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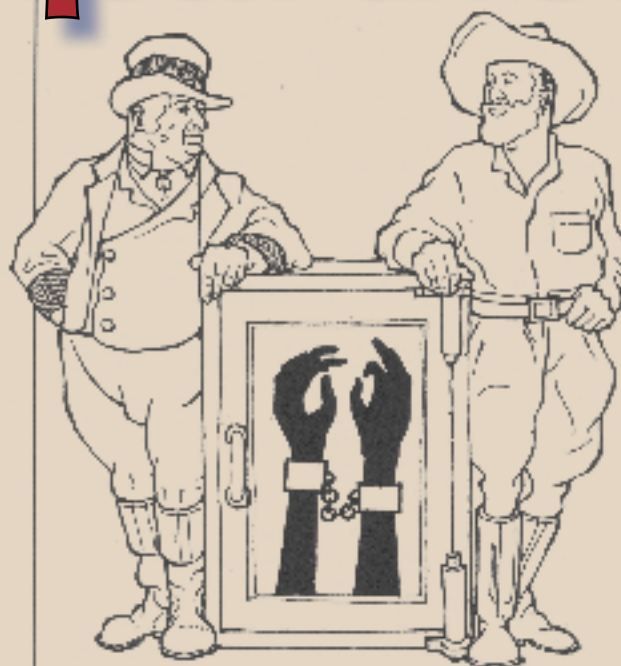
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## Part 1

# Satire and Apartheid



**APARTHEID**  
**IT'S A SAFE BET**

**Franco Frescura\***

Cover, Wits Student, 1973.  
Illustration by Franco Frescura.

**I**n 1972 a Parliamentary election was held in Oudtshoorn to decide who was to represent the opinion of local residents on matters of national importance. But first, for reasons better understood by local Nationalist Party organisers, residents were expected to examine the weighty subject of “*Boerehaat*”, or the hatred that some South Africans supposedly bore against the Afrikaans-speaking folk. This was held to be so important that, eventually, the whole nation was embroiled in this debate.

True to form the English-speaking establishment made a blind rush for the polls in its haste to  
**continues on page 2:**

***“True to form the English-speaking establishment made a blind rush for the polls in its haste to assure Afrikaners that they were indeed the most beloved of all population groups.”***

\* Franco Frescura is presently  
Honorary Professor at Wits University  
and continues to publish his research  
into the architecture of South Africa's  
rural communities.

## Part 1: Satire and Apartheid

Below: Potch intellectuals marching in support of Apartheid, 1960



Graphic, Pro Veritate, 1974



Graphic,  
Pro Veritate,  
1974



### continued from page 1:

assure Afrikaners that they were indeed the most beloved of all population groups and that they were *God's chosen children*, just like their preachers affirmed from the pulpit every Sunday. Predictably their candidate for Oudtshoorn was returned with an increased majority and, in political folklore, this became known as the *Boerehaat Election*.

Being somewhat short of people it could conveniently charge with this *crime*, the Nationalist Party decided to make an example of the student press, predominantly white and English-speaking, whose campus newspapers were firm believers in the principles of Academic Freedom. Of course this had little to do with the fact that, at the time, many members of the nation's youth, clearly without a local voice, were finding their political values in emulation of parallel events in France, Italy and the USA. Clearly an example had to be made, and as events turned out, student satire became manna for all right-thinking volk.

A convenient excuse was provided by students at Wits in 1972 when their tabloid weekly paper, *Wits Student*, depicted the-then Prime Minister, Johannes Balthazar Vorster, at the bottom of a toilet bowl. Eventually student leaders were investigated by Parliament and banned, publications were seized by the Security Police and banned, the son of a British Prime Minister was deported, and spies became an open fixture of our campuses. At Wits the Chairman of the Rag charity owned up to being a paid-up police agent, and the Secretary of the Faculty of Architecture was revealed to be the heard of a Security Police spy ring. The possession of some student newspapers became *verboden*, the student underground was rife with copies of *Private Eye*, bootleg tapes by Phil Ochs, Miriam Makeba and Harry Belafonte were played constantly, and gardening Durban plants became a popular hobby. Films like "If", "Z" and "A Strawberry Statement" were receiving standing

***"... the Nationalist Party decided to make an example of the student press, predominantly white and English-speaking, whose campus newspapers were firm believers in the principles of Academic Freedom."***

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## Part 1: Satire and Apartheid

