Financial Services Board (FSB) and the media did their bit to take down a mega-fraudster who had supposedly stolen from widows and orphans to the tune of R1.2 billion.

But there was always far more to that case than met the eye. Of the barrage of 192 or even 194 charges that were originally brought against him in 2007, he was eventually only convicted of two – and both of those were highly technical and certainly nowhere near the original allegation that he had stolen more than R1 billion from widows and orphans.

Tellingly, there’s a photograph and article on the *Daily Maverick* website in which Brown can be seen surrounded by his supposed victims, who told the news site they believed he was an innocent man and that the true villains in the story were the FSB itself and the bigger financial services firms.

Old Mutual had originally been in charge of the Living Hands Trust fund, and, according to *Noseweek*, lost 23% of the fund’s capital value while

paying the widows and orphans just 4% per year. When the trustees moved their R1.2 billion portfolio from Old Mutual, only R898 million was transferred to Fidentia, because Old Mutual pocketed a R300 million “termination fee” for itself.

Brown wrote in court papers that he found it absurd that he was “accused almost daily of having stolen from widows and orphans, yet Old Mutual could benefit by this obscene amount in cancellation fees – in addition to their usual generous management fees – without so much as a mention in the press, let alone public outcry or sanction”.

Brown was eventually sent to prison for 15 years but was never found guilty of stealing anything remotely close to R1.2 billion. Old Mutual has never been asked to account for itself.

The Living Hands Trust had started as the Mineworkers’ Provident Fund, and its destruction left mineworkers’ descendants high and dry. An important fund for the future of black empowerment was in effect wiped out – while the FSB-appointed curators sold most of the portfolio for a fraction of its value and under questionable circumstances.

The victims have also demanded full access to financial records from Sanlam and major law firm Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr, which is yet to happen.

But we mostly never hear about that side of the story, and the media maintains its official line that once you have been anointed the villain, you will always be the villain. The fact that Brown was not found guilty of most of what he was accused of was conveniently explained away as the bungling of the prosecution.

Brown was never completely innocent. He did cut corners. He probably deserves to be in jail, as do his colleagues. But the story was far more complicated and worrying than we were ever led to understand.

And despite the fact that the victims themselves told journalists that they were there to support Brown, the *Daily Maverick* characterised their meeting with Brown as “strange” and presented them as poor, ignorant people who were still being misled by a fraudster.

It's hard to blame the media. Proper financial journalism is hard. Journalists are often just reporting the superficialities of what they are allowed to see and what they are told. Nevertheless, most people believe that if they see a headline in an 8pm news bulletin, hear it repeated on radio and splashed across the front pages ... well then, it must be true.

I have myself experienced it first-hand, and earlier this year found myself splashed across the front pages of the *Sunday Times* for two weeks in a row.

On 9 September 2017 the paper reported that President Zuma was “fighting back” and engaged in some sort of plan to get Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma into cabinet – supposedly as the minister of higher education. The next week they described me as “Zuma’s pal” and that I was in a R5 billion gas deal with Russia’s state-owned gas company Rosgeo.

It took me quite a while to figure out where this whole story had come from, but I eventually worked out that the *Sunday Times*’ journalists had been fed a number of lies by people working either directly for Cyril Ramaphosa’s election campaign or serving in his official office in his capacity as deputy president.

Details provided by the *Sunday Times*’ legal editor eventually made that clear.

Both the articles attempted to paint an unflattering picture of me as someone who was “influencing” Jacob Zuma and even “intimidating” and “blackmailing” various ministers.

Very little in both articles was factual, but they didn’t really present their revelations as allegations. They “revealed” their information as though it was solid truth.

I was described as a “controversial figure” worthy of the title “New Gupta” because their senior sources in government called me that and because I was supposedly capable of getting a member of my political party, the Patriotic Alliance, into cabinet.

All their sources remained unnamed throughout, described only as “senior

ANC leaders”, “senior government sources”, “ANC NEC members” and “ministers”.

The conclusion was that just because somebody was an ANC national executive committee (NEC) member, “senior member of the ANC” or a “senior member of government”, they were therefore credible. But 104 NEC members are listed on the ANC’s website. And what makes these people so credible?

I was astonished to read that “The *Sunday Times* can reveal that Zuma had been considering appointing Leanne Williams, a former councillor of the Patriotic Alliance in the City of Johannesburg, to a deputy minister position.”

Considering that Leanne is not an ANC member and the Patriotic Alliance wasn’t even represented in the National Assembly, the idea that she might be appointed to cabinet was nothing short of absurd. She would either have to join the ANC, then be sworn in as an MP, or the president would have to use one of the only two positions available to him to appoint cabinet members from outside the National Assembly.

Even though this was a ridiculous idea, it allowed the paper to get away with the speculation that I may now be a “New Gupta” because I could supposedly influence the appointment of ministers.

This speculation was presented as “proof” that Kenny Kunene and I had “growing influence” over Jacob Zuma.

They further speculated that Kenny and I had somehow been the “masterminds” behind the leaked emails that revealed that Cyril Ramaphosa had been involved in at least eight extramarital affairs.

For the record, I don’t know where those emails came from. They were given to many people in the media and I, naively it turned out, believed it would be a scandal that would seriously damage Ramaphosa’s presidential ambitions.

After all, he had made much of the campaign against the “blesser” phenomenon, and here was substantial proof that he himself had been seducing young women and supporting them financially in return for sex and

– in the case of at least one young woman – a regular supply of raunchy videos from her.

Ramaphosa's private emails were hacked – perhaps by state security as he alleges, or maybe someone else. I certainly don't have the skills to be able to do it.

I don't like Ramaphosa, so I obviously took to social media to make much of the fact that he had been exposed as a hypocrite – but that doesn't mean I was the “mastermind” of his embarrassment.

The *Sunday Times* even implied that I might be getting training as a spy when they quoted one of their sources as saying I'd been going to Russia in recent months, either to “collect information on certain people or to get some intelligence training”.

This was, of course, rubbish, and the attempt to tarnish my name and discredit me the following week only continued when they wrote that Kenny and I were now “widely regarded as the new Guptas”.

They wrote this based only on the fact that they themselves had been the ones trying to popularise the label in partnership with Ramaphosa's staff. When they had tried to popularise this label on Twitter on the night before the paper was released by using the hashtag #NewGuptas, they received so much criticism about it that they deleted the tweet.

I complained to the Press Ombudsman, and it was then that it became far clearer that the stories were merely an attempt by the ANC's Ramaphosa faction to target me. The *Sunday Times* were unable to even get the name of my political party right and they made it clear how unimpressed they were with me for having questioned the motives of the anti-Zuma faction in the past.

They told the ombud that their sources had included two cabinet ministers and the head of a state-owned enterprise and they had all told them a similar story about my “modus operandi”.

I can only quote a recent film in which a Vietnam war photographer says:

“Jerry, when three sources tell you the same thing word for word... You know they are lying.”

Perhaps the *Sunday Times* never saw the movie.

They told the ombud that “In respect of Leanne Williams’ proposed appointment as a deputy minister, we received a tip-off that she was going to be appointed as an MP. We then approached the Deputy President’s office since it is a norm for the President to inform the Deputy President of any incoming MPs. An official in the Deputy President’s office confirmed that Ms Williams’ name was submitted to the director-general in the President’s office, Cassius Lubisi. We spoke to a total of three people who confirmed that her name was submitted for a deputy minister’s position. Two of these people are parliamentary staff who have access to this information, the third is an advisor to a minister. One of them said that Mr McKenzie had submitted her name.”

Ultimately, the ombudsman ruled against my complaint, saying that he had himself confirmed with the sources that these were the allegations.

The revelation, to me, though, was astonishing.

The *Sunday Times* had invented their own reality in partnership with Cyril Ramaphosa.

It would only take a moment of thought to realise that Jacob Zuma would never include Ramaphosa in his decision about a potentially controversial cabinet appointment – even though it never happened, and could never happen.

I was left to conclude that the journalists who penned the articles either did not actually understand the parliamentary system or were just being deliberately misleading.

What the *Sunday Times* was told by two parliamentary “staffers” and one “adviser to a minister” could never be relevant to who gets appointed to cabinet, because that is the president’s prerogative alone.

The paper also admitted that their primary source was Ramaphosa's office.

And, by the way, I've checked. There is no "norm" of the president informing the deputy president of anything. The deputy presidents of most countries, including this one, are little more than seat-warmers with few, if any, true powers.

In South Africa, though, our deputy president appeared to have an inordinate amount of power – over the media, at least.

So truth be told, I wasn't overly enamoured about the idea that Ramaphosa and his team seemed to be going out of their way to spread rumours and lies about me.

It should have been Ramaphosa dealing with media fallout and bad publicity, but that's not how the system works.

I first came across the story that he was allegedly having all these affairs when Kenny told me he'd been given the leaks. Steve Motale, *The Sunday Independent* editor, had been given the same info. I'm sure others in our media got the same stuff, but must have chosen not to pursue it.

I told Kenny it must be fake.

"Bullshit," I told him. We ended up betting R50 000 on whether the leaks were authentic.

I realised I was about to lose R50K when I went to an ATM and deposited R10 into the payer's bank account from one of the emails. If you make a deposit to an account number, the machine automatically gives you the recipient's account name.

I couldn't believe it when the name 'Ramaphosa' showed up on the screen. When I called Kenny to tell him, he informed me that he and Steve had already verified the leaks themselves.

Steve had called Ramaphosa and told him he had questions of a private nature, about his personal life, that he wished to send to the deputy president.

Not knowing what it was about, Ramaphosa asked him to send his questions to his private Gmail account, which just so happened to be one of three accounts from which the illicit romantic emails had been hacked.

