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LIBERAL OPINION



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THIS STRANGE PHENOMENON

(Alan Paton's address at the opening of the National Conference of the Liberal Party, 9th July, 1965.)

Dr. Brookes, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to join our National Chairman in welcoming you here this evening, and in welcoming delegates from other parts of Natal and South Africa. I am very sorry that our ex-National Chairman cannot be here to welcome you also, but, as you know, he cannot have anything to do with us, he cannot attend meetings, and he cannot go outside the area to which he is confined. Why this was done to him no one knows. No charge has ever been laid against him. No proof has ever been offered of his offence. He has never appeared before any court. Without trial he was sentenced to five years' detention in the Pietermaritzburg area.

We here tonight remember him and some 30 others who have paid the same price for their beliefs. We have here the strange phenomenon of people who would rather lose their freedom than give up their belief in it.

MAGNIFICENT

White South Africa is very sick. It has the same sickness as affected Germany under Hitler. It is terrified of its Government, and one must admit that its Government has terrifying powers. But this terror does not show

itself as such—it shows itself as courage, patriotism and magnificent self-certitude. It must do this, otherwise it would not dare to look at itself.

I am absolutely fascinated that at a time when Liberalism has been so weakened by Mr. Vorster's attacks, and when so many Liberals have been silenced and banned, and when so many South Africans, not all of them white, have become afraid of the Liberal taint—I am fascinated to find that our rulers are still afraid of it. Take courage from that. We may be silenced, we may be banned, but our ideas and ideals speak as loudly as ever. **Mrs. Verwoerd, in a recent, and I must say very unbecoming speech, dwelt on the dangers of Liberalism, on the dangers of a creed whose upholders have been mercilessly dealt with by her smiling husband, and by his more appropriately visaged lieutenant, Mr. Vorster.**

What is she afraid of? Her husband has all the power in the world. He can insult America and Britain and Russia and China with impunity. And here in his own country he can destroy the personalities of others, so that they betray their friends and desert their own beliefs, and strengthen his unholy cause. What is Mrs. Verwoerd afraid of? I shall tell you a thing that she is afraid of: She is afraid that her own Afrikaans youth (for I do not think she cares much for any other) is rebelling against the straitjacket of Afrikaner Nationalism, that her own Afrikaner writers are rebelling against the obnoxious creed that all literature must be palatable to the Broederbond, that her own Afrikaner churchmen are rebelling against the sterile doctrine of separateness, and are reaching out to touch their brothers of other races.

SLY ?

She calls Liberalism sly. What could be slyer than the activities of her husband's Information Services? They concentrate on two things; the beauty of separate development which is a myth, and the improvements in hospitalisation and housing, which are real. But one thing is left out altogether, and that is the cruelty that is inseparable from separate development, the cruelty that prevents two Indian parents living in South Africa from having their child with them because it was born in India; the cruelty that robs people of that little land they possess and tells them to return to the farm or the tribe, the cruelty that bans people to remote areas, and when they are old and ailing, and want only to return and

die in the haven of their families, will not let them return and die.

What could be slyer than the activities of the S.A.B.C., which day by day smears eminent South Africans with hints and smirks and innuendoes, and never allows one of them to make any reply? May I be allowed to say from this public platform that I feel nothing but the utmost contempt for the S.A.B.C.?

Is Peter Brown sly? Or David Craighead? Or Elliott Mngadi? Or E. V. Mahomed? They got into trouble, not because they are sly, but because they are open. I think Mrs. Verwoerd is ill-advised when she makes such an observation.

SEXUAL ABERRATIONS

I think she is worse than ill-advised when she repeats a rumour that she has heard about some of our South African Universities, and the sexual aberrations of some of their women students. A woman in Mrs. Verwoerd's position, if she is to make such attacks, the propriety of which I doubt, should make them categorically. She brought discredit on her high position by doing it the way she did, and if she is to make any more such speeches, I hope she will make them in a more responsible and seemly manner.

