APDUSA VIEWS

No 19 **August 1987**

IN DEFENCE OF THE FREEDOM OF:

- **THOUGHT AND CONSCIENCE**
- **SPEECH AND PRESS**
- **ORGANISING AND ASSOCIATION**
- **MEETING AND ASSEMBLY**

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NOW UNBANNED!!

INTRODUCTION

This issue of "Apdusa Views" is dedicated to the defence of the following freedoms:-

Thought and Conscience

Speech and Press

Organising and Association

Meetings and Assembly

These freedoms have always played a crucial role in the needs and demands of the oppressed people world over. Their importance is greater in South Africa for two special reasons:-

(a) A host of laws crowned by the State of Emergency which impose severe restrictions on these freedoms;

(b) An alarming tendency on the part of a clique in the liberatory movement to trample underfoot these freedoms in pursuit of its narrow sectarian organisational ends.

The essence of this contribution is to drive home the absolute need to uphold these freedoms and to rigorously apply the rights contained in these freedoms in our day-to-day relationships with other sections of the liberatory movement.

In this article we will show how beginning with intolerance of other tendencies and organisations a power group can end up in a butchery of opponents, whether real or imaginary. History abounds with such examples and none more dramatic than in the Soviet Union during the Stalinist era.

It is our solemn duty to learn from history to avoid similar tragedies.

In recent times we have witnessed the outbreak of conflict within the liberatory movement and the dangerous attempt to resolve such conflict by the use of physical violence.

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE, SPEECH, PRESS, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

1. These freedoms are so precious to humankind that they are enshrined in socialist and democratic constitutions throughout the world.

2. These freedoms and the struggle for their defence is as old as humankind itself.

3. The need for these freedoms is so great in human beings that they often supersede the normally accepted basic needs such as food, shelter, medIcal care, the sex-drive, etc. One has merely to look around and life will provide numerous examples. A worker exposes himself and his family to great hardship when he is dismissed because he stands up for his rights and expresses them forcefully.

Virtues of independent thinking have been extolled over the centuries in poems and songs which outlasted their immediate cause. Such songs and poems are fresh and relevant today as they were when first composed.

4. In pursuit of these freedoms, men, women and children, have over the ages suffered ostracism, ridicule, hatred, imprisonment, torture and death.

5. These freedoms are in themselves self-explanatory. However, because of their violations, it becomes necessary to spell them out.

(a) Freedom of Thought:
The complex and sophisticated human brain is incapable of blind conformity of thought for any great length of time. Compared with other forms of life on earth, a human being can be a superperson. It was in recognition of these attributes that Shakespeare was moved to write:

> "What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel!
> in apprehension, how like a god!"

This freedom means the right to exercise our mental faculties in the creation of new ideas and thoughts on countless matters. It means the right to think differently from accepted views and to differ with others. It is this faculty which is the basis of all progress of human beings. We use the term "basis" advisedly because human beings do have other physical equipment like the sensitive hand with an opposable thumb, upright posture, stereoscopic vision, etc.. which work in conjunction with the brain to create.

(b) The Freedom of Speech and Expression:
This freedom is the physical expression of the previous freedom. Ideas and thoughts, no matter how brilliant and relevant. are in themselves useless unless they are communicated in. the various forms recognised by people - speech, writing, painting, music, body communication (dancing.
mime).

(c) The Freedom to Organise and Associate:
Human beings have a tendency to share ideas with others. When a number of people think alike on certain essentials they form groups, clubs and organisations. It is in this way human societies are formed.

(d) The Freedom of Assembly and Meetings:
An association or organisation functions through meetings or gatherings which are either closed to outsiders or are open to the public. The right of Assembly is exercised so that members are able to get together and to communicate with one another. The freedom of Assembly also means the freedom to engage in peaceful demonstrations and marches.

The ability to think creatively, to communicate ideas (including complex ideas). to organise people voluntarily on the basis of ideas are characteristics which distinguish human beings from other animals. Added to these characteristics is the powerful urge in human beings, almost instinctual, to use these gifts and powers to want to shape their lives and the society they live in.

While the basis of qualitative social change is ultimately caused by changes in the mode of production, such change is only possible by the exercise of the powers of thought, speech and association by those who consider themselves as agents of social change.

Without these powers and the urge to exercise them, humankind would have died out as a specie a long time ago.

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CONTROL OF THOUGHT, COMMUNICATION AND ASSOCIATION

Ruling classes, from time immemorial, have recognised the potency of these powers.
Therefore, top on their list of priorities was the control of thought, speech, communication and assembly. Ingenious methods have been devised to effect the control. All official institutions - educational, religious, the press, radio and television are placed at the disposal of the ruling class. Hence:

> "It is a known fact that ideas prevailing in any given society are the ideas of the dominant group. The control by this group of all channels for the dissemination of their ideas, is a necessary and indispensable prerequisite for its very existence. The particular ideas which must flow through the social system must be of such a nature that their impact in the minds of the members of society must produce results that will ensure the position of the dominant group and its continued rule." (LAND AND NATIONAL OPPRESSION: DrG.H. Gool, 1954 - page 11)

It is only when the dominance of ruling class ideas are challenged and people no longer accept the official ideology that society is convulsed with crises.