And that was that. Steve knew Ramaphosa was guilty.

When the deputy president realised what was going on, he tried to get the newspaper to kill the story – this same man who had helped to draft the freedoms in our constitution that we like to celebrate today, including the right to free speech and the importance of an independent media.

Steve rightly refused. Cyril dragged him to court for an urgent interdict to stop the printing of the story, but the courts threw it out.

As a compromise, he ended up holding back on all the gory details about the email leaks and Cyril went running to the *Sunday Times*, which ran an interview with him in which he admitted only to an affair from years before, claiming his wife knew about it.

It did enough to confuse the issue somewhat – and he cooked up some story about how the money he'd been paying to these young women had been part of his academic support for various students. Except at least one of the women – the same one who'd been sending him all those explicit videos of herself – was not even a student.

She ended up dragging Kenny to court to force him to remove some of her videos that he'd uploaded to his website. She and her top lawyers won that case, which was funded by Ramaphosa too.

What followed was the ultimate hushing-up of the story.

After Ramaphosa alleged that his emails had been hacked through spies abusing state power, *The Sunday Independent* changed its tune on him. Steve was never allowed to run another story on the info he had.

The very next week, Steve Motale was placed on “stress leave” and a front-page story in the paper reported that Ramaphosa was unshaken by the “dirty tricks” campaign against him.

In an apologetic editorial, the paper said: “Our story last week linking Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa to alleged extramarital affairs has forced us to introspect and to redefine our editorial processes.

“While we do not condone infidelity, alleged or real, our story, coming at a crucial time in the race to succeed Zuma as ANC president, may have created an impression that we are meddling in the party’s succession battles. We are not.

“The backlash has been so serious that our editor, Steven Motale, has taken stress leave following death threats. We condemn these in the strongest terms.”

They claimed that Steve was the “sole custodian” of the planned series of articles and they would not be able to continue with them until he returned.

They then apologised to readers and tried to convince them that they had not taken the decision not to run the stories due to pressure from Ramaphosa.

“We assure you that this is in no way a sign that the intimidation tactics have worked, and that we are not willing to be pawns in the ANC succession wars. That battle is not ours.”

When Steve asked for a week off, his boss Iqbal Surve offered to extend his sick leave until the end of the year – until after the ANC’s elective conference.

That was how determined Independent Media’s owner was to ensure that no further unflattering stories appeared about a man he feared would be next in charge of the country.

A friend of mine was working at a rival newspaper at the time and raised the question in a news meeting about continuing with the stories about Cyril’s affairs, but he was promptly shot down: “How can we be reporting about Ramaphosa’s private life when you’ve got the Gupta Leaks going on? You’ve got state capture. You’ve got the economy staring down the barrel.”

My friend was somewhat amazed. “But if we’d been given this exact same

story about any other politician we would have run with it.”

It’s obviously true. If someone had discovered emails about, let’s say, Blade Nzimande, flirting with a gaggle of young women, it would have fed the printing presses for weeks.

Jeff Radebe had earlier been exposed in a phone text for asking a state photographer to send him a photo of her “C.l.i.t.” and the *Sunday Times* had made a meal of him, to the point that he’d been forced to make a public apology about it.

But not so for Cyril. For Cyril, it was newspapers who had to make apologies for simply reporting the truth about him.

He is their man. And he is their man because the owners of these media groups know what the true allegiances are in the economic balance of power.

Steve Motale was interfering with that balance when he started asking Cyril those questions. He ultimately turned down the generous offer from his boss to take the rest of the year off, and turned up for work the next week.

Despite him apparently being the “sole custodian” of the story – he’s yet to be allowed to write another word about it.

So much for Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa that Cyril helped to write.

What happened to Clause 15, under Freedom of Expression, where “Every person shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media...”?

When Steve Motale was in court against Ramaphosa’s lawyers, that was a clause he seemed to have forgotten.

Freedoms are all well and good until they end up causing awkward silences with your wife at home. They’re great until they threaten to interfere with your presidential ambitions.

One of the biggest hypocrisies of our time must be the stark difference in

how the leaks of Ramaphosa's emails were treated by the media in comparison to the Guptas.

The media has expressed great reluctance to publish the information from Ramaphosa's private emails because they are not sure how these leaks were obtained, because clearly it could not have been legal and may have been an abuse of state security. That's all well and good, but it's just as likely that the giant trove of seemingly every email sent by the Guptas and their business associates was similarly not leaked in a legally justifiable manner. You don't hear the editors of private newspapers and websites wringing their hands about whether it's morally wrong to publish the private information contained in these leaks. Instead, they hold forth about public interest and public good.

But what about the public interest in exposing a man who has spoken out publicly against the so-called blesser phenomenon – of older, richer men, entrapping younger women using money in return for sex – who is clearly a blesser himself? Journalists should not be picking and choosing which vices they are okay with, and which not, whose particular frailties should be condoned and excused and whose not. They need to report on reality without choosing sides, and let their readers decide.

That patently was not allowed to happen when it came to Cyril.

I believe in the freedom of the press and the importance of an independent media. Years ago, the very same *Sunday Times* newspaper saved my life after I led an exposé of prison corruption in Grootvlei Maximum and the warders and the prisoners were trying to kill us. A front-page article about our suffering changed the tide and allowed me to be here today.

It gets tricky when these freedoms are abused by power, and when you look at the ownership of most of our major media titles in this country, the owners still primarily represent the interests of white monopoly capital.

The Guptas' attempt to add a different voice to the media mix through their newspaper *The New Age* and their news channel ANN7 has had very mixed results. Without government advertising, *The New Age* could not have survived, but this only succeeded in putting an even bigger target on the

backs of the Gupta family. The very existence of *The New Age* has been an open snub to white-owned media that their share of state advertising has been diminished as a result.

Curiously, on the very weekend I was writing this article, a new Gupta Leaks article broke on various websites, including *News24*. It revealed that MultiChoice had paid the Guptas a “questionable payment” of R25 million in 2015, whereafter the then communications minister, Faith Muthambi, amended digital TV’s migration policy to ensure that set-top boxes for digital TV would not be capable of encryption.

This was precisely what MultiChoice, the owner of DStv, had been lobbying for, as it would effectively prolong their monopoly on pay-TV for years to come.

ANN7 also started being paid a yearly fee of nearly R150 million from MultiChoice from 2016 onwards.

The company says the payment was justified and just another business decision.

*News24* happens to be owned by the same holding company, Naspers, which owns MultiChoice. People who work for Media24 get a discount on their DStv subscriptions as part of their company perks.

So you have to take your hat off to them for reporting unflatteringly about the fact that one of their companies may have paid a bribe to the Guptas. They obviously were not following the advice of the US’s Paul Craig Roberts, who advised: “Most newspapers are part of huge conglomerates, and the policy that comes down is that you don’t rock any boats. You can’t make the government upset because the value of the company is the broadcast licences, and the government will not renew them, and we can’t make our corporate owners mad because they will fire us, and we can’t make the advertisers mad or they will pull their advertising. So the media can’t say anything that will upset the power structure.”

And yet, once again, the only reason the story was identified and written was because it also implicated President Zuma as having given Faith Muthambi

the powers to make her decision.

The journalists were probably telling themselves they had worked in the interests of truth and had not been swayed by internal bias. But the reality is that MultiChoice will no doubt survive this little scandal and it will do nothing to Naspers' share price. Maybe one or two managers or even executives will have to resign in shame, but then life for the big monopoly will go on.

At the time of writing, DStv was trying to kill off ANN7 completely – apparently because the audience figures were too low and the channel had a bad reputation due to its association with the Guptas.

More likely, though, was that MultiChoice's owners were merely keeping their options open. In the event that Cyril were to win, then ANN7 would be culled. If it needed to be kept around as a useful possible future colluder with government, then that could also be arranged.

White monopoly capital ultimately understands what's required for its own survival. It has managed it brilliantly from the early days of democracy, and continues to walk the tightrope carefully to this day.

No doubt they were hoping beyond hope for a Ramaphosa win, because then the floodgates of government advertising would be opened yet again, and the scruffy Gupta upstarts *The New Age* and ANN7 could then finally be killed off for good.

The way that major media have dealt with the debate around white monopoly capital, especially in 2017, has been fascinating. In many respects, there has been a singular lack of acknowledgment or understanding that they are talking about themselves. Nowadays, black journalists make up a majority in many major newsrooms – especially in English media – and this can lead to the mistaken assumption that they own the media. Most journalists have internalised the dominant paradigm that the economic balance of power is good, that one should not do or say anything that upsets the economy and its investors and that overly radical positions should be avoided. The result is that most media commentators, black or white, tend to come across as moderates, and they are happy to do so because it feeds into the myth that you find in almost all newsrooms that journalists are “objective” and report accurately and without fear or favour.

The dominant paradigm has become so entrenched that it’s no longer even visible as a position. It’s just the standard, and anything deviating from the standard needs to be questioned and criticised.

David DeGraw was criticising Western media when he wrote that the “main media bias is in favour of the thieves who stole our country and economy, and own the mainstream media companies. The omnipresent mainstream media is the greatest weapon of oppression humanity has ever known.” He may just as well have been describing South Africa.

In 2017, the British public relations firm Bell Pottinger was utterly destroyed for having taken on the Gupta family as clients and then choosing a campaign against white monopoly capital and its sins as a way to distract from what the Guptas were up to.

It was a cynical strategy, especially since the same PR company had done work for Johann Rupert’s companies (and then targeted him specifically in their campaign). But what happened in the subsequent reportage in the media was simply absurd.

It reached its apogee when *News24* felt bold enough to declare: “Leaked emails linked to the Gupta family, who are President Jacob Zuma’s close associates, show that a UK-based PR firm, Bell Pottinger, was responsible for

coining and popularising the phrase ‘white monopoly capital’.”

