



## **GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER? THEY GET AWAY WITH EVERYTHING!**

"More than two assassinations weekly in South Africa, with targets becoming ever more high-profile." This Daily Maverick (DM) headline (14.4.23) may have been a shocker some years ago, but not in today's South Africa. Only 14% of murder cases result in convictions in this country, so assassinating as a job seems a decidedly lucrative profession, with a very small downside.

Released this month, the report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) indicates, inter alia, how easily violence is paid for in South Africa. In 2022, GI-TOC recorded 141 assassinations in SA, an average of much more than two a week. The organisation says there are probably far more killings of this type because they only record cases reported in the media which are identified as hits, contract killings, taxi killings or assassinations. There are probably more that are unreported.

These executioners however do not appear to be your typical Eastern European hit squad, flying in and flying out without a trace. Instructions to kill people investigating SA government corruption, the whistleblowers who smell a rat and are starting to dig, or the official investigators who are "on the mark" and are proceeding to demand compensation and the return of the Porches and the beach houses, have become targets, and orders to "take them out" are not coming from the clerk at the front desk at the municipality. The instructions are from on high, whether local councillors whose terms of office have already made them rich and they want more, or from those in other branches of government who aspire to the good life, and no one is going to stand in their way.

The GI-TOC report found that the province of KZN was "notorious for supplying hit men to various other provinces and sometimes other countries". Scores of taxi owners have in less than a month been gunned down. Two of the more shocking hits have been the recent Saturday afternoon highway killing of Bosasa liquidator Cloete Murray and his son, and the gunning down of former member of Parliament and local Makopane attorney Schalk Pienaar in September 2022 in his front garden. Pienaar was investigating corruption in the local municipality. There had already been several arrests of high-ranking officials and business people in the town. Pienaar was a marked man!

Getting away with murder is a reality in South Africa. It is not a catchphrase. In fact getting away with almost everything is the modus vivendi in this dangerous country where there is no law and order to speak of, and where a casual attitude towards bringing people to book is commonplace.

A particular example is the case of the large amounts of foreign cash crammed into the back of furniture in the farmhouse Phala Phala, home of president Cyril Ramaphosa, in February 2020. A robbery occurred two years later after a servant discovered the cache, and a police officer in charge of the farm's security had allegedly kept the incident under wraps. It was not reported to the police at the time although the president disingenuously says that in reporting it to the police officer in charge of the farm's security, this was tantamount to reporting it to the police themselves.

When the story became public in 2022, former intelligence operative Arthur Fraser filed a complaint at the Rosebank police station in June of that year. In November 2022 a panel found that there was a case for impeachment of the president. The president said the money was from the sale of cattle to a Sudanese businessman who in turn stated he had declared bringing the money into SA to pay for the transaction. However, officials at SARS say there is no record of such a declaration. .

Former president Thabo Mbeki approached the ANC this year to complain about the party's decision to block a parliamentary probe into the Phala Phala imbroglio. ANC MP's were instructed to vote against any investigation and consequent report on the incident. The ANC informed Mr. Mbeki that the party could not support a "process that may lead to the impeachment of its president". Its president? What about his job as president of South Africa? How many people do we know who could have walked away from the same situation? The fact that Ramaphosa may have an impeachable case against him has been swept under the carpet. The president to date has got away with something that could have been a possible criminal offence for anyone else. Although the Hawks took over the police investigation docket in June 2022, we have not heard from them. The case remains in limbo and the matter will probably just fade away.

## **GUPTA'S AND ESKOM**

Then we have the Gupta's of state capture fame who walked out of South Africa to the United Arab Emirates with billions of SA taxpayers' money. They are apparently now citizens of an obscure island somewhere in the Pacific. The UAE government has rejected South Africa's extremely tardy request for these gentlemen to be repatriated to SA for trial. While our Justice Minister bewails this situation, and says he will appeal, the chance of SA ever seeing the Gupta's again, let alone getting our hands on the stolen funds, are virtually nil. To add salt to the wound, on 23 April the Free State High Court in Bloemfontein punished the State for its failure to prove its case against those accused in the R24,9 million Nulane Investment trial. The accused in this first state capture Gupta-related case are now discharged without having to defend

themselves: this is another blow to the government's endeavours to nail the Gupta's and bring them to book.. The eight local Gupta associates were on trial for corruption and money laundering in connection with an aborted dairy project where R280m was involved in trying to help poor black dairy farmers. The judge criticised the police particularly for the quality of their submissions. So while the Gupta's are laughing all the way to the bank, who will compensate SA taxpayers for the stolen money? Nothing appears to have been salvaged from this theft, either from the Gupta's or from their South African partners.

As far as the Zondo Commission report on the Gupta-involved state capture is concerned, the ANC has blatantly disregarded this commission's recommendations on parliamentary oversight. (DM 23.4.23). It is significant that no parliamentary oversight exists for the presidency which includes Intelligence, the National Security Council, infrastructure, climate change, and many more facets of South Africa's political and social life. A decision on whether this oversight committee should be introduced will of course be held over until after the 2024 election. And then prevarication on a decision will take over and the matter will morph into the odd media comment until everyone gets tired of asking questions that receive no precise answers and obscurity will result.. Watch this space!

And Eskom? Who's going to jail for destroying the lives of millions of South Africans who battle to survive under the punitive load shedding (blackouts), now a daily burden? Whose fault was the destruction of Eskom? Why is the daily sabotage of the infrastructure not stopped? Who poisoned former CEO Andre de Ruyter? There can't be that many suspects who laced his office coffee cup. How far has that investigation progressed?

