

Weekend Argus

Courage was her name

Much has been written in the past hours since Helen Suzman's death, and much more still has to be written of her tireless and lonely fight as a well-to-do white woman for the rights of all South Africans in a Parliament whose members universally feared, if not actually loathed, her.

She did so at a time when the great majority of white South Africans were content to turn a blind eye to the way their black, coloured, Asian and Chinese brothers and sisters were being treated, staying silent in order to enjoy the illegal fruits of a hideous racist society.

Many of us, almost 15 years into the democracy which we all enjoy today – irrespective of race, creed or language – tend to forget about the stand Suzman adopted and the toll it took.

And, if we think back to those times, Suzman's contribution to the establishment of the country we live in today is often overshadowed by the contributions of so many other heroes of the revolution that took place on April 27, 1994.

It takes great bravery and inner strength to fight against an oppressive system, but to faithfully espouse a cause that alienates you from most of your class and race demands an even deeper drawing from the well of moral courage.

Helen Suzman did so for her entire adult life, continuing to speak out against injustices and errors perpetrated by the leaders of the new dispensation long after her own battles had been fought and won.

This is the mark of a true patriot, a statesman, as epitomised by Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. We salute her life.

We are poorer for her passing but inestimably richer for having had her in our and this country's life.

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Meditations

An economist is a man who states the obvious in terms of the incomprehensible

Alfred A Kopf – book publisher

Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want and deserve to get it good and hard

HL Mencken – journalist



Why must Israel always be judged differently?

Suddenly much of the world, including our own inept crowd, who do not have the backbone to criticise the tyranny on our borders, have created new rules of military engagement.

It's called "excessive force" or even more euphemistically, "inappropriate response".

This term was never used when Nato attacked Serbia during the Balkan atrocities.

Britain was never asked to show restraint when responding to Nazi barbarism.

The allied forces killed far more Taliban fighters as well as innocent civilians in the Afghan war, but while civilian losses were mourned, no "limited responses" were expected.

But Israel, as usual, is heavily slated for its responses to acts of terror.

Sadly, as a Jew who certainly regrets and is saddened by civilian

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casualties in Gaza, I know why.

Whether one likes it or not, it is the clearly stated policy of Israel's neighbouring enemies to eliminate it.

Israel, which has not always handled its occupation of Arab lands well

(its settlement building policies are disgraceful in my opinion), has never wished the total destruction of any state. Were this the case she would already have used her military might to achieve this end.

Talking of the occupation, it is an historical fact that when the state of Israel was officially declared in 1948, her Arab neighbours attacked her with the threat of driving "the Jews into the sea". At this point the Palestinian people, fearing for their safety, fled to neighbouring Arab lands. Of course, this war ended in an Israeli victory. Hence, the refugee problem.

On three subsequent occasions the same threat was made to drive Israelis into the sea, and on each occasion a war ensued – with Israel victorious every time.

So, security has to be Israel's number one priority.

That is why there are blockades and also a security wall.

Why has there been no international outrage at the cesspool of violence the Palestinians have created in Gaza, after Israel withdrew unilaterally from that territory?

Of course, handing back Gaza was a very small step in the creation of a true and free Palestinian state, but that withdrawal was a brave move by a politically embattled Israeli government.

Israel always gets very different treatment from much of the world (not all, I acknowledge).

We all know the reason why, and 60 years after the Holocaust those who advocate such an approach should be thoroughly ashamed.

**D Wolpert
Rivonia**

Cope will live to regret recruiting Boesak

Alistair Sparks' comments that the Reverend Allan Boesak poses a double-edged sword for Cope is something the new party should consider seriously, if it wishes to make a resounding dent in the waning popularity of the ANC.

So many political parties fail to attract people of high moral standing, willing to serve the community in an unselfish manner. I fear even Boesak does not fit the bill as it is claimed he was willing to serve the ANC if he was offered post in the UN.

I, like so many other South Africans, was a great admirer of the work done by Boesak in our struggle and of his great oratory skills. I was sadly disappointed when he showed signs of a leaning toward material trappings, which led to his prosecution and imprisonment.

There are so many questions about his return and the way he chose to do

so. He claims to be concerned about ordinary South Africans, yet he chose to remain in hibernation for almost 14 years, while the ANC government saddled ordinary citizens with a deadly HIV policy, and the arms deal and numerous parliamentary scams hit the headlines. Why did he choose to remain silent when people like Archbishop Tutu and Nelson Mandela spoke out against the ruling party?

