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10 SEP 1999

Business Day Jr..... Nr..... P..... Dat.....

**THE SUMMIT PROFILE****With one foot in the SACP**

**and the other in the ANC, Jeff Radebe manages  
a tough business**

# Private side of privatisation's tsar

*He is a committed communist — and yet he is selling off state enterprises.*

*Robyn Chalmers looks at the paradoxical world of a guitar*

*-playing cabinet minister*

**O**NE should not be fooled by the relaxed air about Jeff Radebe. This is a man who has met enormous challenges in his life — and has now assumed the mantle of one of the more daunting jobs in government.

He is SA's public enterprises minister, which means he is the one driving the privatisation programme that promises so much for the country's economy.

Radebe's colleagues cannot remember the last time he took a vacation, and they paint a portrait of a man who is driven, dedicated and who lives and

breathes his work.

But he is in fact a flesh-and blood human being and, as such, has a number of pastimes which lighten the pressing of matters of state.

First and foremost is his love of soccer. If he can possibly help it, he will not miss a Bafana Bafana game. "He is absolutely crazy about soccer, and he can do a mean toyi toyi as well," says one colleague.

Should he manage to get a few days off, he is most likely to go to a health spa to rejuvenate, says another colleague.

But he spends much of the spare time which he does put aside with his family.

**TREFWOORDE**

1 Chalmers

Robyn

2 Huldeblyke

3 Radebe F

4 Tenughlikke

5 Oorsigte

6 Loopbane

7 Suksesse

8 Naamlyste

9 Staatskorps

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10 Privatisering

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In February 1997 he married his second wife Bridgette Radebe, nee Motsepe, who is said to be the first black women to enter the mining industry in SA.

Radebe has two children, Vukani and Mandisa, from his previous marriage.

Work, however, appears to be generally uppermost in his mind. "If I believe in something, I do it with passion," he says.

Radebe's spokesperson Zaid Nordien tells of how Radebe, after returning from a trip to Copenhagen where he held back-to-back meetings for more than a week, flew into Johannesburg International Airport at 7am and insisted on attending a presidential review commission hearing at 9am.

"He is one of the most focused people that I have ever met," says Nordien.

This portrait of Radebe is not evident during a face-to-face meeting where the minister is at pains to try to put me at ease and create a relaxed atmosphere. He comes across as someone perfectly at ease with himself, who knows what he wants and has a plan on how to get there.

Given his history, it is not hard to understand where his sense of determination comes from.

Radebe was only five years old when he and his family were forcibly removed from their home in Cato Manor near Durban and forced to settle in KwaMashu. It was at this moment, he says, that he became aware of the harsh realities of black life under apartheid.

He first became fully politically conscious in high school and was active in student politics, ultimately studying law at the University of Zululand.

He tells of how he and his fellow students read avidly and were largely in-

spired by Malcolm X, Angela Davis, Martin Luther King, Fidel Castro and Albert Luthuli.

Radebe joined the ANC underground during the historic 1976 student rebellion. He travelled widely, spending time in Germany, Russia, Tanzania, Mozambique and Lesotho.

Radebe was arrested in April 1986, which he calls his "least successful undertaking", after actively organising ANC underground units in Lesotho. This resulted in him spending four years on Robben Island. It was here that he acquired one of his great passions — playing the classical guitar, which he studied

under fellow inmate Bafana Nkosi.

It was also on Robben Island that he began to hone the interpersonal skills he needed to move up the ranks of the political world. These skills, as well as an ability to separate the wheat from the welter of privatisation chaff, are going to be crucial if he is to make a success of his

new portfolio.

Although the heads the parastatals he deals with are unlikely to be publicly critical of Radebe's appointment to the post, most appear to be genuinely enthusiastic. Eskom CE Allen Morgan talks of Radebe as a man "ready to do business".