Mr. De Ruyter must now give virtual evidence before the parliamentary portfolio committee on his allegations of gross corruption, fraud and sabotage that has permeated that once world-class institution. President Ramaphosa has indicated in a parliamentary response to the DA that he has not received a briefing on the two Cabinet members alleged to have been part of the looting of Eskom. He said the person who made these allegations, ex CEO Andre de Ruyter, had a duty to report such allegations to law enforcement officials! Even if he did, which police station commander will proceed to investigate two ANC cabinet ministers, if he values his life?

Nothing will happen to any cabinet ministers, whatever their malfeasances, under Ramaphosa's watch. A general election awaits them next year and their goal is to remain in power at any cost. ANC unity is their priority, and Ramaphosa doesn't give a fig about the broken lives of loyal Eskom employees and whistle blowers who were thrown to the wolves when they opened their mouths, nor the millions of hapless citizens who are the daily victims of Eskom's incompetence and corruption. De Ruyter declared, inter alia, that more than R1 billion was being stolen from Eskom every month. Did the president express his shock at that, or order an immediate enquiry? He

after all personally appointed Mr. De Ruyter so there must be some truth to such a charge. It's a lot of public money to go missing on a monthly basis.

## **AND THE MANY OTHER UNSOLVED AND UNINVESTIGATED MATTERS?**

### **AMMO STOLEN IN 2021 RIOTS**

Fewer than 47,500 rounds of ammunition of the more than 1,2 million units looted from a Durban container depot during the July 2021 unrest have been recovered. Although 17 people have appeared in court for the theft of the ammunition, police have not recovered the balance of the cache. It is believed this ammunition has already flooded the black market and is likely to be used "by a variety of criminals". (Sunday Times 16.4.23). The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) says the bulk of the stolen ammunition, more than 800,000 rounds, was 9mm, the most popular ammunition for various brands of handguns in South Africa. The SA Gun Owners Association has been calling on the police to establish "proper crime intelligence" so that the source of illegal firearms can be investigated. If they haven't established such an intelligence section, the chances of it being beyond the drawing board stage are slim. Trying to trace the rounds that have disappeared is clearly impractical, so once again someone got away with a neat pile worth millions.

### **OR TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT A MAJOR TRAFFICKING HUB**

Illegal abalone poaching in South Africa is largely controlled by gangs. According to a report by Global Initiative, customs officers were paid bribes directly to pass prohibited goods through a scanner. Western Cape gang members revealed making use of hit men from Gauteng-based Chinese criminal organisations to carry out assassinations on their behalf, with payment being made by the gangs in abalone. In addition, South Africa is playing a global role in the world cocaine trafficking market, while the growing domestic cocaine market in South Africa is encouraged and assisted by Chinese criminal networks in South Africa.

It takes ages for a local company to obtain a visa for crucially-needed overseas skilled employees, yet Chinese gangs operate openly within the country. How did they get here? Where are the police to firstly check their papers and secondly to arrest them? Are there any current court cases involving these networks? How can these overseas syndicates operate openly within our country, getting away not only with stealing abalone but with assassinations? Do police minister Cele know about these killings? Have dockets been opened and are investigations proceeding? Or are the gangs in the Western Cape and their Chinese friends literally getting away with murder?

What does the president say about the destruction of our rail networks? Has anyone been charged with dismantling our railway stations? Why were the Railway Police units disbanded? Who is receiving the scrap metal which used to be railway tracks? Are there any court cases pending in this regard? What about the construction mafia, and the syndicate bosses who have plundered our road transport trucks? Has anyone gone to prison for the gross fraud committed within the Public Investment

Corporation, some of whose “investments” have cost state pensioners and workers billions of rands in losses – Steinhoff, VBS Mutual Bank, Ayo Technology Solutions and Bounty Brands are some of the rat holes into which millions were poured.

### **A REAL PIE IN THE SKY!**

Despite all the failures gracing our country's CV (they are NOT challenges, a word used with relentless regularity by the ANC), we hold an investment conference. Says Peter Bruce, Sunday Times columnist: “That's the way you do it. Break stuff, invite someone to fix it and call it investment.” (16.4.23).

He is referring to president Ramaphosa's fifth investment summit held last week. Now that his government has destroyed our railway system “our new National Rail Policy provides for third party access to the freight rail network which will allow private rail operators onto the network to increase investment and improve efficiency”, says the president. It's money for jam, says Bruce.

Of course there are some investments coming our way. Private sector companies (to survive) are investing to producing their own electricity, some of which they may sell to Eskom. One British company is planning to spend more than R100 billion on a huge project in Nelson Mandela Bay, but the company made this investment known four years ago, says Bruce.

For the most part, most business executives pitch up at these conferences because they have to, says Bruce. They get a pat on the back for showing up but they would have spent the money anyway. Nothing really changes, declares Bruce. Ramaphosa's failure as a leader is almost complete now. “The entire investment conference and the targets supposedly met were fake”, declares Bruce. Ramaphosa's R1,2 billion goal between 2018 and now has meant he has been looking for annual investment, or what economists call “fixed capital formation” of just R240 billion a year. This is less than 5% of our annual GDP. Total fixed investment in South Africa seldom tops 14% of GDP these days, while Botswana's investment ratio to GDP is 24%, Thailand's is 23%, Rwanda 25%, Saudi Arabia 26%. South Korea does almost 35%, says Bruce.

So setting a new “target” of R2 trillion over the next five years is just a joke, considering the fall in the value of the rand of nearly 30% over the last five years. South Africa is still investable, but not with this government, says Bruce. No heights were scaled at this latest investment party. It was just hype and presentation. “It was all just a lie”, declared the Sunday Times columnist. When will the penny drop that government in SA is all smoke and mirrors?