To say that a company in Britain “invented”, “created” or “coined” the term “white monopoly capital” tends to forget that white monopoly capital was a simple description of a major aspect of apartheid.

Only white people were in charge of almost all the wealth and most of the country’s wealth-generating capacity. Apartheid itself was built on capitalism, and the domination of white people (white men, mostly) in that system was legislated and brutally enforced by the state.

Obviously there were the exceptions of individual black people who started successful businesses, but they were exceptions.

In the 1950 and 1960s Nelson Mandela himself declared that the armed struggle was a fight against white monopoly capital. It was very real, and since democracy it has only changed in degree and in obviousness.

White monopoly capital has changed. It has blended in to a country that has black billionaires now, has a black middle class, has black professionals and, most obvious of all, a predominantly black government.

But just because white monopoly capital is camouflaged does not mean it does not exist.

Absurdly, the ANC spent much of its time at its 2017 policy conference in Nasrec debating whether the term white monopoly capital was fair and should still be used. The Cyril Ramaphosa faction was flatly against it, while Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and her team made it clear they still felt more than justified in referring to the label.

Led by Joel Netshitenzhe, he reported to the media that nine out of 11 delegates had rejected the label and eventually simply agreed to call it “monopoly capital”, which in my view is almost meaningless. They laughably said that monopoly capital was a problem worldwide. They may as well simply have said that capitalism remains a problem worldwide.

But what about the fact that capitalism in South Africa still overwhelmingly

has a white face?

Netzhitenzhe admitted that there was still white dominance in the economy covering the gamut of assets, income, professions and other privileges, but these were simply things the democratic government had inherited from the past and there was no denying it. He effectively admitted that a white-dominated business landscape in South Africa is simply the hand the ANC was dealt and there was little that could be done about it.

Netzhitenzhe was quoted as saying: “We cannot run away that there is white dominance in the economy. We reaffirmed the Polokwane conference decision that there must be a relationship of cooperation and contestation with monopoly capital.”

He then repeated a line that has often been uttered, that the ANC is somehow hoping that big business will help them in their quest to improve the country.

“We want monopoly capital, for instance, to create jobs, invest, participate in black economic empowerment,” Netshitenzhe said.

Many delegates complained afterwards that Netzhitenzhe had not, in fact, conveyed the true popular sentiment at the conference.

ANC KwaZulu-Natal chairperson Sihle Zikalala told the plenary that their submission was that there was a racial domination in all spheres of life, particularly the economy. Arts and Culture Minister Nathi Mtshwa had proposed that the conference should accept white monopoly capital as spelled out in the party’s Strategy and Tactics document.

But that was not to be, and instead we ended up with the strange compromise that the enemy was “monopoly capital”, in effect a faceless, difficult-to-identify phantom hiding behind a label with no accepted definition.

The fact that white households still earn five times more, on average, than black households, is merely explained as a consequence of the fact that centuries of privilege are hard to erase (which is true).

And thanks to the sheer demographic dominance of the black population, it

has been inevitable that black people would start to accrue assets and a share in the economy over time now that the artificial barriers of apartheid legislation have been lifted.

It's true that many black people have become successful and there are many good stories to share. The Johannesburg Stock Exchange's own research suggested in 2016 that more than half of the local ownership in the JSE's Top 40 shareholder registers was held by black people – but much of this is retirement funds.

When you see so many black guys in so many BMWs it's easy to start to think the balance of power has shifted. But it's a veneer, and always has been.

We must remember to give credit to a younger Julius Malema, who repopularised the phrase white monopoly capital years ago when he was still ANC Youth League president.

It bothered many in the ANC because the ANC likes to describe itself as nonracial – and describing the “enemy” as white monopoly capital may have seemed, at the very least, racist, if not outright racist.

But the deeper unease must have come from the knowledge that it was the very same pact with this very same white monopoly capital in the early 1990s at the birth of democracy that had betrayed what the ANC had been fighting for, and betrayed all those who had fought for it.

The ANC doesn't want to discuss white monopoly capital because that may lead to too many questions and discussions around why it was so keen to concede so much ground to this very same white monopoly capital years ago during negotiations.

You have to hand it to big business. They have succeeded in confusing the matter so completely that no one is even sure white monopoly capital even exists any more. It's just “monopoly capital”.

I'm reminded of another famous line from a movie: “The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist.”

It's precisely because of this that I was so astonished to read a piece in the *Daily Maverick* by the Jewish reporter and intellectual Richard Poplak, referring to white monopoly capital as the very obvious thing that it so obviously is.

He started his piece by writing: "At precisely 18:00 military time, White Monopoly Capital's back line filed into the Orlando East Communal Hall – Investec's Stephen Koseff, Goldman Sachs's Colin Coleman, FirstRand's Johan Burger, to name only a few. It was a touching moment: the cohort with the most to lose (at least in financial terms) had come in force to cheer on their Manchurian Candidate. They looked morose, as if they were deficient in iron and vitamin D, and who could blame them – the currency has apparently hung itself in a flophouse cupboard; the entire Johannesburg Stock Exchange is propped up by a Chinese internet company; Jacob Zuma is about to steal all of their money. They were down to one option: Cyril Ramaphosa, and a speech that was billed as a promulgation of his brand-new economic policy."

The rest of the article is pretty good, though I would have to disagree with Poplak's assessment that Ramaphosa had been a "superb negotiator" to outsmart the morons from the National Party negotiators after he stole the role of chief constitutional negotiator from Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma.

What's notable about the article, though, is the fact that it captures the image of Cyril Ramaphosa among the poor masses of Soweto giving a speech about his economic plans to save the country in a hall filled with black people, with the front row made up of some of the richest men – white men – in the country coming to show their open support and, no doubt, keep an eye on what he had to say.

That front row represented some of the greatest state capturers in the history of South Africa – and there they were, keeping close watch on their chosen proxy, the man who had delivered the country to them in 1993, and who they were relying on again to give it to them once more on a gold-encrusted silver platter in 2017.

As I write these words, the ANC elective conference is weeks away. As you read these words, you will probably already know what the outcome of that conference has been.

Just know that if Ramaphosa is the victor, then he would have bought his way into power through not only his own deep pockets, but the endless resources of some of those men who were in that front row that day in Soweto.

Once in power, the media is more likely to start asking critical questions about the man, but even then they will be constrained by the natural, implicit limits that journalists just instinctively understand as the boundary – to here and no further.

And even if he doesn't emerge as the victor in December, rest assured that Cyril is still young enough to bide his time. White monopoly capital will back him again in five years, or throw their weight behind another candidate. It will always be there at the gates, ready to restore the economic balance of power once again, to kill radical politics by any means necessary.

In critiquing the media in his home country the USA, Noam Chomsky famously wrote: "The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum – even encourage more critical and dissent views. that gives people the impression the sense that there's free thinking going on, while all the time the presuppositions of the system are being reinforced by the limits put on the range of the debate."

What that means, quite simply, is that it's possible to create the illusion that you have a very vibrant and free media by ensuring there's a lot of talk and discussion going on, but the moment someone strays outside of the bounds of "acceptable opinion", they are immediately labelled an extremist or crackpot and pushed to the sidelines, no matter how smart or informed they may be.

That's why it's so easy to make otherwise fearless journalists allow juicy stories about Cyril Ramaphosa's sex life to simply die a quiet death, and they don't even question why they think that's fine. That's why journalists who would otherwise rather die than be intimidated or bribed into killing a story about the Guptas do not even think it's worthwhile even asking the question about whether it was morally or ethically acceptable for Pravin Gordhan's daughter to have received a tender worth R10 million from Treasury – his department – when he was still finance minister. Other companies she was a director in also received big government tenders.

You don't ask such questions. Journalists just understand that, whether they're explicitly told to behave in a particular way or not. They just know that some people are acceptable targets and others are not – and the difference can often easily be distinguished by working out whether they are friendly to free-market capitalism or not.

John Swinton uttered the following words more than 137 years ago at a press banquet in New York. It just as easily, if we are honest, be said tomorrow in South Africa.

“There is no such thing, at this date of the world's history, in America, as an independent press. You know it and I know it.

“There is not one of you who dares to write your honest opinions, and if you did, you know beforehand that it would never appear in print. I am paid weekly for keeping my honest opinion out of the paper I am connected with. Others of you are paid similar salaries for similar things, and any of you who would be so foolish as to write honest opinions would be out on the streets looking for another job. If I allowed my honest opinions to appear in one issue of my paper, before twenty-four hours my occupation would be gone.

The business of the journalists is to destroy the truth, to lie outright, to pervert, to vilify, to fawn at the feet of mammon, and to sell his country and his race for his daily bread. You know it and I know it, and what folly is this toasting an independent press?

“We are the tools and vassals of rich men behind the scenes. We are the jumping jacks, they pull the strings and we dance. Our talents, our possibilities and our lives are all the property of other men. We are intellectual prostitutes.”

People like Vytjie Mentor and Julius Malema are perfect examples of the dominant media psychology in action. The way the media reported on an alleged bribe given to the then deputy finance minister, Mcebisi Jonas, is another good example.

Let's start by looking at Vytjie Mentor. The former ANC MP became a bit of a media darling and hero ever since she came forward in 2016 with startling

allegations against the Gupta family and President Jacob Zuma.

Few of us had heard of her before that, and Zuma himself apparently said he had forgotten who she was. But she had claimed on Facebook that the Guptas had offered her a Cabinet post as minister of public enterprises after Barbara Hogan “got the chop”. She claimed Zuma was in an adjoining room at the Guptas’ Saxonwold home at the time and he made an appearance after she rejected the offer.

