



APDUSA VIEWS

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THE CAPE ACTION LEAGUE

CAPITULATES!

INTRODUCTION

In a matter of just two months, the Cape Action League (CAL) has adopted positions on national and international matters which make a mockery of its purported commitment to the policy of non-collaboration and to its anti-imperialist and pro-socialist stances.

We make this accusation because of the positions adopted by CAL on:-

1. The events which took place in China during May-June 1989.
2. The participation by Dr Neville Alexander, a leading figure in CAL, in a conference convened by IDASA, one of imperialism's newly acquired watchdogs in S.A., and the Friedrich Nauman Foundation and which conference was held in Bonn.
3. The participation of organisations which belong to the liberal wing of the ruling class (e.g. Black Sash) in conferences of the various segments of the liberatory movement.

(A) CHINA : ABORTIVE COUNTER-REVOLUTION

Because of an international conspiracy to falsify events in China, most of this issue will be devoted to dealing with this topic. It is necessary to counter the avalanche of propaganda let loose by imperialism and its running dogs.

Background:

1. Imperialism has neither forgotten nor forgiven the Communist Party of China for waging a successful armed struggle against it and its local lackeys over a period of about 25 years. On the 1st October 1949, the most populous country in the world wrenched itself free from the orbit of imperialism and set itself as the model and principal supporter of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle in the third world.
2. The very existence of People's China posed a deadly threat to the colonial and imperialist powers. Therefore these powers lost no opportunity in belittling China's efforts to lift itself by the bootstraps from the terrible legacy left to it by imperialism – a legacy of unbelievable poverty, disease, underdevelopment and dark and cruel medievalism in social relations.

When, for example, China was able, for the first time in living memory, to feed and clothe all her people, imperialism sneered at the effort. It disparaged what it regarded as "drab, sexless and uniform style of dress". Even the colour of the clothes was not spared. The Chinese people were referred to as the "Blue Ants". Errors were magnified to look like disasters. The fight against the bureaucracy

(The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution) was described as insanity. There was nothing that People's China could do to escape condemnation. The model of an impoverished nation making a superhuman effort to overcome its legacy of backwardness had to be ridiculed out of existence. The hatred for People's China was so great in the ruling circles of the U.S. that the counter-revolutionary China Lobby was able to give birth to the monster of McCarthyism.

3. We must not be misled by the fact that trade relations exist between China and imperialist countries; that there are cordial visits by heads of state to and from China or that diplomatic relations have been established. These are products of the profit motive, trade for necessities and foreign exchange, the Cold War considerations and the like.

4. The hatred has been nursed over the decades and therefore when the opportunity presented itself in May-June 1989, imperialism moved in for the kill. The whole bourgeois world was swept into a frenzy. Emotionally charged headlines like "BLOOD BATH IN BEIJING", "BUTCHER OF BEIJING" set the tone for the reporting and writing of articles. "Newsweek", "Time Magazine" "Voice of America" etc. (heavy propaganda artillery pieces) vied with liberal journals (e.g. "The Observer") and the "objective" BBC in painting the most lurid picture of the events in China. The local liberal press dutifully took its cue from its imperialist masters. Even the pompous John Bishop of the SATV and his female underlings wailed about the fate of the "pro democracy" students while at the same time keeping silent on the rape of the genuine pro democracy movement in S.A.

5. The powerful propaganda machine of the imperialists went all out to present the events in China as a conflict between the "heroic pro-democracy students" and the "undemocratic and dictatorial gerontocracy" consisting of the leadership of the Communist Party. The obvious purpose of this campaign was to evoke blind and emotive sympathy for the students and a loathing for the government of People's China.

6. For the imperialists the propaganda campaign was highly successful. Many people and organisations swallowed the propaganda without a second thought. Having become surfeit with this propaganda, they were not interested in wanting to find out what the Communist Party of China had to say about the matter. Their minds were made up irretrievably.

- (a) The Stalinist Communist Parties of Italy, Spain and England, more concerned about warding off attacks on themselves and wishing to preserve a democratic visage than ascertaining the truth, publicly condemned China. Proletarian Internationalism was cast to the winds.