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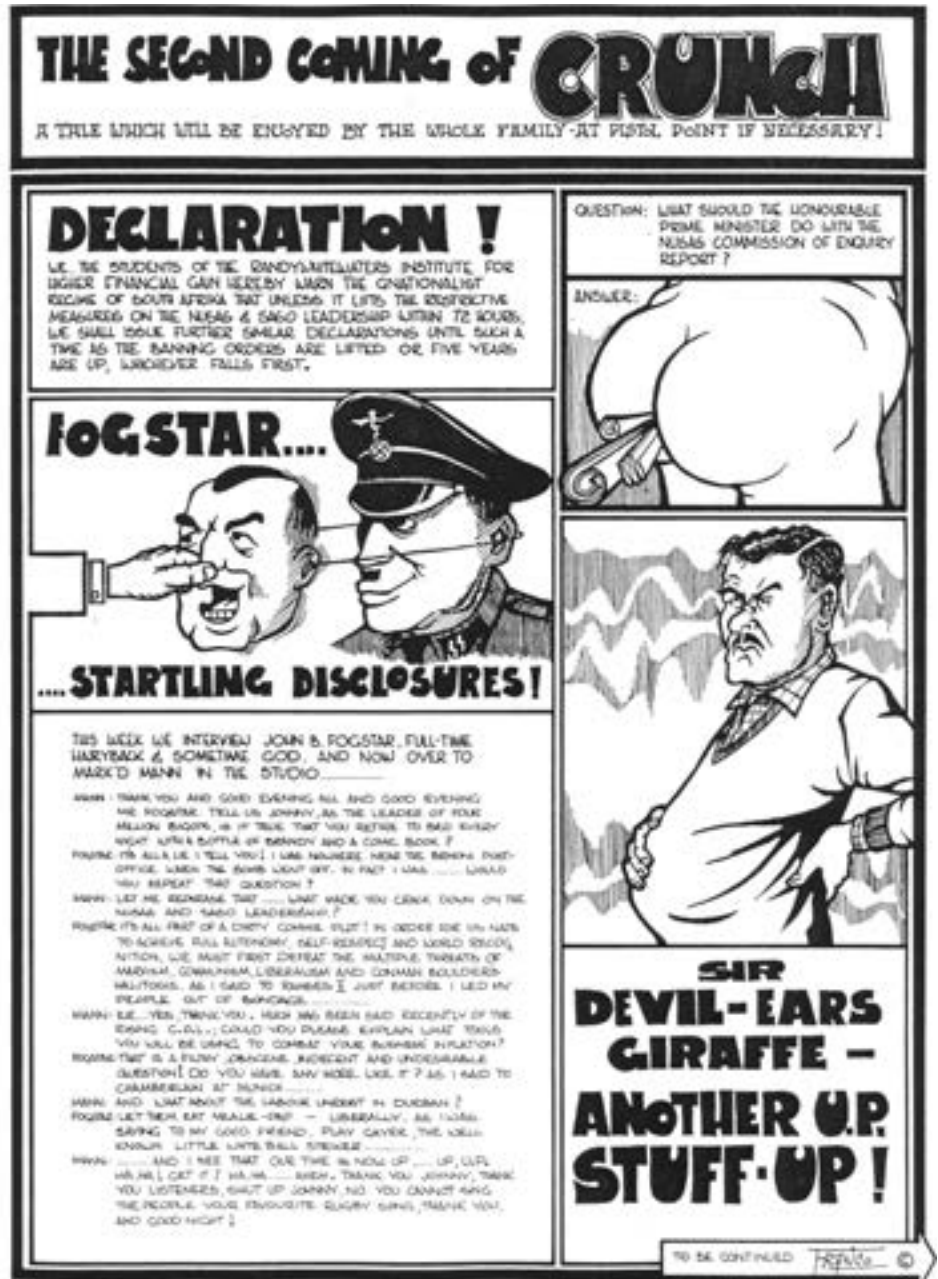
ovations at private screenings, and anything satirical was snapped up before it could be banned by a Publications Control Board gone *meshugana*. By the 1970s student invective at their elders was reaching an unacceptable climax, and even the Wits Rag magazine, always funny but seldom political, began reaching a readership beyond the stuffy bounds of academia.

### No Laughing Matter

Many people will, in retrospect, ask what this fuss was about? After all, student humour the world over is commonly expected, at best, to be smutty and lavatorial in nature, and although some of the Wits Student satire was really funny, it was hardly immortal prose. To understand the reaction of the Apartheid leadership to this work one must first understand that Afrikaans-speakers were, in general, a very literal people. Afrikaans humour is no laughing matter, and any attempt at irony or sarcasm normally fell upon stony ears. In the 1970s there were a few exceptions, but generally this assumption must hold to be true for that time. Thus, when I wrote that “*Beware, the tools of Communism are coming*”, in its context this was interpreted by the Court to mean that “*the penises of Communism were ejaculating*”. Ludicrous, but true. Similarly, when John Vorster’s dinner companion proclaimed that she simply loved his Nationalist balls, the Court came to the conclusion that this had five different interpretations, each “*too disgusting for words*”. It then went on to find the words to describe its disgust even though, in this case, they probably came to some understandable conclusions.