Former minister Hogan wasted no time to say that she believed Mentor, because apparently she had also been approached by the Guptas to have government drop SAA’s route to India. The then deputy finance minister, Mcebisi Jonas, eventually also alleged he had been offered a bribe of R600 million to become the Guptas’ personal finance and, in return, they would ensure that he was given the top job at the expense of Pravin Gordhan.

Such a ludicrous amount of money would have been laughed at had the person making it been anyone but someone making an allegation against Zuma and the Guptas. So because of that, it was impossible to find even one commentator in the privately owned media pointing out that the amount Jonas was talking about simply did not sound realistic. Instead, Jonas was praised as a hero who had come forward to blow the whistle on alleged bribery.

The lack of credibility of his story, though, was nothing compared to the string of further revelations and allegations that have come from Vytjie Mentor on Facebook.

The only journalist who seemed willing to call her out on it was an old friend of mine who was working at *The Citizen* at the time, Charles Cilliers. He pointed out that ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe wanted to sue Mentor for a post about his wife in which Mentor was “clearly a little confused about the financial circumstances surrounding Eskom’s awarding of a five-year catering contract worth R639 million to a company called RoyalMnandi Duduza”.

Mentor had incorrectly conflated the totals for two tenders in her Facebook post, but that was hardly the biggest problem.

Cilliers wrote: “These days, Mentor’s followers and even we in the media can’t wait for the next exciting instalment to drop in the gripping miniseries The Vytjie Files – but there has to be a limit to how much this woman knows and how much of what she claims to know is credible.

“Yesterday, she let rip on how our new finance minister, Malusi Gigaba, is actually a Zimbabwean who was born as ‘Gigamba’. Over the weekend she spoke about how this same Gigaba/Gigamba had supposedly had an affair with a married woman named Judy/Judith, but she offered no proof of it.

“After Zuma’s cabinet reshuffle at the end of March, Mentor went as far as to throw her weight behind an allegation by a little-known ANC member who claimed that Gigaba had signed off on a new nuclear deal after just one day in his new job.”

He called her “that villager who shouts ‘Zupta!’ every night while on patrol and wondered if she was not a “bit of a fabulist who concocts tales based on fragments of memory and things she’s hearing, seeing on TV or reading? Maybe. She probably means well, but clearly also likes all the attention.”

In another article about her, he called her out for writing on Facebook that she was “very convinced” that the drought in the Western Cape was “man-made” and “deliberately engineered”.

He pointed out that Mentor appeared to be so “obsessed with the evil nature of the ANC under President Jacob Zuma that she probably believes the Western Cape drought was somehow cooked up around the fire pool at Nkandla – perhaps as a way of punishing all those voters who dared to choose the DA”.

And yet this was the same Mentor who still had the media running after her at her book launch later at which she – most conveniently – offered the journalists a juicy story about how Jacob Zuma had apparently tried to touch her intimately. Most people were just all too ready to believe this poor, mentally unstable person, simply because she was saying unflattering things about the president. She knows this, and so her conspiracy theories just keep coming, including that Zuma can somehow control the weather.

Cilliers concluded his column by writing: “Mentor’s post sadly tells us far less about what’s going on with the weather in Cape Town and far more about the storms raging in her own mind, driven by the constant need she feels for affirmation and attention. It seems she will say just about anything now to get that attention.

“What’s next? That Zuma and the Guptas are actually extraterrestrial lizard people who regularly climb into volcanoes where they keep teleporters for travelling back and forth to their headquarters in the centre of Mars?”

Julius Malema is another perfect example of the dominant media psychology in action. Back when he was president of the ANC Youth League and vowing to “kill for Zuma”, he was ridiculed and pilloried by the press, generally presented as Public Enemy Number 1. His calls for land expropriation, nationalisation and combative attitude towards white capital saw him given great exposure by the media (because he also generally sold newspapers, and still does), but journalists also went all out to discredit him. His poor school marks were discovered and paraded as evidence of his idiocy without any consideration being given to the fact that he had let his schooling suffer at the expense of his youth activism. His comments on nationalisation were represented as naive and misinformed. When he was finally expelled from the ANC, by a disciplinary panel chaired by none other than Cyril Ramaphosa, on dubious charges that Malema and his senior comrades in the league had been illegally calling for regime change in Botswana, the media offered him little sympathy.

His subsequent tax woes and legal troubles were front-page news. He looked politically finished, an abject lesson in what happens to those who speak out too strongly against white monopoly capital.

It was only after Marikana and the formation of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) that we were allowed to see a different Malema. Now out of the ANC, Malema became the greatest enemy of Jacob Zuma, and steadily found himself becoming a media darling as a result.

Malema’s attacks on the Gupta and Zuma families propelled him to becoming the strongest individual voice in the media landscape. But the day that Zuma goes and if Malema continues to be radical in his unapologetic

demand for the land to be returned, for key industries to be nationalised and for government to come clean on how it sold out the people, then you will suddenly see all of his dirty laundry being aired again. The finest investigative journalists this country has to offer will once again start combing through every financial transaction he has ever made, until they get something to nail him on. For now, though, they still consider him useful and the prying eyes of a team like AmaBhungane will continue to focus its attentions on the Gupta Leaks.

On the subject of AmaBhungane, there's a lot about it that we don't understand or appreciate. It's one of those things you need to understand the background of before getting too excited about it.

AmaBhungane is funded by billionaire Hungarian-American hedge-fund broker George Soros, who, it is estimated, has given as much as \$18 billion to his causes that promote neoliberal economics around the world. Around the time I was writing this there were numerous articles on conservative websites in the US alleging that Soros had in fact moved this vast wealth to his Open Society Foundations as part of an elaborate tax-avoidance scheme.

That aside, true or not, the main purpose of these donations had for many years been Soros' fight against communism. The 87-year-old is credited with playing a significant role in the peaceful transition from communism to capitalism in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s and I have no doubt played a role in South Africa's transition to democracy too, though less is known about that.

Today, he's hated by Republicans and nationalists alike. Russia has no love for him.

Soros continues to use his "philanthropic" organisations, the Open Society Foundation and Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa to promote the liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation of the South African economy. Both of them fund AmaBhungane, to the point that its journalists are secure in the knowledge that they don't have to worry, like most other investigative journalists in South Africa, that their company needs to make a profit in order for them to stay employed.

In an era of shrinking newsrooms and the laying off of senior journalists as print media struggles to keep itself profitable, organisations like AmaBhungane must seem like the saviours of journalism (and therefore democracy), and an essential bulwark against the decay of the fourth estate.

AmaBhungane has done award-winning investigations and will continue to produce the kind of in-depth journalism others will only be able to envy.

But one also cannot lose sight of its liberal, global-investor-friendly agenda. It is an obvious player in the ongoing battle for power in South Africa, with those favouring an economic balance of power seeking to keep politicians as powerless as possible, and the business community as powerful as possible.

Soros has made billions through speculating on international currencies. He is famous for being the “The Man Who Broke the Bank of England” because of his short sale 1992 of \$10 billion worth of pound sterling, making him a profit of \$1 billion during the Black Wednesday UK currency crisis.

A large part of his fortune has come from betting on currencies in this way. During the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the then Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir bin Mohamad, accused him of bringing down the nation’s currency through trading, and in Thailand he was called an “economic war criminal”.

To think that he has not also been profiting, or at least attempting to profit, from the fluctuations of the rand would be naive. So the “saviour of investigative journalism in South Africa” may not actually be the saviour of South Africa.

Soros is despised by nationalists in Europe, who have identified him as one of the chief faces of the new global order. The Republicans in the US despise him for lobbying to reduce the US’s influence on the global stage and increase the power of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The Russians have long accused him and his organisations of being a CIA front.

Whatever you may think of him, he is an ally for white monopoly capital in South Africa and the work of AmaBhungane and other groups like it have had a profound impact on the character of our media.

What started as the investigative arm of the *Mail & Guardian* is today an independent investigative group that partners with almost all the big media companies in South Africa, who are only too happy to publish the free, high-quality content provided by AmaBhungane (often for free), to the point that it's nearly impossible not to see these stories whenever they are released.

AmaBhungane is only one cog in the greater media machine in South Africa, but it sets and maintains a tone that has long been the dominant one in the country, to the point that most of us are just so used to it that we take it for granted. Here are some of the dominant features of our media narrative today:

- It is primarily the corruption or alleged corruption of black people, black-owned businesses and black organisations that matters most. We hardly ever read about the corruption, financial crimes or otherwise of whites, unless it is somehow linked to a “controversial” black person or targets the ANC, particularly Jacob Zuma.
- Even when a story about clear malfeasance in the white-dominated private sector emerges, it tends to fade from focus and attention quite quickly. The World Cup stadium collusion story that cost taxpayers billions and was an indictment of the white-owned construction cartels made headlines for a short time and is now almost all-but forgotten. Very few people would be able to name even one white individual whose reputation was permanently scarred by those stories.
- When a black person shows off their wealth and status they are often treated with suspicion by the media. When an ultra-privileged white person continues with a life of splendour, this is basically just considered completely normal and hardly worth a second glance.
- Anything to do with the West and particularly the West's financial systems is accepted as the norm. Business deals with Russia, China and India are treated with suspicion.

It was an incredible coincidence that in the week in which this book was being finished up, the Steinhoff scandal was dominating the headlines.

It was by far the biggest corporate financial disaster in South African

business history, and somewhere in the region of R300 billion in value had been lost by Steinhoff and associated companies by the time I wrote this.

The CEO, Markus Jooste, was suddenly the subject of scornful columns and insight articles all over the media. He was lampooned for his love of racehorses and his home in Hermanus that looked like a “vulgar compound”.

