

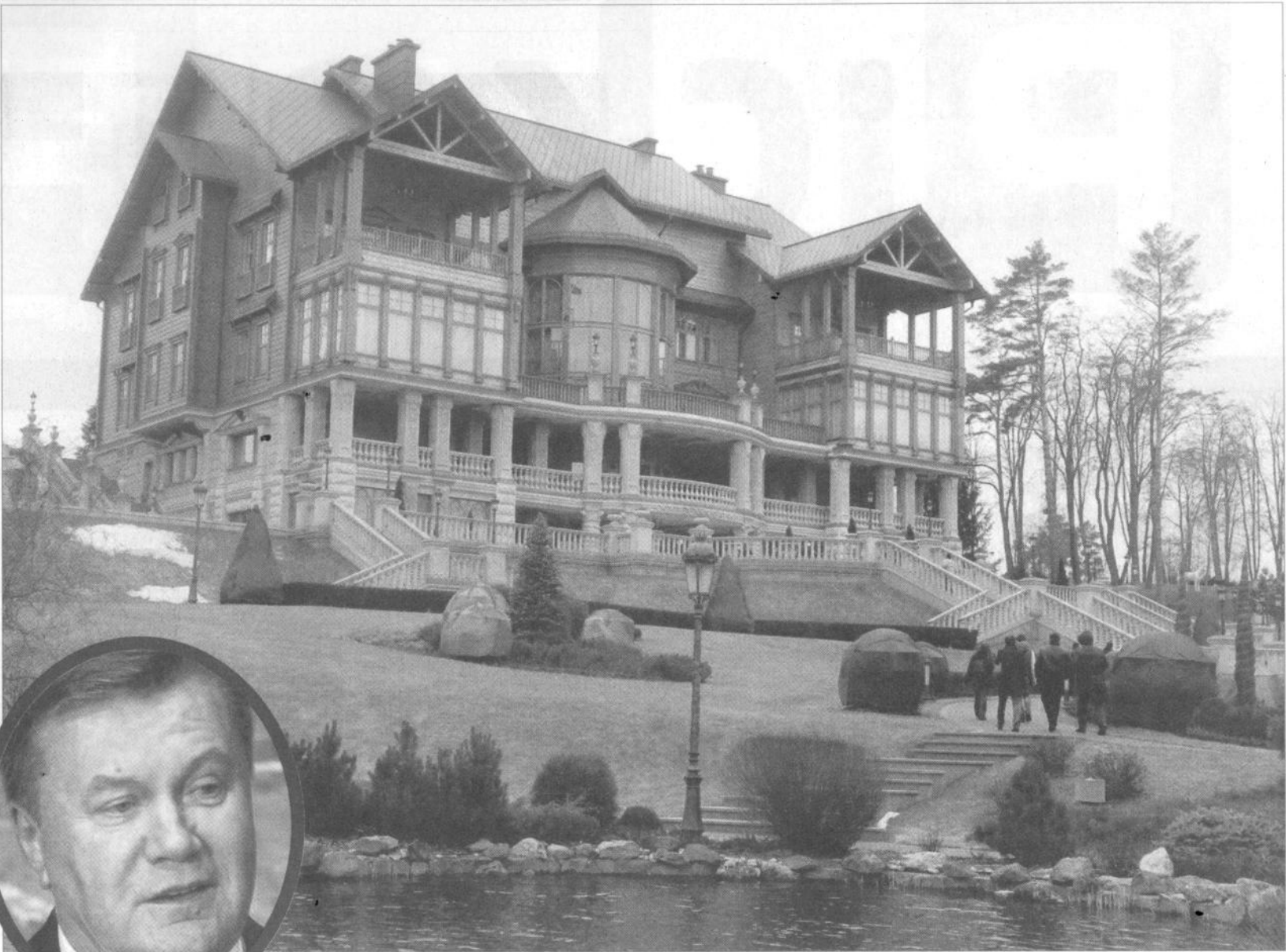
Living it up the norm for many leaders

Z by no means only politician to spend taxpayer cash on his home

PILETSO MOTUMI

PRESIDENT Jacob Zuma is not the only head of state to have spent lavishly on a private residence. Just north of our border, Robert Mugabe has a private residence in Harare's Borrowdale Brooke worth 75 million. The mansion was apparently built by a foreign construction company and is three times the size of the official Zimbabwean state house. Mugabe's palatial home has 25 bedrooms, and its interior is decorated with marble, tile and crystal. It is also allegedly protected by a radar system with biological and chemical sensors and a 24-hour guarding team of police officers. There are two lakes on the property. When the mansion was being built, questions were raised about how the Zimbabwean president could embark on such a spending spree while his country was buckling under an economic crisis. Presidential spokesman George Mazarire told the public that the home was funded by donations from the ruling party, Zanu-PF. The Mugabe family are believed to own property not only in Zimbabwe but also in Malaysia and Hong Kong.

Mugabe has been the president of Zimbabwe for the past 26 years. The average Zimbabwean makes less than R100 a month. Troubled Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich has since abandoned his 138-hectare estate in Mezhyhirya just an hour outside Kiev. The residence was closed off to the public during his 10-year tenure as president. Not only does the estate have a casino and banquet hall, but it also boasts a golf course, helicopter pad, petting zoo and a lake with a galleon – a large sailing ship. The golf course alone allegedly cost \$3m (R32m) to build and about \$9m was used for fittings. Ukrainian citizens were allowed into the abandoned house to see how the president had been living. Yanukovich lived in luxury in a country where the average monthly salary is about R4 000. In contrast to Mugabe and Yanukovich is Uruguay's President José Mujica, who lives with his wife, Lucía Topolansky, in a one-bedroomed house on a farm. He drives a modest VW Beetle and is said to give 90 percent of his monthly salary – about R112 000 – to charity. Mujica reportedly refused to stay



People walk around former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's country residence in Mezhyhirya. Ukrainians are shocked at the opulence of Yanukovich's official residence when most citizens live on about R4 000 a month. PICTURE: AP

in a presidential state house and instead chose to continue living in his own home. He has been the president of the South American country since 2010. Mujica used to be part of the leftist group the Tupamaros and was jailed for 14 years. The protection unit at his home allegedly comprises two police officers at the main gate. Under his rule, the government allowed for a cannabis legislation

bill to be passed through Congress. Not much is known about the private residences of many African leaders. Angolan president José Eduardo dos Santos runs a tight ship in the country where he has been in authority for the past 35 years. Angola is the third-largest economy in Africa. The president hardly interacts with the media. His daughter Isabel is the first

female billionaire in Africa and his regime is rumoured to have pocketed millions of dollars over the years. The only residence publicly known is that of the official presidential palace, which is restricted. In Nigeria, Aso Rock Villa in Abuja is the official home of President Goodluck Jonathan. His private real estate is rumoured to include a hotel in Bayelsa State costing 1 billion naira (about R30m) which belongs to his

wife. The family compound is in Otuoke and is guarded by military men. Last year, the president came under fire after accepting a church donation of 6 billion naira from an Italian company. The church is to be built in his Otuoke home town. Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta's private residence is situated in the affluent Dennis Pritt Road in Nairobi, and is not far from the official state house.

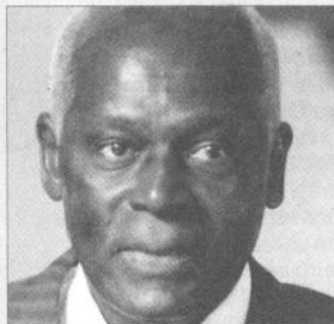
IN THE MONEY



Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta



Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan



Angola's President José Eduardo dos Santos



Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe