

# Fly on the wall ...



Nghia Le

And so Fly and his compatriots have a Government of National Unity. It rings a 30 year old bell. Was the name less ironic then? Fly thinks so. On both occasions, the idea was not that this was to be How We Would Be Governed Forever. On the first occasion, it was what certain industries tend to call a “glide path”; a glide path towards the normalisation of a polity. Now, nobody quite thinks that’s what it is, although some say it’s a glide path away from a single party reality towards something more “normal” than that. On both occasions, there was a sense that it was some kind of glue that held things together for a while, like tightly wound insulation tape around a pressure cooker. Jittery we were then; jittery we are now. But then, there was promise – not clear of what, but the potential paths seemed to bristle with open-ended possibility, most of it exciting and hopeful. Now, not so much.

Fly is 30 years older. So is this land and its heartache. So are our vicious squabbles and our mantras of content. “We are still here.” “We still have so much to be grateful for.” “We’re different.” “We’ve won the World Cup again.” One thing is difficult to deny. The place is broken

everywhere. Everything that matters is in tatters. The direction of travel for the Ship of State is not what benign outsiders would envy. Fly has often over the last thirty years felt like someone on a ship out in the ocean where bits are rotting and falling off, leaks are springing everywhere, crew and passengers are helping themselves to essential components of the ship, and all the while the captain is taking an axe to the most important parts of the structure. Fly is still in one of the prettiest cabins (nothing like the cabins some of the crew have managed to secure, mind), while most other passengers are miserable and getting more and more miserable, and desperate. Not to mention angry, with much of the anger directed at him in his pretty cabin, which appears to encourage the axe-wielding on the part of the captain.

And now? Well, we dodged some ugly bullets. Yes, Fly would say that, being who and what he is. So let him say that. We dodged some really scary, ugly bullets. And this Wildebeest seems our best chance of interim relief pending the review, waiting five years down the line, however scary and ugly that may turn out to be. There may be some letting off in the axe

department for a while. The world may give us another chance. The markets seem to like it, if tentatively. There may even be, when the gunshot pops die down, the far-off sound of rekindling of dawns of 30 years ago. And ... The loadshedding monster is taking a surprising breather. Potholes appear to be receiving some attention. Are water pipes being repaired? Do we see real efforts to rebuild rail infrastructure and to guard it?

People who undergo near-death experiences, as a rule, feel they owe it to fate and to themselves to reflect on what matters, to appreciate what they have, to focus on doing that which they got so close to not being able to try to do anymore. It almost always serves as a bit of a fillip in the psychology of motivation. No doubt our squabbles will intensify. No doubt the resentment will grow. No doubt the leaks will increase in number and gravity. The theft will not abate. But when the moon is high and the hour late, and the single malt hums at the stars, is Fly allowed to hope, without feeling too silly about it, that the proximity of catastrophe, the nearness of the miss, may yet have a sobering effect on the direction of travel? Whether he is allowed to, or not, he will. **A**