It resulted in refreshing commentary from columnist’s like Tom Eaton, who acknowledged that “the middle class and media, always so quick to unload both barrels at state corruption, tend to go easy on dirty corporates. White crooks, they claim, make ‘mistakes’, while black ones are ‘corrupt thieves’.

“This tendency is real, and comes, I think, from the belief that state corruption and private sector fraud are materially different things with dramatically different victims.”

But in reality, he acknowledged that was not true and the R12 billion that had already been lost to the Government Employees Pension Fund by Jooste’s mistake demonstrated that “public and private money is inextricably linked: when some is dirty, it’s all dirty. To defend corporate corruption as somehow less harmful is a curious form of denial that helps nobody”.

“Markus Jooste and his colleagues at Steinhoff just cost our pensioners 50 Nkandlas and 400 Brian Molefes.”

Although much of this was fair comment, it did not go far enough. It failed to acknowledge that what has happened with Steinhoff is far from a special case. They just happened to get caught.

We’ll see what will ultimately happen with this case and whether any of the corporate criminals who have been involved in it will have to spend any time in jail. They probably will. The case is just too high-profile and the victims simply too plentiful to allow Jooste and co to get off with a fine and some or other deal with the prosecution.

However, I still wouldn’t be surprised if that’s what ends up happening. And I also wouldn’t be surprised if, within a few weeks of this story dominating our headlines, we will soon be back to worrying about the Guptas again and

the names Steinhoff and Markus Jooste will start to fade from memory quite quickly.

Hopefully not, but I wouldn't be one bit surprised if it does.

## Corruption charges

While I was writing this book, in the final few days before it was sent to the printers, a story broke that some journalists described as an early Christmas present to South Africans.

The High Court in Pretoria ruled that the appointment of Advocate Shaun Abrahams by President Zuma as the national director of public prosecutions (NDPP) was set aside. Judge Dunstan Mlambo found that that due to his pending corruption case, Zuma was conflicted in appointing an NDPP. He made the further surprising ruling that it would now be up to the deputy president, Cyril Ramaphosa, to appoint a new NDPP within 60 days.

Freedom Under Law, Corruption Watch and the Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution had gone to the high court seeking an order declaring the removal of the previous NDPP, Mxolisi Nxasana, invalid.

Nxasana had accepted a golden handshake from Zuma worth R17.3 million before leaving the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) in 2015. He later said he wanted his job back and was willing to return the money.

During the hearing, as *News24* put it, “the court heard that Zuma tried to ‘bully’ Nxasana out of office by using an inquiry into his fitness”.

Zuma’s lawyers immediately appealed the judgment, pointing out that nowhere in the constitution or elsewhere in South African legislation had provision ever been made for a court to make a ruling on who a president can and cannot hire as the head of the NPA.

It will probably drag on yet again as part of a case that has haunted South

Africa now for more than a dozen years. And almost anyone you speak to about the matter appears to have no doubt that Zuma has been guilty of corruption for all this time and can simply consider himself lucky that he's not in jail. The celebrations that Ramaphosa was no doubt going to appoint someone who would make the prosecution of Zuma his or her highest priority, and you could just hear the cheers from people in their suburban homes throughout South Africa.

Finally, Zuma might get his day in court.

At this point, I must admit that I'll also be relieved to see Zuma show up the flimsiness of the case that was so desperately built against him during Mbeki's second term as president. But I can also understand his desire to want to avoid being turned into the sacrificial lamb for the entire arms deal.

By now, many people can barely even remember what the details of the case originally were. Most people just know it's about "783 corruption charges" against Zuma, and it sounds mighty bad. As I understand it, it's technically 18 corruption charges, among with there are 783 separate counts, but that's probably just the old bank robber in me – who spent a lot of his wasted youth sitting in courtrooms – talking.

We were, however, reminded of some of the facts when the then editor of *The Citizen*, Steve Motale, caused an uproar in 2015 when he unexpectedly ran an open letter to President Zuma apologising to him.

It was discussed for months afterwards and eventually led to Steve being fired by *The Citizen* in 2017, who considered him "captured". For most of that time Steve had been slated and name-called by the paper's readers, and *The Citizen* took a big knock in circulation. They particularly incurred the ire of some of their traditional white audience.

Much speculation followed about what may have motivated such a once-staunch anti-Zuma critic to make so dramatic an about-face. He hasn't been the first journalist to flip-flop on Zuma, but he certainly became the most well-known of those who have changed their mind. While most journalists in the employ of white monopoly capital have steadily hardened their position against Zuma, even if some of them were pro-Zuma decades ago, Steve

swam upstream.

Few gave the man any credit for even the possibility that he had actually had a change of heart and, perhaps, even a crisis of conscience after learning about some of the truths of Zuma's story and the campaigns against him.

The predominant consensus that seemed to emerge against Steve Motale was that he had probably been bribed, threatened or offered some sort of deal in return for his "recantation".

It's a pity, because he meant it honestly. White monopoly capital-owned media houses, however, did not take kindly to one of their own breaking ranks so spectacularly. Editors at other newspapers felt betrayed and Steve was treated as a joke.

He knew that was going to happen to him, but he went ahead and wrote his apology anyway.

In that very long letter, Steve went back to the time in 2005 when Durban High Court Judge Hilary Squires found Schabir Shaik, Zuma's financial adviser, guilty of corruption and fraud.

As Steve put it: "Shaik was sentenced to 15 years in jail. But Squires' verdict [and the media's misreporting on the judge saying Shaik and Zuma were in a 'generally corrupt relationship'] had an unintended consequence: it allowed Thabo Mbeki to fire Zuma and cast him out into the political wilderness. At the time, everyone, myself included, thought that was finally the moment we had all been waiting for; the moment the ANC would start to clean up its own house. We thought, at last, that there would consequences in the ANC from now on for wrongdoing.

"This, we thought, was the ANC we had always wanted, the one we always dearly hoped we'd get, because if even a deputy president was not safe from betraying the nation's trust, then no one could be."

Steve then dared to once again remind South Africa that the judge had never, in fact, ever said there was a "generally corrupt relationship" between Shaik and Zuma. In 2006, after more than a year had passed, the judge made a

public statement clarifying that he had indeed made no ruling or finding whatsoever on Zuma's corruption or lack of it, as Zuma had not been the one on trial.

Squires' judgment, if you read it, actually goes to great pains to point out that there was no evidence offered to him at any point that Zuma had actually acted improperly in reciprocation of Shaik's payments to him.

Despite the fact that there have been numerous reports over the years correcting the mistake, another veteran journalist, Max du Preez, was still repeating this same untruth in a column at the end of 2014. Du Preez referred to the "overriding corrupt relationship", a phrase that was uttered in the Supreme Court of Appeal.

Steve wrote of Du Preez: "Even the once-celebrated Max du Preez found himself so deeply married to the myth of the 'generally corrupt relationship' that he left the Independent Group in a blaze of righteous indignation this year when his employers attempted to apologise on his behalf for repeating the lie in a column."

Du Preez, by the way, still believes he was right to give new life to the old lie.

As Steve wrote: "You'd think that a judge taking the time to clarify his own ruling would be enough, but it wasn't. Barely anyone even bothers to remember that he did that. And by the time the judge said it, the damage was already done. Zuma had been fired, setting in play all the elements for his machine gun dance to the Union Buildings.

Steve added: "Zuma was fired for a case in which he was not found guilty and his guilt was not even relevant."

Much of the criticism against *The Citizen's* editor came from the deep suspicion that has taken root in our society that, surely, Zuma was corrupt and is still corrupt.

In perhaps the most extraordinary expression of this sentiment, Richard Poplak wrote in a diatribe against Steve Motale that came out shortly after the

latter's open letter: "By the very nature of governing South Africa, Zuma gets a free ride. By the very nature of governing South Africa, Zuma is corrupt."

That comment is fascinating because it came from one of South Africa's premier journalists and was a stunning syllogism that goes as follows: "All those who govern South Africa are corrupt. Zuma governs South Africa. Therefore Zuma is corrupt."

By that logic, therefore, any president (or perhaps any government worker whatsoever) should be prosecuted for corruption within weeks of taking office (or perhaps it takes a little longer for the corruption teabag to brew?).

By Poplak's logic, it is impossible for South Africa to have any leader who is not corrupt. The only way to ensure there's no corruption would, in this closet anarchist's view, perhaps then be to ensure we have no leaders and no government whatsoever.

We wouldn't have much of a country to speak of then either, but, hey, guess you can't have everything.

Steve also wrote: "One can only speculate on the kind of president Zuma may have been had he not had to combat not only the infighting and divisions in the ANC (most notably the faction that ensured he was fired in the first place), but the media's vilification of him too."

It emerged after his firing by Mbeki that Jacob Zuma had been under investigation by the Scorpions for nine years. Few politicians alive would be able to emerge unscathed from an intense nine-year investigation led by a well-resourced anti-corruption unit. He had been a clear target for a very long time, and when he was fired the case against Shaik finally offered the bullet in the gun that Mbeki and Zuma's other enemies appeared to have been looking for all along.

It was not the strongest of grounds to fire a man, but Zuma obviously just had to go.

And that is the primary problem with the corruption case against Jacob Zuma that has dragged on now for a dozen years. It's a point that is hardly ever

acknowledged by almost any recognised commentator working for private media, despite that it should be a very obvious fact: Jacob Zuma was prosecuted not because the South African state was going all out to crack down on corruption in the arms deal or because monitoring the behaviour of state officials in case they do anything wrong – so that they can then be prosecuted for it – was normal and routine.

What was done in the case of Zuma was far from normal in the South African context. Much like what had happened to Tony Yengeni, who was ultimately imprisoned for accepting a suspicious discount on a Mercedes-Benz, that kind of consequence and accountability was largely absent when it came to most other officials in the ANC.