And here I cannot help referring to the plaintive speech of Dr. Eric Louw, who as Foreign Minister did more damage to South Africa than any Foreign Minister before him. Dr. Louw's plaint is that he offered diplomatic representation to Malagasy and that country wouldn't accept it. How shocking of Malagasy! But it is possible that Malagasy had heard that Dr. Louw, when he was Mr. Louw, was in the habit of referring to sections of the South African people as "kaffers", and "hot-nots", and "koelies". **Yet it never occurs to Dr. Louw that it is Mr. Louw who must bear a great share of the responsibility for this reaction from Malagasy. The blame always falls on somebody else.**

All of you know that the Liberal Party has suffered heavily from the banning of so many of its leading members. We would not be human if we did not sometimes feel discouraged. It is idle to say that if one is struck down, ten will rise up to take his or her place. When the one struck down is a person like Peter Brown or David Craighead or Elliott Mngadi or Peter Hjul, it is a question, not of finding ten, but of finding one to take his place.

HOLLANDERS FREE

I repeat tonight what has already been said by our National Chairman, Dr. Brookes, and our National Vice-President, Advocate Unterhalter, that there is a clear plan to cripple the Party, not by banning it, but by banning its leading and active members. The Government does not wish to ban the Party, because in so far as it is sensitive to world opinion, it is sensitive on that count. Our Ambassador in London, Dr. Carel de Wet, has assured the British Liberal Party that the South African Liberal Party has every opportunity to work out its own destiny. This assertion is utterly false. Were our banned members free to oppose? **The only people in this country who are free to oppose their governments are the Hollanders and the Danes; they are not only free to oppose, they are positively encouraged to do so. What a strange irony that the Nationalists, who condemn so strongly those who oppose their Government, approve so strongly when the Hollanders oppose theirs! What a strange irony that the Minister who so sternly enforces obedience to authority, was a leading member of an organisation that would have plunged this country into civil war if Hitler had been more successful!** One is reminded of the story of the big business man who was trying to persuade other rich men to invest with him, and said when he had finished, "Well, gentlemen, those are my principles, and if you don't like them, I've got others".

The technique of banning is accompanied by another, the technique of intimidation. One cannot help but take a grave view of it. It would appear—from an abundance of evidence—that the security police in certain places have set themselves the task of intimidating the Liberal Party out of existence. I do not refer to the presence of the security police at public meetings. I refer to the fact that employers are visited and told that certain employees are members of the Liberal Party.

DANGERS OF MEMBERSHIP

Members who have attended meetings have later been visited by the security police and warned of the dangers of membership. I was at a meeting at a rural spot in Northern Natal where no less than seven members of the police were present, and the names and addresses of those attending were taken. Members have been visited and warned of 90-days detention. Aged parents have been visited and have been filled with anxiety to hear of their son's terrible political activity, which was

open and legitimate. I could recount a great number of such happenings, and could substantiate them. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the security police are being deliberately used to intimidate the Party, which, according to Dr. de Wet, has every opportunity to work out its own destiny.

There is another conclusion difficult to escape. It is undoubtedly difficult to ferret out the single individual who writes scurrilous and threatening anonymous letters. Yet if anyone were to organise such letters, and were to send them to members of the Broederbond throughout the country, one feels that the C.I.D. would make tremendous efforts to find him. One feels, on the other hand—and I do not like to say this—that if anyone organises threatening letters, and sends them to members of the Liberal Party, or the Black Sash, or Defence and Aid, or the Christian Institute, or if anyone should smash the windows or windscreens or other property of such persons, or set their cars on fire, the amount of effort put in is much less. There is another thing I should like to know, and that is if the security police have been given power to call off the ordinary police in certain cases, because I was once involved in a case where that seemed to me to be the position.

"WIT HAND"

I dare say some of you have received letters from the Wit Hand. These letters go to the furthest extremes, even calling for the murder of men who a few years ago were held in highest respect by the Afrikaner people. I hope one day a computer will be invented which will make such dastardly offences dangerous to commit. I try not to allow hatred any lodgement in my mind; my tongue is sharp, but I am not given to hating people. But to me the writers of this filth come near to committing the unforgivable offence. If I had to choose between being an anonymous letter-writer and a saboteur, I'd be a saboteur. Or to put it more strongly, if I had to choose between being an anonymous letter-writer or a Nationalist, I'd be a Nationalist.

I would like tonight to say some words in praise of two brave men, and I hope I am not administering to them the kiss of death. I offer my homage tonight to Beyers Naude and Albert Geyser. What their politics are, I do not know. But one thing I do know is that they are brave men. In these days in South Africa, when every white rat is running into the laager as fast as he can, it is a refreshment of the soul

to see these two men who still think it proper to suffer for what they believe to be right, and who can see that separate development is the great white myth, which, if you believe it, helps you to forget the Indian parents who cannot get their child from India, and the humble peasant-owner who is going to lose his little piece of land, and the sick old banished man who can't go home to die. Do you know what these cruelties are called?—petty apartheid! Petty, indeed. But, of course, these cruelties are trifling if you believe in the great white myth.

BEYERS NAUDE

I want to say one more thing. Do you remember—or don't you remember any more—that Beyers Naude was the Moderator of the Southern Transvaal Synod of the big Dutch Reformed Church only three years ago? But today he is an outcast. What do you think of a country that does a thing like that? Isn't it sick? What do you think of a country in which such a change takes place in three years? Hasn't it lost its spiritual way? We talk about our Christian civilisation. What kind of Christian civilisation spews out a man like Beyers Naude?

Now let me conclude this discussion of intimidation and banning. They are serious matters for us, and one of the things we must discuss at our Conference is what we do under such circumstances. One thing is clear, we shall carry on as long as we are able.

My closing topic tonight is a recapitulation of these principles which were true for us ten years ago, and which are as true today. **Ten years ago we believed that complex as were the problems of one common society, the problems of Apartheid (later called separate development) were insoluble; the whole evolutionary process moves in a contrary direction. Where did the Afrikaner himself come from? Certainly not from separate development. And where did the Coloured people come from? Also certainly not from separate development. And what separate development is possible for the Coloured and Indian people? And one must also ask, what separate development is possible for the Africans of the cities?**

A CRUEL MYTH

Ten years ago we not only believed Separate Development to be a myth, but also to be cruel. We see no reason to alter that view. We have seen too much of this cruelty ourselves not to believe it. Even the Nationalist acknowledges the cruelty, though he gives it the astounding name of petty apartheid.

Ten years ago we stood for the rule of law. We still do. No sabotage, no threats from outside, have made us alter that view. We believe in the right of every man when he is charged with an offence, to appear in court before a judge or magistrate, and to plead his cause; only if he is found guilty has the State a right to take away his liberty.

Ten years ago we accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We still do. We believed that it was the duty of the State to protect its citizens against the power of the State. We condemned absolutely the Group Areas Act, many sections of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the removal of black spots, the Suppression of Communism Act. Under these laws we have seen the rights of non-white South Africans whittled away, and the independent spirit of white South Africans dying away.

Ten years ago we believed that Africans, white people, coloured people and Indians could live and work together in a common society. We have had no reason to alter that belief. The very composition of our roll of banned members is a proof of our contention.

WE BELIEVE IT STILL

Ten years ago we believed that Apartheid (later called Separate Development) could never succeed. We believe that still. We have seen acquiescence in the myth enforced by the harshest of laws. That indeed is our belief, that acquiescence in Separate Development can only be enforced by law. When this myth will be given up, or begin to lose its power, we cannot say. Nor can we say under what circumstances it will be given up; will it change as a matter of evolution, or will it be destroyed by force or violence?

And meanwhile what does one do? Is it all worth suffering for? I can only give my own answer to that question. Some people go away, some for the sake of their children, and others with children stay. All I can say is that I would rather suffer for what I believe, I would rather retain my integrity of belief, than change my belief, or pretend to change my belief, or hide my belief, because of my fear of rulers. There is only one reason for changing one's belief, and that is because one finds it to be wrong.

I have no young children now, but if I had I would be faced with this question, whether I would give them a home with a father and a mother who would suffer for what they believed, or whether I would take them away to a

home in a quieter and happier country. But I would not dream of answering that question for anyone else.

I say to those of you who are here, stand firm by what you believe, do not tax yourselves beyond endurance, yet calculate clearly and coldly how much endurance you have; don't waste your breath cursing your rulers and the S.A.B.C.; keep your friendships alive and warm, especially those with people of other races; beware of melancholy, and give thanks for the courage of others in this fear-ridden country.

MORE ON AFRICAN NATIONALISM

By Dr. EDGAR BROOKES

I have been asked to state more fully my views on this subject, and I do so gladly. I would emphasise that what I am doing is to state my own views for careful consideration by other Party members, not to make an *ex cathedra* statement on behalf of the Party.

In most political discussions, much depends on the meaning of the terms used, and many such discussions are wars of words, when each participant in the discussion is using the controversial phrase in a different sense.

"African Nationalism" may be used—in my opinion incorrectly used—for the struggle for equal political and social rights. This the Liberal Party is bound to support, but it is not African Nationalism or African anything else: it is quite simply liberalism. For this we are all struggling.

Even here, however, the Liberal Party should make its own decisions and frame its own policy. It cannot be dragged at the chariot-wheels of a purely African organisation, for the Liberal Party embraces men of all races. No man, no association of men, can be asked to live and die for principles in the working out of which he has no share.

EASILY TWISTED

"African Nationalism", again, may be the perfectly sound pride in one's own parents and ancestors and one's own past. In this sense Winston Churchill could be described as an "English Nationalist". In its positive aspects this is a determination to be one's self, not someone else. But it can easily be twisted into

mere conservatism and a refusal to accept the modification of national life by new culture contacts, which is a condition of all progress. Such a conception would appeal to the Nationalist Party, but hardly to Liberals, who stand for a pooling of racial riches in the service of a common country.

"African Nationalism" can mean, finally, the African counterpart of Afrikaner Nationalism. It would then stand not for African equality but for African domination. If this is what we are asked to approve, what answer have we to the critics of "one man, one vote" who argue that our policy means the domination of white by black instead of the reverse? By what strange magic does racial domination which we as a Party condemn as immoral suddenly become moral because black men are the dominators? **The argument that it becomes moral because the Africans are in the majority would justify the "Aryan" domination over Jews in Germany.** The Liberal Party has Indian and Coloured as well as European members, and we are asked to throw these to the wolves if we support **this** type of African Nationalism.

When we are asked to "ride the tiger" of "African Nationalism" of this type we must remember the old limerick:

There was a young lady of Riga
Who smiled on the back of a tiger:
They returned from the ride
With the lady inside

And the smile in the face of the tiger.

What is more, we are asked to support something which is quite incompatible with liberalism.

It may be that earlier correspondents have had in mind something different. If so they should be asked to define their terms.

UNIVERSITAS BOUND—

UNIVERSITY CHIEF TAKES LEAD IN ATTACK ON UNIVERSITIES

On March 8 students from all the Afrikaans language Universities and Colleges of Education in the Transvaal gathered in Pretoria for a "protest march" against Communism and Liberalism, ending at Church Square, where speakers also attacked NUSAS and the Roman Catholic Church.

The Rector of the University of Pretoria, Professor C. H. Rautenbach (who was amongst the speakers), had addressed a pre-march meeting at his University the previous evening