He re-emerged on the political scene, on Cope's ticket, on the pretext that he was upset with ANC policies and as a champion of the people. How disappointing it must have been for so many of his past admirers to learn that he only went to Cope after the ANC denied him a UN post. This smacks of political opportunism, where the suffering of millions is merely used as a tool for personal gain.

Boesak's 14 years of absence from politics, his silence on issues of public importance and his latest opportunistic move could well make him a liability more than an asset to Cope. While in the UDF, he had the support of all South Africans, black and white, who were united against apartheid.

Today, he is fighting a party he once supported; a party that has almost five million new voters waiting in the wings, who have never heard of Boesak and who could very easily view him as a counter revolutionary. In spite of his great oratory skills, it will be a hard battle to convince the electorate that Cope is the answer, when Cope's leaders are the very people, as part of the Mbeki government, that were guilty of the issues that he is currently accusing the ANC of.

Besides, Boesak will only be remembered by people from the 80s,

who were in the struggle. They, unfortunately, are in the dwindling minority. The young majority, whose vote is going to count in the forthcoming election, will be constantly bombarded about his track record and opportunism by his opponents in the ANC. He will be easy game for them.

The ANC's disrespect for the law and its tendency to the Mugabe style of rule makes Cope's entry into the political arena a welcome one to prevent a dangerous ANC majority rule.

However, the country now needs a strong but apolitical civil society movement, styled like the old UDF to keep the government in check. This society should be run by people with integrity and whose only interest is to serve the people, unlike our once champion of the people, Boesak.

Dr EV Rapiti MP

BRIEF Points

Keep interest rates high and inflation low

The front-page lead last Saturday (Weekend Argus, December 27), "More cash for you in 2009, say experts", was indeed good cheer, but where were these experts last year when we needed them to warn us of the global financial meltdown? They didn't know it was coming any more than they can predict this year.

Meanwhile, you could ask them to explain how a drop in interest rates is going to see inflation fall, protect the rand and lower fuel prices when the opposite is usually the case. One has only to look at how interest rate cuts in the US and Europe have weakened their currencies to see this.

We should pray that our Reserve Bank does not yield to the pressure to reduce interest rates further this year. Even if a weak rand makes our exports cheaper, who will buy them?

We would do better to keep interest rates high and inflation and fuel prices low, and concentrate on building the domestic economy, while the rest of the world wallows in depression.

**R Groves
Cape Town**

Astrology is a hoax

The heading "Heavenly marriage of astrology and therapy" (Weekend Argus, December 27), might be intended as a pun, but a heading such as "Deadly linkup between astrology and therapy" might be more correct.

Astrology is a hoax. To link this up with therapy could be dangerous for the unsuspecting.

Therapy can help you to understand your strengths and weaknesses, but to link it to astrology, you are entering the dangerous world of fairy-tale make-believe. Sounds like becoming an astrotherapist is a wonderful way of making some quick-fix bucks out of unsuspecting suckers who have too much money floating around!

**Dr Bernhard Ficker
Somerset West**

A blinkered view

My recent letter pointed out more were killed in fighting between Islam and Ibo in Jos in Africa than in Mumbai.

Now we hear Israel has killed 350 Hamas operatives and about 50 civilians. (Hamas has long been amusing its homicidal self by pumping a myriad rockets into Israel.)

Meanwhile as many civilians have been massacred in the DRC by the Lord's Resistance Army. Just as has happened over the past 20 years, nothing will be done about them. Such filth is no threat to international peace.

**H Westwood
Pinelands**

Diesel's unfair deal

As a diesel owner I am keen to know how the petrol price affects diesel every time the cost of oil changes.

Petrol costs more to produce than diesel. How does one then explain:

1. Whenever there is an adjustment because of a higher oil price, the price of diesel increases more than that of petrol.

2. When the price goes down, the cost of diesel decreases less than that of petrol.

Diesel users are being financially abused, to put it lightly.

Is it the oil companies or the government that are taking advantage of diesel users? Why has the Competition Commission not looked into price fixing, or alternatively, why has there not been a public outcry?

**PJ Calothi
Rondebosch**

Cricket

● All you gravel-brained individuals who shouted your mouths off about how Australia were going to whitewash SA in the Test series must be feeling like the absolute idiots you are right now, hey, Well, feel the pain suckers because you deserve it.

● Graham Smith for president! A leader by example!