Most of us know that Yengeni was made to pay a heavy price for the fact that he did not declare to parliament the discount he received on the car through the help of Daimler-Chrysler Aerospace. What fewer people can remember was that 31 others also received the same discounts, but nothing happened to them. The difference was that, like Zuma, Yengeni was beginning to operate outside of the acceptable limits and was asking too many unwelcome questions about the poor deal the ANC had agreed to at Codesa.

For that, he needed to be discredited. For that, he had to go. And who better to turn into a scapegoat so that the rest could sleep easy.

The idea that only Jacob Zuma may have had a few drops of money flying in his direction from the billions that were being splashed around by the arms deal companies is patently ridiculous.

Not for one moment am I condoning the arms deal and the decision to pursue it that began under Nelson Mandela with the guidance of Thabo Mbeki and continued under Mbeki's reign. But it's high time we begin to question why only Jacob Zuma, Schabir Shaik and Tony Yengeni have ever had to endure one uncomfortable day as a result of this deal with arms manufacturers from the same countries who were part of our oppression in the struggle.

No one else has had a single charge proffered against them. No one else, Mbeki included, has ever so much as conceded that anything suspicious was ever going on. Mbeki was even able to utter the most extraordinary double

speak in 2016 when he told the *Mail & Guardian*: “I still don’t understand for the life of me why anyone is saying [Tony Yengeni’s prison sentence] had anything to do with the defence procurement.” This despite the fact that Yengeni’s 50% Mercedes discount had been taken while he was head of parliament’s portfolio committee on defence.

Somehow Mbeki could not see anything suspicious in the fact that Daimler-Chrysler Aerospace owned 33% of Reutech Radar Systems, which in 1999 won a R220 million contract as part of the arms deal.

Mbeki also strongly denied that Shaik’s conviction could have had anything to do with the arms deal because, by 2005 when Shaik was convicted, the deal had already been signed.

He was quoted in the *Mail & Guardian* by veteran political journalist Carien du Plessis as saying: “Whatever it is they say, Schabir and [French arms company] Thales had absolutely, absolutely, absolutely no relationship with the processing of this agreement for the defence procurement – its negotiation, its conclusion, its signing, absolutely nothing,” he said.

“It is not in the least connected to the defence procurement, but why do we then say this proves corruption? I don’t know.”

When I first came across this interview last year, I was genuinely gobsmacked. Many others read it but apparently missed the huge implication of Mbeki’s words. He was obviously trying to defend the arms deal and deflect any more criticism from whether he had ever been party to a corrupt deal, but his admission brought with it a curious admission by implication.

He was effectively telling South Africa that he had been completely wrong to fire Jacob Zuma as deputy president of South Africa in 2005. If Mbeki was aware, as he now so freely admits to being aware, that whatever money was paid to Zuma through Shaik could not possibly have had any effect on the arms procurement deal, then there was also no possible way that Zuma could have acted in a corrupt way even if he had tried. And if that was the case, well then, there should have been no possible way in which Mbeki could have felt justified in firing his old struggle comrade.

But that's not how it went down. Apparently based strongly on the media reports that Zuma and Shaik had a "generally corrupt relationship" as well as the apparent certainty Mbeki appeared to have that Zuma would have to face a criminal case and inevitable prosecution, he told parliament on 14 June 2005 that in light of the pending "further legal processes" ... "as president of the republic I have come to the conclusion that the circumstances dictate that in the interests of the honourable deputy president, the government, our young democratic system, and our country, it would be best to release the honourable Jacob Zuma from his responsibilities as deputy president of the republic and member of the cabinet".

However, based on what Mbeki now admits to knowing, he must have realised at the time (at least in his own opinion) that Zuma was completely innocent. Why, then, did he not act on the courage of that conviction and stand by Jacob Zuma instead of casting him out into the cold or allowing him to be cast out?

A man of such great certainty and conviction would surely have stood up and told the nation: "Schabir Shaik and the French arms company Thales had absolutely, absolutely, absolutely no relationship with the processing of this agreement for the defence procurement – its negotiation, its conclusion, its signing, absolutely nothing," he said.

"It is not in the least connected to the defence procurement, but why do we then say this proves corruption? I don't know.

"I therefore, as the president of the republic, can confidently say that I firmly believe no possible allegation of corruption against the honourable deputy president Jacob Zuma has any chance of succeeding in court and that the police and prosecuting authority are engaging in a fruitless exercise that will merely burden the taxpayer and abuse the resources of the criminal justice system. However, they should investigate as they see fit, despite their negligible odds of success.

"Myself and my government will, however, continue to back this esteemed veteran of the struggle through this unjustifiable storm, and he will continue to work in the role he fulfils so well, as deputy president in my cabinet."

That is the speech of the kind of man in 2016 who was so convinced that no corruption could have occurred. But that's not what happened.

Zuma was instead hounded out of office and, to this day, is having to counter the unremitting public narrative that has in effect already long pronounced him guilty on all 783 counts of corruption and fraud. But deep down, we know the truth. We know that there were many others in Mbeki's cabinet with corruption skeletons to hide, or the mere suggestion of allegation worth facing.

They, too, should have been identified, fired and prosecuted. Then we would have been able to say today with great conviction that Zuma was never singled out, that he was not the victim of political interference and that he was indeed targeted by the Scorpions and the National Prosecuting Authority on the basis of his alleged misdeeds, and not simply because he needed to be prevented from becoming the next president of South Africa.

But we cannot say that. Because what happened to Tony Yengeni was not enough, because he, too, was clearly singled out for special attention when he had been only one beneficiary of 32. To this day, including in the terms of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, many MPs have been non-observant in strictly declaring all benefits received. Many have skirted the rules, or ignored them completely, and yet we can point only to Tony Yengeni as an isolated case of an MP being punished for it.

Shaik, Yengeni and Zuma. Those were the casualties, and yet many, many unanswered questions about the arms deal remain.

For example, Corruption Watch has asked the question around arms deal supplier MAN Ferrostaal – which was part of the German consortium that won the submarine contract – later hired a well-known US law firm to figure out its legal risks worldwide. Their 2011 report found the company had paid \$40 million to gain “political access” to support its South African bid.

“These political contacts were afterwards considered to have had a ‘decisive influence’ on their success.” Ferrostaal has to release the report, but it was leaked and can be viewed easily online.

Corruption Watch also pointed out that British Aerospace (BAE), which won the contract for the Hawk and Gripen fighter aircraft was charged by the US State Department for violating its arms export regulations when it used an unregulated and covert offshore company that operated with specific “intent to circumvent the normal payments reviews”) and middlemen all over the world, including in South Africa.

“Rather than face these charges, BAE settled – agreeing to pay \$79 million as a penalty.”

BAE has also pled guilty to “knowingly and wilfully failing to prevent and detect corruption and bribery in its operations, as well as conspiring to impede the related US investigations. It was found to have been aware of the ‘high probability’ that its payments would be used to influence foreign government procurement decisions. It was made to pay a criminal fine of \$400 million.

The UK Serious Fraud Office (SFO) also investigated BAE’s use of agents and secret commissions worldwide, again including South Africa. Leaked documents include details on £103 million in covert payments to BAE agents in South Africa – including R280 million paid to Fana Hlongwane, the then defence minister Joe Modise’s special adviser.

“The SFO could find no substantial work done by Hlongwane that could justify such payments.”

When you consider the sheer scale of misdeeds that a serious, wide-scale investigation by the Scorpions may have uncovered, it’s likely that what happened between Jacob Zuma and Schabir Shaik would have looked like a full stop at the end of a 1 000-page book.

It’s obvious that Shaik was benefiting from the arms deal, and passing some of that money on to Zuma for whatever reasons he may have had. But this relationship represented an opportunity to nail Zuma by whatever means necessary, and, for a time, it worked. But Zuma is a fighter; he is a survivor. And he was there in Polokwane in December 2017 to accept the mantle of ANC president a year and a half after the world had completely written him off – and his many enemies must have convinced themselves that they need

not worry about Zuma ever again.

But Msholozzi had only been getting started.

His enemies realised they would need to up their game, even if that meant murder.

We speak of state capture today as if it's something that came along with the rise of the Guptas.

But we saw state capture at its finest, at its most dangerous, when we had the Scorpions ruthlessly pursuing the political objective of destroying Jacob Zuma, in effect trying to nail him to the wall as though he was some sort of Al Capone. None of the defenders of democracy in civil society or opposition politics ever seemed bothered by the evidence that Mbeki's administration had abused power to target one of their own.

Instead, we see the Democratic Alliance today still using these discredited charges to try to drag their target into a courtroom and embarrass him even more than anything he's already had to endure.

After his 2005 firing, attempts to find further evidence against Zuma were deemed illegal and in 2008, Judge Chris Nicholson set aside the decision to prosecute.

But still, the opposition has kept coming, cynically using a case that goes to the heart of a factional split in the ANC to make themselves look like the defenders of clean government, justice and truth.

They can only go after Zuma though, because they lack any power and agency to effect true change or accountability on their own. As a noisy opposition, they have only been able to buzz around the festering wound in Jacob Zuma's side that was first inflicted by government agencies doing the bidding of Thabo Mbeki.

We appear to have conveniently forgotten that, at the end of November 2004, when news broke that Zuma was being investigated for allegedly having solicited a bribe through Shaik from the French arms company Thales, one of

the questions investigators wanted answered was whether Zuma had met with the CEO of the company's South African subsidiary, Thint, in 1998, to discuss any bribes. Shaik also owned a stake in Thint through his own company.

The allegation being made was made that, for R500 000 a year, Zuma was supposedly expected to protect the company from allegations of corruption in the tender process. Zuma was therefore being accused of taking bribes for the express purpose of saying that no bribes ever happened.