(b) The "New Nation" pretends to attack the Communist Party of China from the "Left". The end result is the same as that sought by imperialism – the overthrow of Deng Xiaoping, Li Peng and the Communist Party. It is our hope to deal with the approach of the "New Nation" in some detail in a future issue of APDUSA VIEWS.

(c) A late-comer to join the bandwagon which imperialism has set in motion against China, is the Dalai Lama. He is described as the god king and spiritual leader of the Tibetans. In truth, the Dalai Lama represents theocracy – backward and reactionary. As for the man himself, he has not done a day's honest labour in his life, the last thirty years of which he has spent plotting against People's China from India. For this kind of labour he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. So blatant is the anti-communist motive behind the award that even the liberals are embarrassed. Hence the Editor of the "Natal Witness" criticizes the granting of the award and sarcastically remarks: "We are puzzled!"

To show his gratitude for the award, and no doubt hoping for more, the Dalai Lama states: ". . . we want to show solidarity with those Chinese students who are working for democracy and freedom." Theocracy, the rule by the priestly caste is the direct antithesis of democracy which is the rule by the people at large. Money can do many things, including making a person act against his own caste – at least in words only in this case.

(d) Lastly for our purposes, the joining of CAL, through its mouthpiece, "Solidarity", in the anti-China crusade. Two centre pages of this newspaper of the August 1989 issue are devoted wholly to a savage attack on China. The contents and tone of the article have left imperialism to desire nothing more. Imperialism will no doubt recognize its own handiwork in the article. The writer has done no more than to regurgitate the propaganda muck he/she had swallowed from the imperialist press, directly or indirectly.

There is no pretence of objectivity or research and indeed there was none. As will be shown later, facts favourable to the Chinese Government or those which place the students in a bad light have been deliberately left out. The article is a good example of journalism of the worst kind.

7. WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN CHINA?

Because of the conspiracy to discredit China, there is very little by way of independent reporting. As for the official Chinese version, we have no access to it. Notwithstanding this handicap, we have been able to extract certain facts from

the very propaganda itself – facts which have been allowed to slip through unwittingly. We have said that we intend dealing with China in greater detail in the near future. When doing this we will also deal with China's policy of introducing limited capitalism and inviting foreign capital. Suffice it to state at this stage that the Chinese were by no means original in this approach. Lenin advocated similar measures some 70 years ago to try and solve problems facing the first worker's state in the world. Those problems were in essence the same facing China today.

- (a) There can be no doubt that initially, the students and workers correctly expressed the opposition of the people against the practice of graft, corruption and nepotism. A usual concomitant of these vices is the tendency to suppress the truth. Hence the opposition to the freedom of press was also fully justified.
- (b) The first wave of protests carried with it slogans like: "Support the correct policies of the Communist Party"; "Support Socialism" and "Long Live the Party". The Politbureau praised the protesters for their patriotism and their opposition to corruption. Not only were the students allowed to protest but their protests were accepted and praised.
- (c) These protesters were soon eclipsed by a different type altogether. Instead of singing the "Internationale", the epigones preferred worshipping their own brand of the Statue of Liberty. The recognized leader of this breed of students was one Wuerkaixi.
- (d) What sort of person was Wuerkaixi? He was a first year university student who was caught up by events and thrown to the forefront. According to "Newsweek" Wuerkaixi likes being a star. How does he view the protests? According to him: "This is fun, isn't it?" He is very conscious of his position. Hence: "The march to Tiananmen happened after I issued an order." He is unashamed and a complete stranger to modesty: "If they arrest me, I'm not afraid for myself. I'm just afraid of the loss it would cause to our movement."