Thus it could be said that, in the 1970s, student humour defined the cultural, aesthetic, and political chasm existing between the English and Afrikaans-speaking communities in South Africa, and underlined the levels of suspicion which separated the parochial and inward-looking world of Apartheid bigotry and the international student movement we identified with.

More importantly though, Afrikaner



Banned back page of the John Burger Saga, March 1973.

society of the 1970s was overwhelmingly patriarchal in nature, where tradition dictated that the family head, and other father figures such as the local preacher, the co-op *voorsitter* and, of course, the Prime Minister, dictated the macro and micro mores and values of their families, their congregations, and their constituencies. To insult the *father* figure was unthinkable, and any attempt to deride it was perceived to undermine the basic values of their society as a whole. Thus satire, personal ridicule and anything which diminished the dignity of the patriarch, the preacher and the Prime Minister was considered to be subversive.

A couple of news photographers from the *Sunday Times* found this out for their

continues on page 4:

**“After all, student humour the world over is commonly expected, at best, to be smutty and lavatorial in nature, and although some of the Wits Student satire was really funny, it was hardly immortal prose.”**

## Part 1: Satire and Apartheid



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pains, when the Security Police arrested them for taking a photograph of John Vorster at a banquet with a couple of empty wine bottles overturned on the table in front of him. To some ways of thinking, the image might have implied that he was a drunk, a conclusion that was probably uncomfortably close to home. He was reportedly fond of an evening tippie before retiring for the night with a comic book and a half-jack of brandy ... or so it was told in inner social circles. The press photographers had broken no written law, but still had their films confiscated and later could show smashed cameras and a few bruises for their troubles.

When Apartheid's masters could not draw upon a law to support their prejudices, they did not hesitate to invent one to suit their immediate needs. Thus should a white male employer give a lift

to the family's maid after work and seat her in the front of the car next to him, they both ran the peril of being arrested for planning to break the Immorality Act which prohibited acts of tenderness between people of different skin melanin content, even if no such provision existed in law. Apartheid mores held that the proper place for a *servant* was at the back of the car, behind her *master*, and Afrikaners would use any means at their disposal to force non-Afrikaners to abide by their social customs.

Significantly such prejudices were also manifest in other arrangements between the genders. For example, should a white family take a drive in their car, custom dictated that the men should sit in the front while the women and minor children sat in the back. To have it otherwise was considered it to be a scandal.

continues on page 5:

*Spot the Pig Competition,  
Wits Student, 1972.*

***“To insult the father figure was unthinkable, and any attempt to deride it was perceived to undermine the basic values of their society as a whole.”***

## Part 1: Satire and Apartheid



*Pro Veritate, 1974.*



*Poster for John Balthazar, Superstar. Artwork seized by the Security Police and never seen thereafter. This is a later reconstruction, 2017.*

continued from page 4:

When my wife and I were married in 1970, it was considered to be improper for a white woman to drive the car while the man sat in front as a passenger beside her. A woman was permitted to sit in front with a man, but only as a passenger and provided there were no other men in the vehicle, otherwise her proper place as a passenger was in the back seat. When we drove about Johannesburg in a manner that we considered normal, we ran the peril of incurring incidents of road rage, where other men objected to such an arrangement and either swore at us, or cut us off, or challenged my virility in fairly vulgar terms for allowing my wife to drive me around.

So it was with *Wits Student*, whose editorial policies and contents were so far removed from Afrikaner thinking that it might as well have been published on a different planet. Apartheid's masters could not understand the social values and democratic principles the paper stood for, and could only react by over-reacting. Thus the students at Wits forced the Government into actions which exposed its true totalitarian nature at a time when it was attempting to present a more moderate image to the outside world while increasing its absolutist control over South African society. Under such circumstances, satire and laughter subverted the objectives of the state and could not be tolerated.

Satire was also an attractive alternative to those who opposed Apartheid, but did not believe in a violent response to an overwhelmingly powerful industrial-military state. At the time the ANC and the various liberation movements did not exist as a viable alternative, and liberals had few options available to them. The Liberal Party had disbanded, the trade union movement was just beginning to stir, and the weapons of peaceful and legal resistance to such laws as the Group Areas Act, the Immorality Act, and the Separate Amenities Act, affecting sport and all inter-racial social contact, were still in the process of being invented. Barring a few figureheads, opponents to Apartheid had precious few legal allies we could turn to. So, the pen of the cartoonist, the typewriter of the writer, and the paintbrush of the artist became weapons in a struggle still being defined by bigotry, censorship and state-controlled ideology. This was also an arena where inter-racial contact could not legitimately take place, where opponents of Apartheid, regardless of race, creed, gender, or colour, were not allowed to meet socially on an equal basis. The lives of people were regulated by a number of interlocking laws that defined who could meet where, be present until what time, and drink alcohol with whom they chose. Inevitably, also, some people

continues on page 6:

***“So it was with Wits Student, whose editorial policies and contents were so far removed from Afrikaner thinking that it might as well have been published on a different planet. Apartheid’s masters could not understand the social values and democratic principles the paper stood for, and could only react by over-reacting.”***

## Part 1: Satire and Apartheid

continued from page 5:

fell in love, another *verboden* activity.