A letter was indeed later written to the parliamentary standing committee on public accounts to allay concerns that Thint was involved in any corruption. However, we later learnt that Mbeki himself had written this letter, and Zuma had only signed it.

Mbeki was the one who had actually also met with the arms company concerned. Although he seemed to forget about doing this, ambassador to France Barbara Masekela reminded Mbeki of his meeting with Thales, which took place in December 1998, the year before the arms deal was signed.

Zuma has often suggested that when it comes to Thint kickbacks, or anything else relating to the arms deal, Mbeki is the person who should be asked most of these questions, since he was the man who negotiated the arms deal in the first place. However, when Mbeki was finally placed on the stand in the middle of 2014 to testify in the Arms Procurement Commission headed by Judge Willie Seriti, it degenerated into a farce.

As the *Daily Maverick* reported it, Mbeki "calmly told the commission ... it was all above board and in accordance with the constitution, which mandates the state to provide for defence".

Mbeki was deputy president when the procurement process began, and was the president when the deal was signed.

Evidence leader Advocate Paul Hoffman tried, during Mbeki's testimony, to establish that the late former defence minister Joe Modise was linked to allegations of corruption and could also be tied closely to Mbeki. But Mbeki simply answered him that there had never been any concrete evidence of any

bribery having taken place in 16 years.

The day ended with most of us having learnt little more about the secretive arms deal. To add to the futility of it, Mbeki's questioning closed off with Advocate Hoffman in tears and apologising to Mbeki for "irritating him". Nice, right?

And what about Max du Preez's insistence that he had been perfectly justified in writing in 2014, nine years after he should have known better, that a judge had indeed said there was a "corrupt relationship" between Zuma and Shaik?

The website Akanyanga Africa did an analysis of it concluded that Du Preez had simply been misrepresenting the findings of the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA).

No court of law or judge has actually ever found there to have been any "corrupt relationship" between Zuma and Shaik.

In his column, Max Du Preez wrote: "...the after-effects of [Zuma's] corrupt relationship (in the words of a judge) with his financial adviser, the debt he owed to those who put him in power and his obvious view that he was more of an African chief than the president of a modern democracy led him on a different path".

Zuma then complained about the personal attack on him and asked for an apology for the factual error.

But Du Preez refused to apologise, basing this on the fact that the SCA had actually found in 2006 that there was a "sustained corrupt relationship over the years" between the two men.

The registrar of the SCA was later forced to correct a further error in the court's judgment, admitting that the "SCA erred in ascribing the words 'a generally corrupt relationship' to the trial court" and these quoted words had "incorrectly and regrettably" been ascribed to Judge Squires when in fact this should not have been the case.

The then Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi slammed the court, saying: “Instead of going through Squires’ judgment line by line, the Supreme Court merely parroted newspaper editorials. The five of them clearly must go. If they can do this in such a high-profile case, imagine what they do to ordinary, poor people.”

All those years later, when Max du Preez repeated the inaccuracy, his bosses decided to apologise on his behalf for “perpetuating a factual inaccuracy”, whereupon Du Preez promptly quit and was warmly welcomed into the welcoming arms of *News24*.

And that’s where they’ve been continuing with a “mutually inaccurate relationship” ever since.

It’s true that corruption is a cancer that has been eating at the heart of South Africa for years. We cannot wish it away or pretend that we couldn’t have done far better.

But we need to stop pretending that this wild goose chase against Zuma is ever going to bring us any closer to fighting the real corruption in our society, which starts around many boardroom tables in this country as well as the offices of political parties and government. We need to understand that the entire financial system we have signed up for is corrupt at its heart, and the challenge is far greater than we ever realised.

## Aftermath

No book about how President Jacob Zuma has been targeted would be complete without discussing the Nkandla scandal. The revelations that emerged in the years after Zuma's ascent to the presidency about how millions had been spent on non-security upgrades to his private home are by now well known and often don't make for pretty reading.

There's not much that can be said in its defence, and if anything ever had the potential to see Zuma unseated from power prematurely, it has always been Nkandla.

We first heard that something was going on when Chris Roper and the now late Mandy Rossouw accidentally stumbled on the Nkandla development in November of 2009, months after Zuma's inauguration.

They discovered architectural drawings taped to a wall in a prefab building showing that big plans were in the pipeline. Rossouw estimated that the cost of the expansions to the Zuma family homestead would come in at R65 million, which a source told them would probably increase, and with taxpayers expected to pick up the majority of the tab.

What followed was years of official denials and spin. The final cost came in at R206 million and most of what was paid for ended up being hugely inflated.

In the two years prior to the 2014 election, the impact of the scandal was being felt so keenly by the ANC that many were wondering whether the ruling party would feel confident enough to even keep Zuma as their presidential candidate. While other political parties were putting up posters of their leaders' faces all over the country, the ANC conspicuously continued to

put up generic posters featuring the ANC's logo. Of course, in the end, Zuma's face was plastered all over the country and the ANC managed to get more than 62% of the votes, confounding most of the analysts' expectations of an even bigger drop and disappointing the opposition.

I was even surprised myself, as I had also run against the ANC with my own new political party, the Patriotic Alliance. Like other opposition parties, I'd even mentioned Nkandla as a reason to encourage ANC voters to cast their ballots my way, but the damage of the scandal was minimal for the ANC. Most of their voters were not feeling a sense of outrage at tax rands building a swimming pool, amphitheatre, cattle kraal, tuck shop, guest houses, chicken run, visitors' centre and so on for the president.

That does not excuse what happened. It was a scandal, and rightly so. You may think I can see no wrong in Jacob Zuma, but that is not the case and, as I've said before, the purpose of this book is not meant to serve as an apologia for the president or make out that he is some sort of perpetually noble saint who's being martyred for the cause.

He is no saint, and his motives are not always selfless or pure. But the simple fact is that Zuma is a cunning politician who has outmanoeuvred some of the smartest people who've come sidling his way. It's hard to imagine anyone else having been able to ascend to the presidency against the odds that were mounted against him at that NEC meeting of 1991 and the palace coup that happened, and then the ignominy of his removal in 2005 by Thabo Mbeki's government.

I admit I am an admirer of the man on a personal, historical and even political level, and I respect his courage and intellect, but I have deep misgivings about many aspects of his government. Time and again, he has shown us that he prizes loyalty and trustworthiness from those who serve him above almost all other qualities, even if those "qualities" include competence, injudiciousness with budgets and finances, and a complete lack of accountability. Zuma has backed many ministers and other public officials who should have been replaced or even fired, and that has cost the country. Of that there can be little debate or argument.

But much of that can also be explained by his history in intelligence, when he

spent years doubting that those around him were who they professed to be. For those who he was sure were loyal to him, he has been loyal to in return, almost to a fault. A Zuma government with more consequences for corruption and public mismanagement would have been far more effective and less easily critiqued. It would have achieved far more than it has, but it's difficult for me to judge. I am not Zuma. I have not walked his path. I have never been a president of this country and had to balance myself in the maelstrom of forces that each pull and snap at the levels of power to get what they want.

So things have not panned out quite how I would have liked over Zuma's two terms in office, but let's not be too naive about why, either.

This is a man who has always known his many enemies are always coming for him. The Zuma administration is an example of what happens when a man ensures that the rank and file of his party are loaded with those he can rely on to back him when the chips are down and despite the fact that his own party continues to be riddled with men and women who collaborated with the former enemy. When, like Zuma, you know how many within your own party simply cannot be trusted to be who they say they are and to do what they commit to do, you will build your personal defences and assemble your defenders carefully to make it very difficult to be sideswiped, caught unawares, and removed like a fool.

From where I stand, the ANC sold us out at Codesa and that has always raised a question mark over how much we should continue to trust our "liberators". I myself am no longer an ANC member. I do not know whether the ANC will ever be able to take us out of this mess we are in, but it's difficult to find alternatives. I established my own party in the hope of finding a real alternative, but political ideology is easy. Revolution, even reform, is hard.

I am moved every time I look at a clip of Chris Hani when he explained in an interview how no one even consulted with him – the leader of the armed struggle – as to whether it was time to stop the fight and begin talks with FW de Klerk.

That man had been fighting in Umkhonto weSizwe for more than 27 years.

“I spent the best part of my life in an armed struggle against this regime. I was angry and bitter that this decision was taken without comprehensive consultation.

Hani spoke bitterly of the many young faces of those who had been killed by the “regime of terror in Pretoria”, and how many of them he had personally seen dying. He was haunted by their sacrifice.

“I know the names. I know the faces. I know how these young people put aside everything in life to concentrate in the fight against white domination.”

Hani tried to rationalise it, telling himself: “Probably it was the right decision ... but why was it that there was no widespread consultation with those who were actually involved in the physical side of the actual armed struggle?

“But like a disciplined soldier, a disciplined member of the movement, I had to understand that the decision had been taken and I had to understand that decision.

“And when it was explained that it was important to maintain the momentum of negotiations, I was ready to be reined in to explain it to other comrades. And I did it.”

He said he found a way to suppress his “own strong views” and “accept the views of the majority in the leadership”.

In perhaps the deepest irony of all, it was the assassination of this very same Chris Hani in 1993 that was used as the most pressing excuse to speed up negotiations and deliver the Faustian compromise under which we exist today.

So this book is not meant to be about whether Zuma is a blameless soul and whether all the decisions he has taken as a president and all his actions as the president are above reproach. I doubt they could be.

It’s about something far more interesting. It asks the simple question: why is removing Zuma so important to those who own and manage our economy? Why is every possible scandal, every unguarded comment, inflated to world-

changing proportions, while great efforts are gone to to shovel dirt over anything that could make another powerful ANC leader, Cyril Ramaphosa, look bad?

