SW_NWS_E1_020109_p10 C M Y K

The Star
FRIDAY JANUARY 2 2009 Established 1887
47 Sauer Street, Johannesburg

An icon of activism

Today South Africa bids adieu to Helen Suzman, an icon of anti-apartheid activism and a woman who took a fearless and often lonely stance during the darkest days of our recent history.

Hers is a story that won't be easily forgotten, an admirable tale of activism that stretched over seven decades into her retirement. It was brought to a peaceful and painless end on the first day of this year, when Suzman finally succumbed to old age. She was 91.

Helen Suzman was born into a conservative Jewish family from Johannesburg on November 7 1917, but broke from its ranks when her inquiring mind began to get a grip on the anti-black rule taking hold in the country.

Her curiosity led her to the University of the Witwatersrand, where she studied the system academically through native law and administration. She would later return to the Joburg university's campus – to teach economic history – all the while widening her grasp on the social injustices unfolding around her.

It didn't take long for politics to beckon, and she found a natural home for her liberal thinking in the party of General Jan Smuts, which would become the forerunner of what would later be called the United Party (UP).

Suzman quickened her step in the wake of the 1948 general election that brought the Nationalist Party to power. Five years later, she joined the ranks of the opposition benches in Cape Town, where she resided for the next 36 years until she retired in 1989 – although not always in the name of the UP.

In 1959, a year after Dr Hendrik Verwoerd became prime minister, Suzman co-founded the Progressive Party, a grouping that would take on many shapes before evolving into today's Democratic Alliance.

Although the fledgling "Progs", as they were then known, were decimated in the 1961 election, Suzman retained her seat and became the lone liberal, dissenting voice in a sea of Nationalists.

It didn't deter her. She rose to the challenge. And with political skill like few around her, she began to expose the system for what it was. Her probing questions began to echo in corners and corridors all over the world.

To the Nationalists, she was bringing undue shame on the country. "But it's not my questions that are embarrassing South Africa, but your answers," she would famously retort.

The government's human rights record was bleak, and Suzman took up the cudgels.

She lived by her campaign slogan, "See for yourself", and trailed the length and breadth of the country to try to understand life as it was under white rule.

She fought relentlessly against the repressive pass laws, and bowed to the Cape Town gallery when they were finally repealed in 1986.

Although she stepped into retirement 20 years ago, silence didn't come easily to her. White rule may have come and gone, but she continued to cast a light under some of the murky sides of black rule.

By the time she passed away, Suzman had twice been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize and gathered 27 honorary doctorates, along with a string of awards from around the world in recognition of a life of bravery lived during very tough times.

The only accolade she declined to accept was that of Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

May Helen Suzman's unforgettable soul rest in peace.

Something to forget?

Dogged by bad memories? Then dump them and never give them a second thought. That's the aim of New York's year-end event in which people are invited to gather in Times Square and hurl symbols of unhappy recollections into a giant shredder.

One woman, for example, disposed of an e-mail printout in which her boyfriend broke up with her. Other people scrapped such items as depressing bank statements and letters of demand.

It's an idea that some South African cities might consider taking up, though perhaps it's as well they didn't do so this time round.

Ordinary citizens would have been elbowed aside by hordes of dejected politicians.

The Star
Telephone 011-633-9111
Box 1014, Johannesburg 2000

Editor Moegsien Williams
Deputy Editor Jovial Rantao

Editorial Executives

Dave Hazelhurst, Zenaide Jones, Nelandri Narianan, Adrian Ephraim, Sol Makgabutlane, Brendan Seery, Janet Smith

News Editor
starnews@inl.co.za Tel: 011-633-2410

Opinion/Letters Editor Sol Makgabutlane
sol.makgabutlane@inl.co.za Tel: 011-633-2336

Oped Editor Brendan Seery
brendan.seery@inl.co.za Tel: 011-633-2290

Verve Editor Zenaide Jones
zenaide.jones@inl.co.za Tel: 011-633-2587

Challenge, but World Cup on track

COMMENT
DANNY JORDAAN

No one will ever talk of a Plan B from now on. We will be ready and Plan B is officially dead

The year 2009 is a landmark year for South Africa and our continent. We will host the Fifa Confederations Cup, a curtain raiser for the World Cup, on South African soil. The Fifa U-17 World Cup will be held in Nigeria, and the Fifa U-20 World Cup in Egypt.

