

VIVA! VIVA!

by DAVID BASCKIN

BARBIE, OH BARBIE

WHILE skimming through a grumpy little Joburg tabloid en route to the Doonsbury cartoons the other day, my eye chanced upon a searing indictment of Barbie dolls. It seems, in the opinion of some Capetown educationist, that Barbie, bless her skinny hips, is chockfull of bad news. As a father of young daughters, this came to me as a great shock, since we had only recently burnt all our Noddy books, to the approving nods of the cultural workers in our immediate social circle. But however bad Noddy is or was, he's got nothing on Barbie. Barbie gives children wrong values. Barbie reinforces gender stereotypes. Barbie pushes consumerism. Barbie promotes anorexia. Wow and golly. When you consider that all this power is concentrated in 11 inches of plastic, Barbie must have the magical abilities of a Nigerian fetish, at the very least. Prompted by this exposé, I conducted a little bit of research of my own. According to some documents slipped to me by my mole in the United States Information Service, it would seem that Barbie is a special project of the CIA designed to promote capitalism throughout the entire world. Having already smashed the systems of Eastern Europe, Barbie was now en route to destroy socialism in the New South Africa. Shattered by this, I went in search of my daughter only to find her dressing Ken (that's Barbie's chaste and plastic boyfriend) in a gold lamé miniskirt with matching Madonna-style lurex bra. So much for gender stereotypes, I thought, deciding to save the CIA connection story for her sixth birthday.

I TALK TO THE PRESS

SO the Hero of Angola, the Victor of South West Africa, the Securocrat of Securocrats, the Hammer of the Reds, the Scourge of the Cubans, the Sword of Righteousness, is to become the Minister of Forests. What an end to a mighty military career. In fact, with the possible exception of Dr

Treurnicht's brief tenure as Minister of Statistics, I can think of no other Nat heavyweight to have been so unambiguously sidelined. Meanwhile, on the other side, some commentators are making much of the symmetry between Malan's cabinet shift and that of Chris Hani. Maybe secondment to the South African Communist Party is the ANC's version of the Ministry of Trees.

MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE CROCODILE

JUNIOR, a large male crocodile currently resident in an Assagay croc breeding establishment, raised some small prickles of terror with the news that he has recently eaten several small lady crocs which a benign management provided for his entertainment. The general idea was that he would mate with them, and so achieve his version of the Greatest Good, with everyone — from Junior, to the lady crocs, to the owners — reaping material and emotional benefits, each to his or her own kind. Sadly, this was not to be, since Junior consumed not only his last chance for marital bliss, but the equivalent of twenty belts, eight handbags, three wallets and one gross assorted watch straps.

THOSE IN PERIL

WHILE the life-enhancing behaviour of the captain of the *Oceanos* has dominated the news, there has been little information on the reasons for the sinking. According to my favourite conspiracy theorist, it would seem that the *Oceanos* was sunk by a torpedo fired by an Inkatha submarine, the *Jamile*. Based at Kosi Bay, the *Jamile* is the flagship of the Royal Zulu Navy. Before sinking the *Oceanos*, the captain informed the SADF, so allowing the South Africans to carry out an effective "rescue" and so gain some much-needed positive publicity for Pretoria.

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