That's what makes Zuma, his life and his troubles such an interesting topic for me. He is not the man big business chose as "their man".

That is why I have written this book. I need people to take note of what has happened to a president who did not play precisely by the rules and micro-rules of what big business would have expected.

Arguably, Zuma has actually done very little to hurt, threaten or endanger what I refer to in various places in this book by different names but which is essentially the same thing: white monopoly capital, big business, privately owned media, the corporatocracy, the Bretton Woods institutions, big multinationals, huge conglomerates, the plutocracy, the Randlords, the Broederbond, the Stellenbosch Mafia, fat capitalists, you name it. We all have an idea in one form or the other of what I'm talking about.

No, Zuma has largely allowed big business to continue on its merry way. A near-omnipresent firm like Bidvest and the 300 companies it controls have simply continued to expand and acquire more assets, profits and value. The big auditing companies have continued with all their tax trickery, offshoring schemes, money laundering, bribes and influence peddling. The big investment and advisory firms have been allowed to continue with their stranglehold on state spending. The huge monopolies that exist in our handsomely profitable sectors of retail, banking, construction, finance, food, recreation, accommodation, tourism, mining, fishing, farming, processing, manufacturing in all its forms, maintenance, infrastructure ... you name it, under Zuma they have simply been allowed to continue to get state contracts, to corner the market and to make more money for their shareholders than they ever dreamt could have been possible under apartheid.

Zuma has also generally allowed the massive pretence of black economic empowerment to shield the super wealthy from criticism, even though we see the same black names over and over, on board after board; we see the same lucky few becoming billionaires many times over, and these names must now supposedly lead us to accept the lie that black people are now an inextricable

part of this economy.

Under Zuma, all of that has been allowed, and more. You could argue that the plutocracy has actually been less than grateful for the benign disregard Zuma has expressed towards them in allowing an economy whose structure and commanding heights remain largely untransformed.

Zuma, sadly, has mostly continued the doctrine of reconciliation and nation building that was born under Mandela, and the result has been that South Africa has remained a neoliberal economy with weakly protected trade borders and a financial system prone to offshoring and the inexorable flow of wealth out of these lands into the pockets of the superwealthy. He's done little to reform this or change it, and yet he has become a target anyway.

The fact that he's finally amplified the volume on the need for radical economic transformation has also put the cat among the pigeons. That he's done so relatively late into his second term probably has much to do with the fact that he had always been fighting so many battles on so many fronts, from the personal fact that he's simply needed to stay out of jail to the ongoing political machinations contriving to unseat him, that the idea of taking on the lords of the JSE was probably the last thing on his mind. Aside from the odd comment or complaint about it from time to time, one may have been forgiven for thinking he was truly oblivious to the challenge.

But he finally reached a point where his enemies had basically done their worst. He began to speak openly of radical economic transformation and in particular the need to reform and transform white monopoly capital. He had always promised us he would eventually reveal some of the ANC's many secrets once he was out of power, and the campaign to discredit him has only gathered pace as a result.

It's curious, when you think about his presidency, just how little Zuma has been allowed to do or change when it came to anything business perceived as a move by the president to change the balance of economic power in this country.

His removal of Nhlanhla Nene as finance minister precipitated the complete meltdown of the rand. His conflict with Pravin Gordhan was presented by the

privately owned media as nothing less than a battle between the forces of good and evil. Mostly, a lot of the negative attention came down to the fact that he was linked too closely to the Guptas and others whose gold-leafed names do not adorn the wood-panelled walls of exclusive country clubs throughout South Africa.

So they hate Zuma, but the truth is that this same corporatocracy may find itself missing him when he's gone. If ever he is replaced by someone whose revolutionary, radical fire is still burning strongly in his or her chest, then we will see what the corporate masters of South Africa are really made of. We may then see the reality of how much they have truly stolen from us in their collusion and power broking.

I doubt that such a person would last long, though. That's not the way the world works, and Zuma's continued survival is probably also thanks to the fact that he has backtracked on those critical occasions when it seemed he might finally be taking charge of the economy, whatever his motives for doing so may have been – good or evil, selfish or selfless, reformatory or simply acquisitive.

He reversed his decision to appoint Des van Rooyen as the finance minister. Brian Molefe was also eventually not given the job as head of Treasury despite most of us thinking it was a near certainty.

So Zuma cannot, even now, be labelled a clear enemy of capitalism and its continued interests. They're still not sure though. They've never been comfortable. The markets need certainty. They need someone they can bank on. They need "their man", the one who was handpicked to rise to the top from the start.

Mbeki may not have been business' first choice, but Zuma was way down that particular list. The fact that he's still in charge in 2017 must be a mystery to the corporatocracy that they still can't quite fathom. He's still there despite more bad publicity than you can dream up, despite assassination attempts, despite motion after motion of no confidence in parliament. He's still there despite a concerted effort to raise a rebellion against him from within his own party who are so clearly more aligned to "pro-business policies".

That, and that alone, is what has made him so interesting for me. And I truly do hope that he does survive until 2019, is able to step down and reveal some of the deeper secrets and truths he has been sitting on for so long. The country deserves to hear it, to be brought into his confidence.

I know about much of it, but I am not Zuma. It should come from him, and hopefully we will still be able to believe this man whose credibility has been left in such tatters by the hostile media, when he finally speaks.

Because his is a story of an unacknowledged South African tragedy, of the comrades who were fighting the good fight during the struggle to reach a genuine victory, but who fell at the final hurdle and have been tied up in knots by the very same victory ribbon they were meant to burst through in triumph.

But at least under Zuma the policy of black industrialists, which has seen the funding and establishment of a new generation of black industrialists, not dependent on being invited to the master's table, has been established. At least, under Zuma, South Africa has aligned itself with Brics and the promise of major institutional financial change that can being.

So yes, Nkandla is a scandal and it cannot be brushed aside easily. Zuma was wrong to trust that the security upgrades being made to a homestead at which his childhood sweetheart MaKhumalo had been gang raped years before were being done in a manner that would protect him from ultimately having to apologise to the nation.

He was wrong to trust that the architect entrusted with managing the project would not skim money off the top; that costs would not escalate without justification; that the workmanship would not be shoddy, with corners cut to ensure the enrichment of those doing the work; that houses for security guards would not be built kilometres away for unnecessary millions.

I don't know what Zuma knew and didn't know about all of this. To this day, the jury is still out as to whether he was simply misled by state officials hoping to impress him with the building of a swimming pool and other amenities, or whether he actually asked for these things himself. We don't know if he was fine with the costs spiralling out of control while what was

actually being built for him and his family was of a poor quality.

It's hard to believe he would have agreed to that or wanted it. But let's leave that aside for the moment. This is not a book about Nkandla or the millions that taxpayers have lost to that debacle.

It's about the trillions we have lost in taxes we've never even seen. It's about the impoverishment of a country that is actually obscenely rich. We just don't know how rich it really is and the true extent to which we have been robbed blind, continue to be robbed blind and will ultimately be left completely blind to the theft of not just our past, but our future too.

## Dear black people

It's true that we got a raw deal, and now we need a new deal. But not the type of new deal that's being proposed by the people who brought us the raw deal in the first place.

We are the only nation who won a revolution and is still landless; we are one of the few nations who didn't get reparations from the nations and businesses who oppressed, maimed and killed our parents.

The people who brought us reconciliation without the means of surviving economically badly miscalculated if they thought our former oppressors would open their hearts and hands; most of our people barely survive today.

The people who are benefiting from the pension funds of our parents are the same ones who are terminating our jobs because they have offshored their profits instead of reinvesting them.

It's time for blacks to rise up and do something for themselves; the time to wait and see the result of what has been done for us is over; we have given our power away and then complain bitterly when whoever has been given our power doesn't deliver in the way we envisioned it.

It's time to educate ourselves. Education is key and vital to achieving what we have been singing about.

No economic freedom is possible without the land. The land is a non-negotiable. There is no rocket science attached to it.

The hardest truth we have to accept is that there will be no radical economic transformation without the land being threatened and losing value.

Ratings agencies are not on the side of the black child. We should just accept that.

We should also accept that things will get worse before they get better. Wake up now and imagine what it will feel like once all our minerals are gone. What will we have left then?

You don't need to go far. Look at Kimberley. It only has a giant hole with dirty water left for supposedly attracting tourism. All its shiny diamonds have long ago travelled over the waters to faraway countries.

We need to get together. Without unity there is no purpose. We need to identify the ones who have been planted among us to keep us fighting. We can build this country, white and black together, but we can't build it if I stay in a shack and you in a mansion that I still have to I clean for you.

Sandton is being turned into a mini Dubai with the pension moneys of the people of Alex who have been left in the desert.

We cannot blame whites forever. We have the power. We complain that the fees required to start a bank are too steep. So lower the fees or give money to banking entrepreneurs to start, but let there be a point of departure.

Two decades into democracy and we still have no 100%-black-owned major commercial bank. That cannot be right.

Wake up my people, do your bit for unity every day. Unity brings purpose and alignment. We can do this; we should do this.

Blacks can and should no longer be spectators of corporate wealth controlled by an elite who have never been our friends.

“The native is to be treated as a child and denied the franchise. We must adopt a system of despotism in our relations with the barbarians of South Africa.”

“I prefer land to niggers.”

“We must find new lands from which we can easily obtain raw materials and at the same time exploit the cheap slave labour that is available from the natives of the colonies. The colonies would also provide a dumping ground for the surplus goods produced in our factories.”

“I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race...What an alteration there would be if the Africans were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence.”

***Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902)***

– *British businessman, mining magnate and politician who served as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony from 1890 to 1896.*