We will prove to the world that we are ready to host the soccer festivals.

No doubt, 2008 was a difficult year for the world, and at home in South Africa we have also had to face up to our own fair set of challenges.

Despite these challenges, the 2010 Fifa World Cup Organising Committee (OC) can look back on what has been a most eventful year. Behind the scenes the OC and tens of thousands of dedicated people have been tirelessly working on transforming SA into the stage for the greatest sporting spectacles, other than the Olympics – the Fifa Confederations Cup and the 2010 World Cup.

It is hard to believe that in less than six months, on June 14, we will see the first Confederations Cup game on SA soil, and in just 18 months, on June 11, 2010, the opening match of the World Cup will kick-off in Soccer City, Johannesburg.

That is why we closed 2008 with the successful hosting of the Confederations Cup draw, proof that our organisational capabilities are comparable to the best.

The draw saw SA matched up with Spain, New Zealand and Iraq in Group A, while football giants Italy and Brazil are joined by Egypt and the USA in Group B.

The tournament, which takes place from June 14 to June 28, provides an excellent chance for the OC and the country to test their readiness for the big 2010 showdown.

Tickets for this "festival of champions" are on sale. Thanks to a Fifa decision to allocate tickets specifically for SA residents, locals can buy for as little as R70.

Nowhere else in the world can you watch matches of this calibre for these prices, and so far ticket sales are going well. World Cup tickets go on sale in February, once again with a special category making matches accessible to South Africans.

So far no one will ever talk of a Plan B for the World Cup. We will be ready and Plan B is officially dead.

One just has to look at the stadiums fast transforming city skylines, see the transport projects that turned host cities into construction sites, or visit a big airport to realise SA is well on track to deliver.

Open fields of dirt were sectioned off to become building zones in 2008. Now they are transformed into skeletons of stadiums, which will be completed in a few months.

Renovation of the four Confederations Cup stadiums, Ellis Park, Mangaung, Loftus Versfeld and Royal Bafokeng, is now almost complete, and the new work will be handed over by the end of the first quarter of 2009.

Nelson Mandela Bay, Durban, Polokwane, Nelspruit and Soccer City are all more than 60% complete – well on track to meet their October 2009 deadline.

Green Point Stadium, which started late due to environmental objections, is making remarkable progress, and is now nearly 50% complete, and will be ready by December. Overall, 55% of the budget has been spent, showing good construction progress.

A global economic crisis has unfortunately not left World Cup preparations untouched, but we refuse to be discouraged by market conditions beyond our control.

Initially the crisis resulted from a R3,2-billion funding shortfall as stadium costs escalated, but in October the National Treasury allocated an additional R1,4 billion for hosting the event. Talks are under way to resolve the R1,8-billion overrun.

On the transport side, OR Tambo International Airport removed layers of scaffolding and building boards to reveal a new central terminal and international pier, and the Cape Town and Bloemfontein airport upgrades are far advanced.

The new airport at La Mercy, north of Durban, which will be able to handle 7,5-million passengers a year, is fast taking shape and remains on track to be completed in time for the World Cup.

High-occupancy vehicle lanes have been put in place in major cities, and the multi-billion-rand freeway improvement to ease congestion on Gauteng highways is fully under way.

Construction of the world-class rapid rail link, Gautrain, to link Joburg, Pretoria and Sandton to the airport, made incredible progress in 2008, and the first trains are already in the country.

The airport-Sandton link remains set to be completed in time for 2010. Railway stations near stadiums are also being upgraded, and trains are being totally revamped to provide a first-world travelling experience between cities.

SA's public transport system is being transformed, and by next year we will see special buses on bus-only lanes in many host cities.

Security remains high on the priority list of both government and the OC, and both are working closely with experts from around the world.