By the way, those of us who lived through that era will also recall the unspoken and informal liberalization that took place in the late 1960s when many restrictions upon the gay community were lifted. Once the practical implications of this became known it was realised that, unwittingly, the Nationalist Government had also provided a legal loophole for social interaction to take place between heterosexual couples of mixed race. It took another eight years or so before this too was removed from our law books.

Thus a perceived like, or dislike, of Afrikaners as a whole was irrelevant to the issue. By the 1970s the imposition of Apartheid as a policy was in the hands of Afrikaans-speaking politicians and administrators, almost all top administrative positions in Government were filled by Afrikaners, the police, the railways, the army and the post office were essentially Afrikaner institutions, and it was an attempt to impose Afrikaans as the language of education upon the black schooling system that sparked off the student uprising in Soweto in 1976. South African cultural and civil society was infiltrated, and in many cases controlled, by members of the Broederbond, an Afrikaner secret society whose objectives were the establishment of a state run exclusively by Afrikaners, for Afrikaners. Afrikaners were at the heart of the Apartheid state, and it was inevitable that our satire would be directed almost entirely upon Afrikaner authority figures

and Afrikaner culture. The parrot-cry of *boerehaat*, hatred for the Afrikaners, still heard today, was a deliberate attempt used by the Afrikaans press to deflect criticism from the racism and bigotry of the South African state.

**T**his then was the context within which *The John Burger Saga* was drawn. Sometimes its humour might have been misdirected, sometimes it was a little vulgar, often it was bitter, but always it stood for the principles of democratic values, and an intolerance of bigotry and racism. To our way of thinking, the enemy was well-defined, and the divisions between *us* and *them* were clearly delineated, with no *ifs* and *buts* to blur the lines. It picked up the values for which a generation of servicemen and women before us had fought for, and had often died. By the laws of natural selection the

continues on page 7:



Unpublished graphic. 2002.

***“The lives of people were regulated by a number of interlocking laws that defined who could meet where, be present until what time, and drink alcohol with whom they chose. Inevitably, also, some people fell in love, another verboden activity.”***

## Part 1: Satire and Apartheid

continued from page 6:

inheritors of fascist and totalitarian values should not have been living amongst us still.

**M**any of the immediate family of students who worked on the Editorial Board of Wits Student had served in the war against fascism, and some had given their lives in the name of Democracy.

A few had even lost relatives in the Holocaust, and it did not sit well with us that those who had given support and comfort to the Nazi cause were still walking free in our country to preach their creed of bigotry and hatred. To our mind this fight was begun by our parents and would not be over until we had buried the last apostle of racism.

I have never been able to find out what my Italian family did during the war. My one grandfather worked for the partisans in Fiume and died because of it, but the rest of them, judging by their often-voiced opinions, just survived and hoped that it would all go away. My wife's family, on the other hand, all served in the SADF and wore the red tabs of volunteers with pride.

One uncle was taken prisoner at the first battle of Tobruk, another was a decorated pilot who flew Spitfires, and my father-in-law fought in North Africa and only ceased using the word "Aitai" when I married into the family. When they came back to South Africa they marched with the Torch Commando, stood with the Black Sash, and ran Freedom Radio until the tracking technology used by the SA Police got too close for comfort. Then, as now, I firmly believe that their war was our war, and that we gave them closure in 1994.



Unpublished graphic of NGK clergy fantasy.