As it happened he WAS afraid for himself. He escaped from China through a network set up by imperialism. He has presently become the favourite lapdog of the American and European bourgeoisie. He is singing for his "supper" by narrating horror stories of Chinese communism – exactly what his hosts want to hear. Wuerkaixi may not realize it but he is there on borrowed time. Soon his horror stories will become stale and boring. Soon his erstwhile listeners will always not be at home to receive him. Soon he will be avoided like a pest. Then he will be cast to the army of refugees where he will forever be complaining about the ingratitude of the world towards a hero who tried to save humanity from the evils of communism.

Wuerkaixi, shallow and superficial, a flair for theatrics and demagoguery, arrogant and dangerously irresponsible, represented the degeneration of an authentic and legitimate protest by students and workers.

- (e) However, behind the Wuerkaixis, lurked the adults who used students for counter-revolutionary purposes. One such person is Fang Lizhi,* the astrophysicist. He is not a young fool like Wuerkaixi. He is a seasoned counter-revolutionary. His connection with CIA goes as far back as the time George Bush was ambassador to China. He was expelled from the Communist Party for fomenting student rebellion in 1986. That he is highly regarded by American imperialism is borne out by the fact that he was invited to dinner by George Bush when the latter visited China in 1988. It is also borne out by the fact that at present Fang Lizhi is in the U.S. Embassy in China as a refugee and most certainly as an honoured guest.

As far as Marxism-Leninism goes, this renegade is out to impress his new friends how complete his apostasy has become:

“I would not call Marxism-Lennism empty – to physicists emptiness is an interesting concept. The word trivial is the only word that will do.”

- (f) So what began as a genuine protest against the vices practised by the bureaucracy and the suppression of the press was soon taken over by reactionaries and counter-revolutionaries.
- (g) “Solidarity” is completely silent on these vital aspects of the events, not because the writer of the article did not know. These facts are to be found in the very articles from which he/she drew so heavily. If not there, then in any of popular international journals dealing with China. The conclusion is inescapable – the omission is DELIBERATE! As they say in the world of journalism when criticizing dirty journalism – “Why let facts spoil a good smear!”
- (h) “Solidarity” is equally silent on a number of features which if presented, would shed a different light on the events:
- (i) No mention is made of the extraordinary patience and tolerance shown by the Chinese Government towards the protesters. Large numbers of students – ranging from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands – continued to occupy Tiananmen Square

*He is the second person, in the last two months, to receive imperialism's awards given to enemies of people's China. Fang has been awarded the Robert Kennedy Memorial Human Rights Award (Natal Witness 20-10-1989).

even after being told to disperse. For seven weeks the protesters occupied the Square! The question is : How many governments in the world would tolerate such open defiance, bearing in mind that the government offices are situated on the perimeter of the Square.

- (ii) No mention is made of the repeated attempts made by the government to defuse the situation by making appeals, meeting the students and listening to their grievances. We will also recall how the government had had to tolerate arrogant demands from the students like the setting up of a body of arbitrators, equal access to the press and so on. This from students who were totally inexperienced in matters of ideology and government.
 - (iii) The physical attacks of unarmed members of the militia who were sent to persuade the students to disperse.
 - iv) What of the petrol bombs hurled against the army? How come they had petrol bombs with them?
- (i) The more one studies the events in China, the more one is convinced that those controlling the students wanted *a showdown at any cost*. Regardless of what the leadership of the Communist Party tried to do to avert bloodshed, those who wanted a confrontation got their way in the end. The issue was no longer one of complaints against corruption etc; it was *the very existence of the system which became the issue*. And to replace it with what?? Fang Lizhi and company are not socialists. That is abundantly clear. The demonstrators claim that they drew their inspiration from the civil rights movement in the U.S., from Gandhi, Thoreau, Voltaire and the South Korean students. The United States of America is their model and hence they worship the Goddess of Democracy, alias the Statue of Liberty. In the context of the Chinese situation and the calibre of the leadership of the demonstrators, that goddess is bound to turn out to be the whore of a democracy which is formal, empty and totally devoid of socio-economic content.
- (j) The imperialists and other China-Haters had hoped for a full scale civil war in China. There was talk about coup d'etats, seeking assistance of the Kuomintang of Taiwan etc.