■ *Danny Jordaan is CEO of the 2010 FIFA World Cup Organising Committee.*

Insults fly in 'broad church'

WATCHWORD
GEOFF HUGHES

The ANC has become accustomed to referring to itself as "a broad church", the phrase being used most recently by its president Jacob Zuma in an interview.

The phrase grew up in the mid-19 century in the context of the Anglican Church, which like most English institutions, has come to be regarded as divided along class lines into the High Church and the Low Church.

The concept of the Broad Church meant that it should be comprehensive and tolerant, admitting a wide range of opinion and practices in dogma and ritual. Recent bitter controversies over gay priests and women bishops suggest that "breadth" is not accommodated by all.

For decades the ANC has incorporated a whole spectrum of political views, from the most revolutionary and radical to the most conciliatory. In recent years it has even developed a thriving capitalist wing. The swing to the left at Polokwane has of course led to the ousting of the president and the split in the party.

How valid is the "broad church" metaphor now, when members refer to others, some still in the party, as "dead snakes", "cockroaches", "dogs", "baboons" and other unparliamentary, indeed inflammatory epithets?

■ *Geoff Hughes is Professor Emeritus, Wits University*

Policing the catastrophe north of Musina

ANALYSIS
PETA THORNYCROFT

Supposed joint control of home affairs, which controls the police, is another disaster waiting to happen

If ever proof were needed that Zanu-PF should no longer control the police, then the last week's circus around Harare's courts should provide it. Peace worker Jestina Mukoko and about 24 others, after being abducted and held in secret locations for weeks, were supposed to be sent to hospital or freed on Christmas Eve according to an order from High Court judge Yunus Omerjee.

Instead they remained locked up. It is no use presidential spokesperson Thabo Masebe saying: "There are many issues that need to be addressed by a unity government. This (Mukoko and co) is one of them."

In a unity government as it stands now, Zanu-PF would control justice, and Zanu-PF and Movement for Democratic Change would jointly run the home affairs ministry, which controls the police.

No country in the region has ever tried to co-manage a ministry, so imagine the first experiment within SADC, carried out with an incompetent Zanu-PF appointee.

If SADC believes that Robert Mugabe won't shift on allowing MDC sole control of the police, and he already has the armed forces and intelligence, then South Africa will have to push him hard, and they have plenty of non-military weapons.

It is not that the police haven't defied the courts before. Human rights lawyer David Coltart spent years defending people loyal to the then opposition, Zapu, and other Ndebeles, locked up without trial, or held after the courts ordered their freedom.

Zimbabwe had a state of emergency then, a handful of traitors in its ranks, and hits from South African security forces, although its efforts were, in retrospect, muted.

There is no record of a professional police force in Rhodesia or in Zimbabwe, although there were spasms of impartiality in both eras. At least early Zimbabwe had a preponderance of professional judges.

Without control of the police, forget any unity government. If Thabo Mbeki believes that giving Morgan Tsvangirai a passport is enough to lure him into the prime minister's office, then he should think again. Tsvangirai only got his passport because the South Africans leant on Mugabe.

The charges of nine of those who appeared in court again on Monday add up to treason, with a death penalty. They are charged with recruiting or trying to recruit people for military training in Botswana to topple Mugabe.

It was obvious Botswana would be accused of harbouring MDC insurgents as soon as President Ian Khama spoke out against Mugabe. Treason and similar charges are a favourite of Zanu-PF; they have done it to all their political opponents.

Tsvangirai's secretary-general Tendai Biti is similarly charged.

His treason charges arise from a document written by military intelligence. It is a document littered with cliches of what MI believes is Rhodesian-speak. Biti is an intellectual and a lawyer, and could never, even if he tried, write the childish, semi-literate language of which he is accused.

The document, about the way forward under an MDC government, attributed to Biti, was first published in the wicked *Herald* newspaper in April.

Biti laughed it off, issued a denial, and lo and behold it appeared a few weeks later on a charge sheet, with treason attached.

They did similarly to Morgan Tsvangirai, then MDC secretary-general Welshman Ncube, and the party's then agriculture spokesperson Nelson Gasela three weeks before the violent 2002 presidential election.

