

## **An Old Camdenian in Africa-March 2011**

In my last note I was careful to reflect only positive news.

The bad news in Africa is all around us each day and sometimes a break from this is good for the soul. South Africa is no exception although framed within a landscape of democracy and the ability to change things via the ballot box.

My feel good intention was short lived as some of the regimes of North Africa and the Middle East started to crumble under a disillusioned population that would no longer sit by and watch the leaders plunder the state coffers whilst they dwelt in poverty.

From South Africa we watch with great interest and with empathy for the peoples of these countries.

We see the courage that it takes to stand up to this type of power and many here will relate this to the ANC struggle to obtain freedom from the immoral Apartheid system in SA.

In many instances the turnover has not been orchestrated and seems to be a natural across the board expression of unhappiness aimed at their leaders or regimes. They have used spontaneous peaceful mass action to show the powers that be that their time, or the old way, is over. Only the disillusional Gaddafi seems to be standing firm and threatens some kind of violent upheaval.

I imagine that the 30 odd year rulers like Mugabe in Zimbabwe should be watching events with growing concern. There are others down here in the southern section of Africa where an exit plan may be on the plotting board if the modern technology of communication can somehow rally people to a common end.

These leaderless uprisings do risk a vacuum of control and even a fear of worse regimes taking over. But we all watch with respect and understanding.

I say "all" but of course the AU seems to have done, or said, nothing as these very despots are the ones that they have revered for years and still hold up as heroes following the removal of the Colonial powers.

This does lead me onto a Mr Abdelbaset at-Megrahi who was found guilty of the Lockerbie bombing of 1998. He was released due to a terminal sickness and returned to Libya looking very frail.

About 2 years ago a Mr Shabir Shaik was found guilty of bribing Jacob Zuma (SA President) and was given a 15 year sentence. By the way this is why we know

that Zuma must be guilty of corruption albeit a small example. Zuma has avoided his day in court because he sacked the person who was handling the case (arms deal) against him and instead replaced him with a friendly chap who promptly dropped the charges against Zuma!!

However, back to Shaik. He was/is, of course, well connected and managed to convince the prison authorities that he needed medical care. Most of his first year was spent in the confines of a well decked out private room in a private hospital. I think only a few days were actually spent in goal.

He then “proved” that he was terminally sick (a blood pressure issue I think) and was released by....well you know by whom, the very same Jacob Zuma cabinet. This was 2 years ago but he is seen around and about as he has a very easy parole arrangement that gives him adequate free time outside his own palatial mansion.

Well....the press had a tip off that he might be found playing golf at a local course and off they went to have a look. A scuffle broke out on the course and Shaik is accused of attacking a female journalist. We await developments but “terminal illness” or well connected? But where is al-Megrahi?

I will have told you about our top cop Jackie Selebi who was found guilty of corruption and given a few years sentence. Well he is still having appeal after appeal (at tax payers’ expense]. His replacement, a guy called Bheki Cele, has just been found manipulating a multi million rand deal that the Public Protector found was done in an “improper and unlawful” manner. The relevant cabinet Minister is also implicated but what will Jacob Zuma do to these pals of his? We watch and wait. The opposition calls for his dismissal and so perhaps we will have another Top Cop removed by the courts and many more millions of tax payers money spent in their defence.

This takes me naturally to The Grand Design and the euphonium.  
*(How did he jump to this?)*

The first is the latest offering by Mlodinow.

*(Sorry , who....?)*  
Leonard Mlodinow.

*(Ah that one, so many Mlodinows around.)*

Well his book was co-authored by Richard Hawkins.  
*(Ah now we are getting somewhere).*

I think I understood the first 100 pages but then he lost me in multi histories with quarks and things like the “uncertainty principle”. Is that an oxymoron?

Are there any views from anyone who has read it as to the credibility or even possible viability of the concept of multi histories and futures? i.e. if we are able to go back in time we would then travel forward in a different history to that left behind.

*(Is he sure about that?)*

Views please on the Alan Patrick Shearn Facebook site or of course by e mail.

*(Interesting, but what has this got to do with Top Cops?)*



And so to the euphonium.

*(Is that a kind of tuba?)*

A 9 year old watches Hannah Montana and wants to join the school band. Visions perhaps of guitar waving, pop star idol.

The picture above shows you what our granddaughter, Courtney, ended up with.

Now methinks we are in for some interesting practice sessions at home!

Next time perhaps some sport and wild life.

So much going on but even Wilshire was reduced to tears and England threw away their potential great win against India.

That's it, 2 pages up and a picture.

All the best until the next time.

Alan Shearn.

PS At least the English have Colin Firth to wave the flag on high.