According to the "Economist" of 10 June 1989:-

". . .there was only one glimmer of hope. The murderous brutality of troops which took Tiananmen Square from the students . . .provoked not only incoherent rage of the Chinese people but also a more organized resistance by those parts of the army and Communist Party that had opposed martial law." (Our emphasis)

“Solidarity” seemed to have wished on the same wishbone:

“Action is the power workers have to bring the economy and its rulers to their bloody (sic) knees.”

- (k) The all important question is: If Deng and his comrades are removed from power, if the regime is brought to its “bloody” knees and if the 47 million member Communist Party is defeated, who will take power in China? Which other organisation is capable of governing a country the size of a continent and having a population of over one *billion* people? Surely not Fang Lizhi with all his fascination for emptiness? Wuerkaixi? But seriously, who?**

There is no answer. All the reactionary students wanted, as did imperialism and bandwagon passengers, like “Solidarity” was for the power of Chinese Communist Party to be broken. And the consequences? It mattered little that there would be chaos, fragmentation of China, overthrow of the Socialist system.

CONCLUSION

When proletarian internationalism is thrown overboard, an organisation loses its moorings and will find itself in the same bed as imperialism, reactionaries like the Dalai Lama, the SATV and the like.

The position taken by CAL is not accidental.

B. CAL AND VAN ZYL SLABBERT

Following Trotsky's thought, it can be said that an organization's position in the international field is no more than an extension of that organization's position in the national situation.

We have seen how CAL found itself in the camp of the imperialists in the international situation concerning events in China. In the national situation we find CAL taking a position which can only be described as capitulation to the agents of imperialism in South Africa.

According to a report in the Sunday Tribune of the 17th September 1989, Dr Neville Alexander of CAL participated in a conference held in Bonn, capital of West Germany. The conference, according to the report, was organised by IDASA and the Friedrich Nauman Foundation.* His co-participants were Dr Van Zyl Slabbert and Professor Lawrence Schlemmer. The Non Stalinist Left is no stranger to the acrobatics of Van Zyl Slabbert. His political career is chequered as it can be. He resigned from Parliament because the Tricameral System was not good enough for him. But it was "fine" for the Indian people and those classified Coloured. Therefore, without even bothering to consult with the people concerned he urged the Sellouts in the House of Representatives and Delegates to remain there, presumably, to carry on with the "good work". Following his resignation from Parliament, Van Zyl Slabbert flew off to the capitals of imperialism and presented his credentials as its loyal servant. When he returned to S.A. he did so with pockets bulging with dollars, pounds and German marks. Imperialism is never miserly towards its valued servants. With ready money, Idasa was formed.

When the Democratic Party was formed, Van Zyl Slabbert changed his mind about parliament and became the D.P.'s expert on extraparliamentary organisations. He also assisted the D.P. in its election campaign.

As for Professor Schlemmer, he is notorious for his truckling up to the government. He is also adviser to Inkatha and Gatsha Buthelezi. People know him to be a government man. This would explain why his archives at Natal University were set alight.

We are presently functioning at a time when imperialism through its various agencies has launched a mighty offensive against the radical and non collaborationist section of the liberatory movement. The political initiative has been removed from the petty bourgeois section of the populist movement and handed to local

*The Friedrich Nauman Foundation was set up in honour of a West German liberal. The Foundation is a political one, although it provides funds for research, development and education in the form of grants, scholarships etc. It is funded by, amongst other institutions, the Liberal Party and the Government of West Germany.

agents of liberalism like Church persons, academics, researchers etc. The recent public knucklerapping administered by Walter Sisulu to Alan Boesak when the latter agreed to suspend sanctions, is an indication that the radicals in the ANC are none too pleased with the presumptuousness of some of the Church people. Watching every move are the Thatchers, the Bushes and the Kohls. They are going to supervise the betrayal of one of the longest and bloodiest struggles in history. But there can be no betrayal if the leadership does not collaborate in the schemes of the local ruling class and imperialism. Now, more than ever before is the time for those who believe in the policy of non collaboration and who regard imperialism as a mortal enemy to be straining every muscle and nerve fibre to expose imperialism and its machinations. Now more than ever before is the time for such persons to wage an uncompromising war against the local agents of imperialism both ideologically and organisationally. It is always an uphill battle against high profile persons like Van Zyl Slabbert. But then that is what a struggle is all about – an uphill fight.