This time they had a Canadian crook, Ari Ben Menashe, and paid him more than US$1-million (admitted in court) to produce a video "proving" Tsvangirai plotted to kill Mugabe. The CIO that devised this plot didn't care whether or not it got a conviction. The charges took two years of the accused's lives and drained the MDC of funds.

Even if MDC gets home affairs, Mugabe still has the right to appoint the commissioner, and the Police Act has many ways he can circumnavigate the law.

Nevertheless, for the morale of the police, at least, Zanu-PF must be removed from day-to-day control.

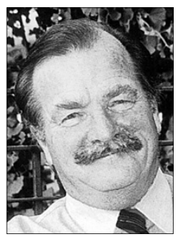
Nevertheless Morgan Tsvangirai is the people's choice as he easily beat Mugabe in the first round. It is rough of ANC members to be snide about Tsvangirai.

Zimbabweans want Tsvangirai and he is brave enough to still want to try fix his country.

Without the MDC in control of home affairs, the region will have to find a solution other than a unity government to the catastrophe north of Musina.

Wanted: silent treatment for two months

STOEP TALK
JAMES CLARKE



Behind every man is a smart woman, Afghan women have proved

The battle of the sexes across the globe goes on via the Internet and, almost daily, spills over into my corner.

A reader, Win Kuppers, offers this advice: "Know women, know trouble.

No women, no trouble."

And, as if to confirm this, Bentley Cook tells me of an older man who approached an attractive young woman at a shopping mall.

"Excuse me," he said, "I can't seem to find my wife. Can you talk to me for a couple of minutes?"

The woman, feeling a compassion for him, said, "Of course, sir. Have you any idea where your wife might be?"

"I have no idea," he said. "But every time I talk to a woman with a beautiful figure like yours, she appears out of nowhere."

Jayne Southern sent me an anecdote I saw long ago but which has now been rearranged with a distinct woman's bias.

It is supposed to have involved Barbara Walters of US television fame who did a feature on gender roles in Kabul, Afghanistan, several years before the Afghan conflict.

She noted that women customarily walked five paces behind their husbands.

Recently she is said to have returned to Kabul and found that women still walk behind their husbands.

From Walters' vantage point, despite the overthrow of the anti-female Taliban regime, the women now seemed to walk even further behind their husbands and they seemed happy to maintain this ancient chauvinistic custom.

Walters approached one of the women and asked, "Why do you now seem so contented with walking behind your husbands when, a few years ago, you were so determined to change all that?"

The woman said, "Land Mines".

The moral, says Jayne, is: "Behind every man there's a smart woman".

Men have struck back. Take this anecdote from Erik Eilertsen: Two men fishing. Very quietly, so as not to scare the fish, one says, "I think I'm going to divorce my wife – she hasn't spoken to me in over two months."

His companion, slowly sipping his beer, says, "You should think it over – women like that are hard to find."

And from a woman reader: While shopping for holiday clothes, my husband and I passed a display of swim suits. It had been at least 10 years and 10kg since I had even considered buying a swimming costume, so I sought my husband's advice.

"What do you think?" I asked. "Should I get a bikini or an all-in-one?"

"Better get a bikini," he said. "You'd never get it all in one."

He's still in intensive care.

And a male reader seeking sympathy wrote, "My wife was sick in bed and asked me to make her some herbal tea. I couldn't find it so had to ask.

She said, "For heaven's sake it's in the pantry next to the rice in a cocoa tin marked 'matches'."

And a number of readers have sent the story about a man getting into bed with his wife when his hands began roaming all over the place – down her spine, along her contours, down her legs… "That was nice," she murmured, "why'd you stop?"

"I was looking for the remote control," he said. "It was behind your knee."

Linda M Smith tells me about a couple – Myrtle and Joe – who had been married for over 50 years.

Then Myrtle died. A couple of months later Joe died.

As soon as Joe went through the pearly gates he saw Myrtle running towards him calling his name.

Joe shouted, "Hold you're horses my dear! The deal was very clear: 'Until death do us part'!"

■ Contact Stoep Talk: Fax: 011-465-4564
Write to: Box 876 Lonehill, 2062
e-mail: jcl@onwe.co.za