### Honing the media knife of holding power to account

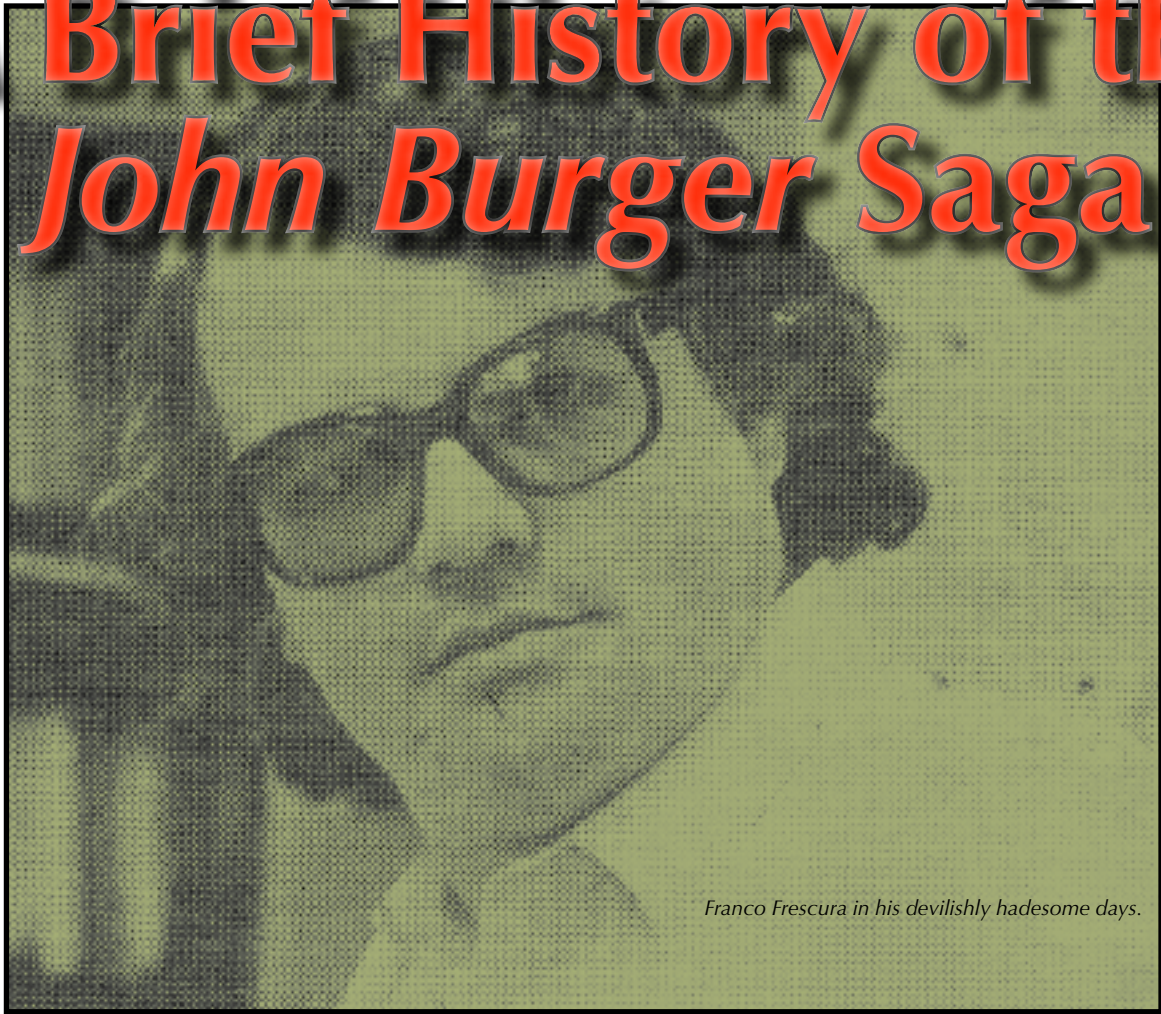
... and to hear another voice in the Wits University student press battle against the apartheid regime, follow this link:

- Former Wits Student editor Dr Irwin Manoim shares his recollections of a newspaper that pushed boundaries
- <https://www.wits.ac.za/alumni/benefits/witsreview-magazine/>

***“A few had even lost relatives in the Holocaust, and it did not sit well with us that those who had given support and comfort to the Nazi cause were still walking free in our country to preach their creed of bigotry and hatred. To our mind this fight was begun by our parents and would not be over until we had buried the last apostle of racism.”***

## Part 2:

# A Brief History of the John Burger Saga



*Franco Frescura in his devilishly handsome days.*

## Franco Frescura

During the 1970s the University newspaper, *Wits Student*, was a weekly tabloid published by the Wits SRC. On 21 April 1972 it featured on its front cover a lampoon which located the-then Prime Minister, John Vorster, at the bottom of a toilet bowl, presumably keeping company with other malodorous turds. As a direct result, on 9 May its editor, Mark Douglas-Home, a nephew of the-then British Prime Minister, was declared by the Government to be an “undesirable alien”, and deported. The lampoon, the product of the fertile mind of future architect, Mark Wolffe, has since descended into lavatorial folklore.