Where propaganda and indoctrination fail to establish the dominance of its ideology, the ruling class resorts to naked force - the whip, the gun, the prison and the gallows.

Radical thinkers, world over, have realised that the first step in the struggle, and the most important, was the battle of ideas. The battle of ideas, in turn, meant the battle for the minds of the people. When the ruling class finds that it is losing that battle, the first target is the freedom of thought and the other related freedoms.

It is for this reason that liberatory movements throughout the world have defended and cherished these freedoms.

THE POSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

These freedoms have been violated in one form or another from the time Van Riebeck landed in this country. The oppressed have paid dearly in the defence of and attempts to exercise these freedoms. They will continue paying the price in blood until such time as these freedoms are guaranteed in a truly democratic society.

It was the illegal denial of these freedoms which compelled bodies like the ANC and PAC to renounce their philosophy of non-violence and to turn to sabotage as a means of achieving their objectives.

Lest people have underestimated the importance of these freedoms, let us briefly survey how they have been violated by the ruling class:-

(a) Thought: Indoctrination and fallacies through the schools, other institutions of learning, the pulpit, the press, the radio and now television.

(b) Speech and Press: Banning orders, censorship, prolonged detentions, prolonged vexatious political trials, the huge deposits demanded by the Newspaper and Imprints Act before a newspaper can be published.

(c) Association: The Unlawful Organisations Act, the old Suppression of Communism Act and the Internal Security Act have caused a host of organisations to be declared unlawful for no valid reason.

(d) Assembly: Banning of open air meetings, arbitrary bannings of other meetings, peaceful demonstrations, marches and funerals.

The above forms of repression and violations have been duly clothed with legality.

Increasingly in recent times, informal methods, stripped of all pretence of legality, have been used. There is intimidation, job victimisation, terrorism by vigilantes who have the blessing and encouragement of the ruling class, kitskonstabels, murder squads. These agencies have been running riot and with impunity. Their sole purpose is to suppress opposition by suppressing the various freedoms we have been referring to.

If some of us have forgotten the importance of these freedoms, the ruling class has not. The oppressed are no strangers to the violations. It is for this reason most of us hold these freedoms so dear.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE LIBERA TORY MOVEMENT TO THESE FREEDOMS

The entire liberatory movement is of one mind when it comes to defending and upholding these freedoms. No organisation has officially pronounced otherwise.

(1) Enshrined in the Ten-Point Programme of the Unity Movement is the following:

"8. FREEDOM OF SPEECH, PRESS, MEETINGS AND ASSOCIATION: This means the abolition of the Internal Security Act and related laws directed specifically against the oppressed. It embodies the right to combine, to form and enter Trade Unions on a basis of full equality for all workers. Bannings of meetings, persons, literature and other media must go."

(2) The Black Consciousness Movement, through its various bodies, has been foremost in upholding these freedoms. It even went to the extent of allowing other tendencies into its forums to exchange and discuss matters of importance.

(3) Inserted in the Freedom Charter through Clause 6 is the following:

"The Law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship. . ."

(4) The other tendencies in the liberatory camp like the Cape Action League and the broad Independent Left have in theory and practice upheld these freedoms.

Despite the clear stand of the entire liberatory movement on these freedoms, there is a clique which, like the ruling class, is busy violating these freedoms in a flagrant manner.

VIOLATIONS OF THESE FREEDOMS IN THE LIBERATORY MOVEMENT

For the past five years or so, violent feuds have broken out between sections of the liberatory movement. The origins of these feuds are, undoubtedly, political rivalry and differences. Therefore, we have witnessed and still do, the settling of political differences, not through debate and discussion, but through violence. The ruling class has ruthlessly exploited the feuds for its purposes. Very often the public does not know who exactly does the killing. Tragically, the logos of organisations on clothing have facilitated the dirty work of the ruling class. Frequently, the killer is identified only by the logo on his t-shirt. Forgery can be committed so easily in these circumstances.

In earlier days when the practice was to debate and argue on political differences, nobody would have believed that members of one organisation could be responsible for the death of a member of another organisation. Violence was not an accepted method of settling differences in the liberatory movement. Therefore agents of the ruling class were given no chance of plying their filthy trade of setting one organisation against another in blood feuds.

WHO ARE THE VIOLATERS WITHIN THE LIBERATORY MOVEMENT?

To lay blame for these violations on any specific organisation would be the height of irresponsibility and untruth. We repeat that most members and the majority of the leadership value these freedoms.