By participating in the conference, Dr Alexander was doing the exact opposite. He was giving credibility to imperialist agencies like Idasa and the Friedrich Nauman Foundation. By agreeing to participate in a conference with Van Zyl Slabbert and Lawrence Schlemmer he was promoting them. Both CAL and Dr Alexander are aware that the liberatory movement is sharply divided on an attitude towards such liberals. Even organisations who officially adopt a tolerant attitude towards liberals are divided. Dr Alexander has thrown his weight with those who are prepared to accord people like Van Zyl Slabbert the status of a freedom fighter.

When reduced to essentials, the much vaunted “anti-collaboration” and anti-imperialism of CAL have turned out to be nothing more than a cover-up for consorting with some of the most dangerous liberals. We believe that the Bonn Conference is no more than the tip of the iceberg!

C. GIVING LEGITIMACY TO BODIES LIKE BLACK SASH

“If the Chaterists wish to include the Black Sash or any other white organisation, this must be their democratic right.” This statement appears in the editorial of **“Solidarity”** dated August 1989. This means that any organisation has the right to introduce the liberals of various hues into the ranks of the oppressed without murmur or protest. If one were to criticize this, then according to CAL, that would mean an infringement of a democratic right. In other words, to wage the class struggle would be interpreted as an infringement of a democratic right! After all our opposition to organisations like Black Sash, Idasa and the Five Freedoms Forum is not based on personalities or colour but reflects class hostility. CAL’S **“democratic right”** in this instance means the right of the opportunists to introduce representatives of capitalism into the ranks of the oppressed. We reject that **“right”** entirely. From CAL’S position the **“right”** is not a contradiction. If you can share a conference with Van Zyl Slabbert and Schlemmer, there is nothing wrong in sharing a conference with the Black Sash, Five Freedoms Forum or even the Democratic Party. The possibilities are endless.

CONCLUSION

- 1. For some years now CAL has been sniping at the Unity Movement – never a face to face confrontation, always from the side. Initially, we attributed this behaviour to be typical of renegades. As we all know renegades usually seek to malign or destroy their former organisation so as to justify their rene-gation. But when the sniping continued, when political history was falsi-fied and when political ancestry was assiduously concealed, we then realised that there was more to this than just the actions of renegades.**
- 2. The Unity Movement has never let up on the question of collaboration. Col-laboration manifests itself in infinite ways. Fraternisation, formal and in-formal, funding, research projects, joint conferences etc. A whole relation-ship is built up. The personal develops into the political and soon the two become inseparable. There obviously must be more to it than the report in the Sunday Tribune. Joint Conferences do not materialize out of thin air.**
- 3. CAL knows that its actions and those of its members will not pass without comment when the policy of non collaboration is violated. No amount of sniping is going to help to suppress exposure. CAL is aware that the Unity Movement is the only loyal sentinel of the policy of Non Collaboration. It is this that makes CAL snipe at the Unity Movement.**

4. With negotiations thick in the air; with opportunists planning their moves carefully how to make the best of the situation, there is a scramble for the grandstand, if not the negotiating table. CAL does not want to be left out from the negotiating process at some stage. It is said that the process of negotiations is going to close a chapter in our history. That may be so, but it is going to leave open and unresolved those very contradictions which gave rise to the struggle in the first place.
5. The anti-China position, the collaboration with Van Zyl Slabbert and the approach to bodies like the Black Sash all have a single thread running through them. The capitulation of a group of petty bourgeois intellectuals who for years posed as the vanguard socialist group. They held all other groups in arrogant contempt and regarded themselves as Marx's handpicked socialists.
6. The actions mentioned above are also signals to the liberal wing of the oppressors that CAL is ready to talk business!