In 1973 Mark Douglas-Home was followed as Editor by Derek Louw, with a Board that included a number of highly talented writers, including Stephen Friedman, Geoffrey Norman, and Stephen Hulbert. Its contents featured articles on international student news, the history of the labour movement, Feminist theory,

bitingly funny satire, hard-hitting debates on national political issues, and an iconoclastic front page. On its back page it usually featured a column oddly named *The John Burger Saga*, written and produced by a witty and devilishly handsome architectural student of Italian extraction called Franco Frescura, the author

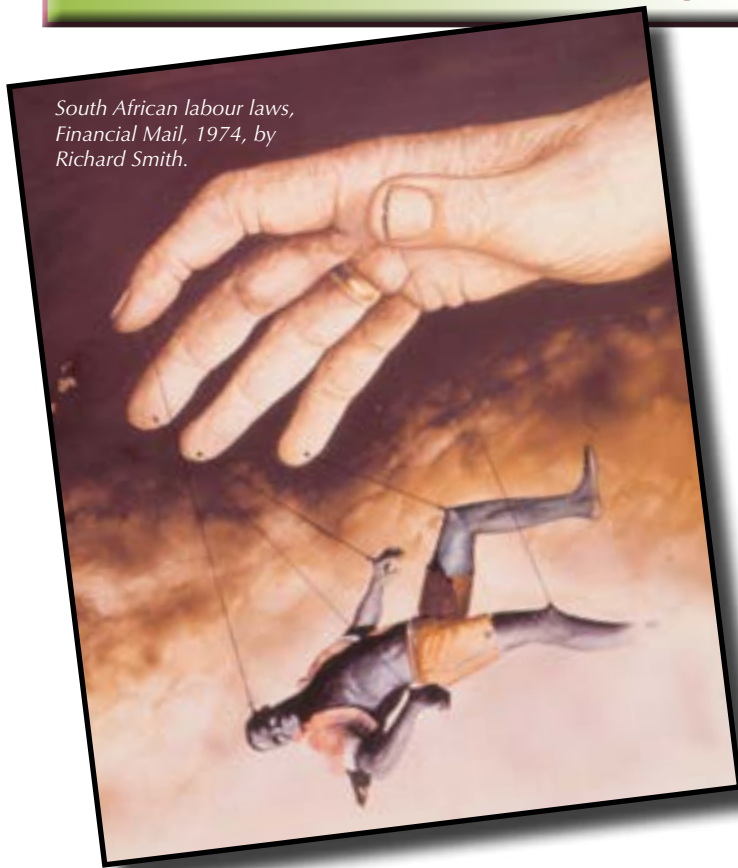
***“On its back page it usually featured a column oddly named The John Burger Saga, written and produced by a witty and devilishly handsome architectural student of Italian extraction called Franco Frescura, the author of this article.”***

of this article. The paper’s tone was unapologetically anti-racist, anti bigot, anti-fascist, anti-apartheid, and anti anything that had to do with the South African Government. The paper rapidly gained a wide following, on and off campus, and at one stage it was estimated that each copy was being read by at least nine people, giving it a readership of 18-20,000. It was flushed with success but, for some unaccountable reason, had little advertising revenue.

One of its early groupies was Craig Williamson, better-known to his “intimate” student friends by the pet name of *Craigie* who, at the time, was sharing a house with Stephen Friedman, and had yet to emerge as a courageous and intrepid killer of women and innocent children.

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## Part 2: A Brief History of the John Burger Saga



South African labour laws,  
Financial Mail, 1974, by  
Richard Smith.



South African election poster, 1974:  
Albert Hertzog

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*The John Burger Saga* was printed on the back page of *Wits Student* between 5 May 1972 and 27 April 1973. In its brief life, only 16 pages were ever produced, five of which were immediately banned by the Government's Publication Control Board. An omnibus reprint of the collected works of John Burger, published on 4 May 1973, sold 3000 copies within three hours. By 18.00 that evening a special broadcast on the SABC, the state-run radio service, had warned the nation that reading, possession and distribution of the publication had been banned. Listeners were advised to destroy their copies forthwith, or face a hefty fine and the possibility of a prison sentence. This made the paper highly collectable, and numerous copies were soon finding their way to readers overseas.

**T**o repeat the obvious, neither the column nor its author had anything to do with the front page lampoon, published previously, which portrayed a child looking into a toilet bowl, asking, no one in particular, to "Excuse me, are you the Prime Minister?" As matters transpired I could not have drawn this

work as five days previously I had broken my right wrist in a hockey match at the Wanderers, and could prove it by producing a medical certificate. Nonetheless this fact did not carry much weight with the Editor of the *Sunday Express*, "Johnny" Johnson, known in the trade as someone who enjoyed a rather tenuous relationship with the truth. On 15 April 1973 the *Sunday Express* conflated my work with that of Mark Wolffe, the original author of this prose, and carried an article headed "Lavatory joker Franco does it again". Henceforth, Johnny decided, I should be known in his editorials as a "lavatorial cartoonist". I did not care much about what an illiterate like Johnson thought of me, but I think that Mark was a little miffed by this mistaken attribution.

### The John Burger Saga

The series of sixteen panels which comprises *The John*

*Burger Saga* began as a brief attempt at a political cartoon strip, but pressures of time and the need to pay more than lip service to the requirements of a university education soon saw its reduction to a series of lampoon panels which, if anything, proved to be even more effective in antagonising the right people or, more to the point, people on the right.

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## Part 2: A Brief History of the John Burger Saga

Dutch Anti-Apartheid poster, circa 1974.



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By the end of 1972 it had gained a wide following in the Parliamentary Reading Room, as well as *Die Transvaler*, *Die Vaderland*'s editorial desk, and some of the more literate members of the Security Police. The former connection proved important, for many of the snippets carried by *The John Burger Saga* were being provided on a regular basis by insiders of party political caucuses. The warning that "*Beware, the tools of Communism are coming*", for example, featured in conjunction with an Aubrey Beardsley drawing on 30 March 1973, were uttered in Nationalist Party caucus by a parliamentary back-bencher, Cas Greyling. John Vorster was widely referred to by his followers as "*a harde man*", an uncompromising man but, to a student satirist, its literal translation to English had other and much more interesting connotations (30 March).

On the other hand, the truth was often more effective than any satire. Allegations that General Hendrik van den Bergh, head of the then Bureau of State Security (BOSS), was providing his farm workers with free electric shock therapy (28 July 1972) were subsequently picked up by the national press. The glorious leader of the United Party opposition, Sir de Villiers Graaff, had a war record distinguished only for its passive acquiescence to Nazi POW rules (16 March), as were the pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic affiliations of United Party MP, Etienne Malan. His sudden and unlamented departure from the political scene in the 1974 election was the direct result of investigative reporting published by my colleagues on *Wits Student*. The frequent comparisons of John Vorster to high-ranking Nazi criminals (9 March) were based upon his valiant support for the German

cause during WWII, and his totalitarian-mindset thereafter. If you were on death row, then for you South Africa was "*a swinging country*", and yes, the students did consider Apartheid to be obscene, far in excess of any pornographic image they might care to publish.

Although unstated at the time, this access to insider knowledge may have been one of the reasons why, in 1973, the Nationalist Government finally decided to move against *Wits Student*.

### The Aftermath

All of this was, of course, besides the point to the University, who had its own devils to exorcise. In an obvious move to appease its donors, Wits instituted a disciplinary hearing against Derek Louw and I, charging us with "*bringing the University into disrepute*". The Disciplinary Committee was chaired by Prof Ellison Kahn, Deputy Vice Chancellor and former Dean of Law, rumoured to have a collection of pornographic material, obtained strictly for academic research purposes under Government license. Other members included Professors GA Doyle, NG Garson, PR Levy, and well-known liberal, Prof Phillip Tobias, soon to become an icon of the South African scientific establishment. Evidence was led by Professor David Zeffert. Initially we were represented pro bono by Advocate Ernest Wentzel, who was forced to resign on ethical grounds following the 27 April issue of *Wits Student*. He was immediately replaced by Professor John Dugard, of the Wits Law faculty.

Following the hearing, on 3 May 1973 we were found guilty and rusticated for the remainder of the year. Tobias later admitted privately that the hearing had been "*a monumental blunder*" on the part of the University authorities but, needless

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## Part 2: A Brief History of the John Burger Saga

**continues from page 10:**

to say, the episode did not feature in his memoirs.

On 22 May Derek and I were arrested by the South African Police and charged with contraventions under the Publications and Entertainment Act. These charges were based directly upon the findings of the University's "liberal" Disciplinary Committee and were therefore, in the Government's eyes, beyond reproach. On 14 August we pleaded guilty to four charges of defamation and criminal libel, and were each sentenced to nine months in jail, suspended for three years, and a total fine of R1850, equivalent today to R75,000. One of the charges against us related to the publication of a statement that the South African Parliament consisted of a "corrupt pack of neo-Nazis who have been elected by less than one-fifth of the people of this country". In retrospect, I am still surprised by the moderate tone of our prose.

The court case also became subject of some drama. We had been charged under provisions of an act which attempted to define criminal libel. It was little known at the time and had last been used in the 1920s when a person with diminished mental capacities had defamed a Supreme Court judge. This, quite obviously, did not apply to us as at worst, we had published invented stories which would have been more at home in *The National Enquirer* than a student tabloid. Unbeknown to us we had invented "fake news", and Mr Trump and the MAGA movement would have held us up as icons of a free press.

**S**econdly, the State quite obviously did not know, or care, as to the minutiae of courtroom procedure. More to the point was the fact that a charge sheet was a public document, and its contents were therefore in the public domain and could be quoted verbatim in the public press. If the Department of Justice had overlooked this point, it certainly found it out soon enough for, on the day that we were due to appear in court to answer twelve charges of



Cover of *Corriere della Sera*, August 1960, illustrating the attempt upon the life of PM Hendrik Verwoerd.