● Pointing to Duminy "A very dissa (Ponting) Test series, please pl(r)ay 4 me!"

● Cape Flats tornado blows away Australian cricket domination. This is only the beginning. South Africa is still going to D.O.O.M. M.A.N.Y more. JP Duminy, you did Cape Town and South Africa proud. Just remain humble, son.

● What on earth have they done to the once beautiful Newlands cricket ground?

Gaza

● Interesting that our government sees

fit to condemn Israel for its air strikes into Gaza but is silent when Hamas resumes its attacks. Silent too while Mugabe fiddles as Zimbabweans suffer and die.

● Hamas knows that its hold on power will weaken if relations with Israel improve. Therefore they must make trouble regularly to remain in control whatever the cost.

● By indiscriminately firing missiles into Gaza and thereby killing hundreds of innocent civilians, Israel has sunk lower than the fighters of Hamas. The most powerful military force in the region has lost the moral high ground and the

respect of the civilised world.

● Why do people protest here about the poor Palestinian people in Gaza? They should go there and protest, surely.

● So at last the Israelis have decided to return enemy fire – their tolerance under constant attacks has been astounding but unacknowledged by the world. It's about time they fought back.

● Hamas won the democratic elections. Israel enforced the Gaza aid blockade. Hamas retaliated, minimal Israeli casualties. Israeli air attacks, 300 people dead. You have gone too far.

Politics

● Dear ANC, as a voter, I take part in politics. Thus, I expect to also qualify for a "political solution" if ever I'm in trouble.

● Our latest president Motlanthe's business links to oil baron Majali should be investigated before the ANC manages to destroy the Scorpions.

● The movement of the people, the ANC, is the only party that has delivered to the ordinary people in South Africa. My vote will be for the ANC.

● The ANC is soiled by the arms deal from head to foot – this is why Motlanthe was ordered by his Stalinist masters to neutralise Pikoli, close down the Scorpions and reject any calls for a commission of inquiry.

● To understand why the ANC "monolith" is imploding before our very eyes, the book to read is *After the Party* by Feinstein – it exposes massive infighting, dishonesty and racism from within the ruling party

● It is OK to be black and not vote for

the ANC. It is my democratic right to vote for whom I choose.

● If the DA and Cope decide to form an alliance in the next election, they could give the weakened ANC a good run for its money.

● A two-thirds majority by a ruling party does not make for good democracy – especially so in SA, where we have zero debates in Parliament. ANC MPs are content to focus solely on party loyalty just to preserve their jobs and positions of privilege.

Pets

● Your article in last Saturday's Argus is heartbreaking. I am an animal lover but can't have a pet as I live in a flat. Forgive me if this is out of line but is euthanasia not the best option? I say this in all sincerity.

● You did not publish what we can do, eg, volunteer, donate. I had to search the web for bank donation information. You should say for, eg, R20 will feed a cat for X days so people can see that every bit helps.

Other

● Barack Obama's philosophy of considering all arguments but especially those who disagree is surpassed only by the Biblical text that prescribes that we treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. Show me an African leader who subscribes to these ideals and I will show you peace and prosperity in a country on our continent.

● Re "Reckless drivers": many years ago you had bumper stickers like "I Play Putt-putt", "I Like Swipe", etc, but the one that really meant something to me was "Beat the robots and be first to the morgue".

● I am a pensioner and cannot maintain a balance of R6000 in my cheque book – for that I am penalised R90 per month in bank charges. It's pure greed on their part.

● Most things drop in price. Petrol drops every month and into the new year. Recently, (there was) a 20c drop on bread – not much but it's OK. Everybody chips in but never do you hear, never do you hear Eskom and

Telkom dropping their prices. These two companies are the biggest skelms.

● Cyclists in Tokai/Steenburg, the traffic circles also apply to you to yield to traffic on your right when approaching the circle.

● Yes, your editorial is correct: babies are "little miracles" and yet millions of these little miracles are murdered every year in the world before they are even born – some even when they are partially born in partial birth abortions. Apparently, it's a woman's "right".

● Camping and caravanning at Soetwater is being marred by the authorities. I wonder what their ultimate agenda is because they are making certain that the decades of tradition and spirit are stopped like District 6.

● Bam has lost the plot. Soetwater will be a white elephant in five years' time.

● Why are there signs "No dogs on the beaches" and people ignore these warnings? You find dog shit all over the surf at Muizenburg and Strandfontein. Keep our beaches clean.