Radebe's special advisor Ian Phillips says he has the reputation of someone who gets things done, and also one of being a team-player. Both of these will be crucial if Radebe is to properly smooth the path of restructuring at Transnet or Eskom, or any of the other parastatals performing a strategic service in the country.

The privatisation initiative forms an integral part of government's economic policy and it is a key driver of the black economic empowerment programme.

Most analysts agree that the programme to date has failed to achieve its aims, with the same elite few individuals and groups being financially empowered time and again.

For Radebe, the empowerment aspect of privatisation is very important. While he is a member of the ANC national executive committee and the national working committee, he was also re-elected in July last year to the central committee of the SA Communist Party (SACP).

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**Business Day**

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Having studied law at the Karl Marx University and spent a year at the Lenin International School in Moscow, Radebe holds close to his heart communist doctrines of a transformed society that puts human needs and values above so-called greed and polarisation.

Phillips describes Radebe as largely "non-ideological" and says his political perspective is premised on the tripartite alliance between the ANC, SACP and labour.

"He has no difficulty reconciling a deep commitment to the SACP with an equal commitment to the ANC leadership," says Phillips.

So, unlike some of his cabinet colleagues, Radebe disarmingly agrees that the price government can attain for the sale of some assets is crucial. The ability of the initiative to help sort out SA's crippling socio-economic problems is a priority.

"The growth of small and medium sized enterprises helped fuel the creation of the Asian Tigers, where 90% of the economy is in the hands of small companies," he says.

There are those who believe that Radebe is destined for greater things, and it has been whispered by some in business and political circles that he is being groomed to ultimately take over the top position in the country.

His ability to correctly manage privatisation, and to withstand the critical spotlight that comes with that process, will go a long way to determining whether such a scenario has any chance of realisation.

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**Business Day**

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**THE BIG SALE****WHAT HAS HAPPENED?**

**1995:** Deputy President Thabo Mbeki announced that stakes in a number of state-owned entities would be put up for sale.

**1996:** Nothing happened.

**1997:** Sun Air was sold to the Rethabile/Comair consortium for R42,1m. (Sun Air recently ceased operating.)

Several SABC radio stations were sold to various private concerns for R510,2m.

Thirty percent of Telkom was sold to US-based SBC Communications and Telekom Malaysia for R5,63bn.

**1998:** 20% of the Airports Company was sold to Italy's Aeroporti di Roma for R819m.

Thirty percent of Transnet's fleet management company Viamax Fleet Solutions was sold to a newly formed black empowerment consortium for R12m.

**1999:** Aventura holiday resorts was sold to Kopano ke Matla for R93m (the deal was subsequently cancelled and Protea Hotels awarded a five-year management contract).

The Alexkor management contract was awarded to Nabera consortium.

Twenty percent of SA Airways was sold to Swissair for R1,4bn.

Transnet travel subsidiary Connex Travel was sold to a consortium of Rennies Travel and El Shadai Equity Investments for R13,5m.

**DEALS UNDER NEGOTIATION:**

☐ The sale of 500 000ha of state commercial forests (R1bn to R1,5bn estimate).

☐ The Post Office management contract is expected to be awarded to preferred bidders New Zealand Post International and the British

**Post Office.**

☐ An unspecified stake in Denel Aviation is to be sold to British Aerospace and a black empowerment group.

☐ Eskom's info tech division, Denel's Aerial Technologies and Datavia are being consolidated into a single IT company.

☐ Eskom's telecommunications division and Transnet's Transtel are being consolidated as SA's future second national telecomms operator.

**FUTURE EXERCISES:**

☐ Transnet is to sell off many of its non-core assets and introduce private sector involvement in other core operations.

☐ Arms maker Denel will seek an international equity partner.

☐ SA Special Risks Insurance Association (Sasria) is to be restructured and possibly sold.

☐ Eskom's Rotek Industrial is to acquire a strategic equity partner.

☐ Stakes in Telkom and the Airports Company, and possibly SAA, are to be listed via an initial public offering.

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