Criminal Libel, the morning edition of *The Rand Daily Mail* carried the full, unexpurgated version of the charge sheet, with full size copies of the cartoons originally published by the *Wits Student*. As a result, thanks to the freedom of the South African press and the generosity of the Times Media Group, our work was given exposure to a readership numbering of hundreds of thousands and not the meagre 1800 who normally bought our paper on the Wits campus! The State, or more to the point, the Nationalist Party, had obviously forgotten that the RDM was still flagship of a newspaper owned by the Anglo-American

Group, and that it was edited by Derek's father, the now famous Raymond Louw.

During the course of our criminal trial we discovered that the owner of the company that printed *Wits Student* every week was the nephew of JJ Kruger, Chairman of the Publication's Control Board and the country's chief censor. This finally explained how copies of the paper were able to find their way to John Vorster in Cape Town and to the Security Police at John Vorster Square before it went on sale on the Wits campus on the Friday morning. As it was printed late on the Thursday night, copies must have been sent that evening by overnight courier to reach Parliament by 08.00 the following morning. We also discovered that the Prime Minister was an assiduous reader of the *Wits Student*, and would frequently leaf through its pages in the company of prominent academics, whom he would berate loudly.

On 11 July 1974 the Government stripped me of my South African citizenship, a move which rendered

me stateless for the next ten years, during which time I was not permitted to travel outside the country, nor to any designated homelands and black residential areas. This was not a restriction that caused me undue concern, and during my frequent field trips

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## Part 2: A Brief History of the John Burger Saga



*Sculpture, Franco Frescura, Wits, 1972*



*Portrait of worker in Kliptown, 1976.  
Franco Frescura.*

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into South Africa's rural areas it became common practice for me to hide my vehicle well off the road camouflaged beneath some friendly bushes. The rural people I met during my research proved to be very helpful in this regard.

My citizenship was reinstated in 1984, at the instance of Minister of the Interior, Louwrens Muller who had personally contacted my Member of Parliament, Rupert Lorimer, and indicated that, were I to reapply for my South African citizenship, the matter would receive his personal and most favourite attention. I never found out the reasons for such treatment, but this move appears to have also opened the way for the return of travel documents to a host of other anti-apartheid activists.

Since 1973 I have continued to use graphics as a means of making political and social commentary on a number of issues, although I seldom publish material with a satirical content. After all, I have now come to the conclusion that politics in our country is also no laughing matter. Instead I have contributed drawings to a number of political causes and organisations, including the Christian Institute, SPROCAS, SASO, the Fietas Resident's Association, FOSATU, the Social Democrats, the ANC, and a range of trade unions and NGOs. I have also continued to draw material of a more personal nature, most of which has never been published.

In 2013 I celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of events at the University of the Witwatersrand with the publication of a book documenting the social prejudices and blithe bigotry of Durban's polite, post-colonial society. I do not think that anyone took any notice, but then, unlike *The John Burger Saga*, I do not think that

anyone cared any more.

### And Then ...

Today, 52 years later, it is difficult to remember clearly many of the finer details that surrounded these events, and I can only paint a picture through the use of a very broad brush. I hope that, in doing so, I have done justice to the many friends who, like my own family, survived through those times. Following my rustication from Wits

in 1973, I returned the following year and despite the ban that the University had placed upon me I found very little difficulty in staying out of student politics. Having taken eleven years to graduate with a BArch, I completed a Masters in nine months and less than four years for a PhD. I discovered that the practice of architecture was actually very boring and became an academic instead. By now I have written 16 books and over 200 academic papers. For a time I continued to draw graphics for selected groups and trade unions, but have kept far away from people with no sense of humour, something that has been quite difficult in a country like South Africa.

It has been some time since anyone has remembered my student

past, possibly because I now use insulting words that are longer than four letters and few people know what they mean, but I still enjoy a good pun or a spot of irony. Which leads to my final, and most ironic remarks. As I have now told, in 1973 I was charged with defaming the Prime Minister, John Vorster. The Chair of the University Committee that rusticated me was Philip Tobias. Philip and I subsequently became good friends and academic colleagues. In 2022 I was surprised to learn that the

***"Since 1973 I have continued to use graphics as a means of making political and social commentary on a number of issues, although I seldom publish material with a satirical content. After all, I have now come to the conclusion that politics in our country is also no laughing matter."***

Simon van der Stel Committee had awarded me a gold medal for my work in the conservation of our national cultural heritage. I was even more surprised to learn that the first recipient of this award, given in 1969, had been John Vorster, and that Philip had received this same award twenty years later. I am convinced that nothing that I ever wrote in Wits Student could ever have gone beyond the supreme irony that life can present us with.

Or maybe I can. A good friend of mine in the legal profession was banned for five years in 1970 by the then Minister of Police for allegedly serving the ends of a subversive organisation. He was served with his banning order by the Security Police two weeks after being decorated by the South African Defence Force for his courage in action on the border.