We believe that the violators are:

(a) Undisciplined members and supporters who are ignorant politically and are prone to employ violence to stifle criticism or differences. If unchecked, this section can very easily degenerate into the Killer Youth we wrote about in "Apdusa Views" of February 1987.

(b) A small clique of intellectuals which regards itself as the "vanguard" and its members as super-revolutionaries. This clique has fashioned its methods of working on those used by that discredited dictator, Stalin.

FORMS OF VIOLATIONS

We do not consider it our function to name members of that clique. We think it far more profitable to help identify the presence of the clique by the manner it operates and how it manifests itself.

(1) An insane hatred of other tendencies of the liberatory movement.

(2) An inability to countenance any criticism or to engage in debate. Bigotry controls their thinking and their ideological] impotence leads them to answer criticism with violence.

(3) Territories are claimed as belonging to certain organisations. Any person from another organisation who enters the area to do ordinary political] work is regarded as an invader and dealt with as such.

(4) The cult of the individual is being used to silence opponents. A bigot has merely to accuse an opponent as being "anti" a martyr or a famed leader and hatred is instantly whipped up. While we all have high regard for freedom fighters who have made enormous sacrifices for the struggle, we, nonetheless, do not regard such persons sacrosanct and therefore above criticism. Those inclined to cultivate the cult of the individual ought to have a quick glance at the cult of Stalin and that ought to have a sobering effect.

(5) A propensity to brand other organisations and individuals as *"enemies of the people", "agents of the system", "CIA agents", "Third Force", "Working with the Police"* and so on. We are not for a moment saying that if organisations and individuals fit any of the above labe]s that we should remain silent. On the contrary, it would be our duty to expose such organisations and individuals to the fullest. The only precondition we ask for is that the accusation be fully backed by facts. Flinging out such accusations without the factual evidence is the same as the fascistic tactics where people are condemned to death through a mere accusation.

(6) The erroneous belief that only one's own organisation has the monopoly of liberating South Africa; that other organisations are interlopers who have no business engaging in the struggle. This arrogance flies in the face of the very concept of the National Liberatory Movement In the Dakar discussions, the ANC delegation made it clear that the autonomy of all organisations fighting against the apartheid regime would be recognised. At home, Murphy Morobe, the Acting Publicity Secretary of the UDF spells out his understanding of the liberatory movement when discussing Mr Gumede's suggestion about participation in the tricameral system:

> "The UDF is just one component of the broad national liberatory movement, A decision as far reaching as that of deciding to participate can never be taken by the UDF alone. It must be that of the whole democratic movement." - (Daily :News - 9 July 1987)

STALINIST TECHNIQUES IN SUPPRESSING THESE FREEDOMS

The reader may ask why we have chosen the Stalinist techniques of suppressing these freedoms to illustrate our theme? Surely, it was not the peculiarity of Stalinism to engage in repression. There was Hitler, Chiang Kei Shek, Franco, Salazar,Suharto, Pinochet, Batista, Samoza, Idi

Amin, Mobuto and the long list of dictators who also freely engaged in repression. Therefore, why choose Stalin?

What distinguishes Stalin from the other dictators is that Stalin perpetrated crimes in the name of Marxist socialism and as self·styled leader of the workers' state in history. In short, the crimes were committed in the name of proletarian democracy and in the defence of socialism. Hence the relevance of Stalinism to the modus operandi of our local clique whom we accuse as the violators of the basic freedoms.

Viewed objectively, Stalin's historic role was to destroy Leninism - ideologically first and then the physical liquidation of the Leninists. In doing this Stalin acted as the leading representative of the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy was the usurper of the 1917 Revolution fought and won by an alliance of the workers and peasants.
By bureaucracy we refer to that caste in Russian society consisting of civil servants, managers of factories, directors of collective farms, military officers, party officials, government officials, etc, It took the bureaucracy over a decade to smash Leninism.
The battle was bloody as it was one-sided.

This is not the time and place to deal with the reasons for the emergence of Stalinism and why it emerged victorious over the forces representing Leninism.

Stalin's strategy in defeating Leninism was to hold himself and his supporters as the true Leninists and discredited the Leninists as betrayers of Leninism. The next logical step was the physical extermination of the Leninists. Fur as long as the Old Guard Bolsheviks were alive they posed a threat to the usurpers. The problem which faced Stalin was how to commit mass extermination of the Old Guard, many of whom were close comrades of Lenin without creating widespread revulsion and opposition?

Isaac Deutcsher, the renowned historian, offers the following explanation:-

> "No milder pretext for the slaughter of the Old Guard (of the Bolshevik Party) would have sufficed. Had they been executed merely as men opposed to Stalin or even as conspirators who had tried to remove him from power, many might still have regarded them as martyrs for a good cause. They had to die as traitors, as perpetrators of crimes beyond the reach of reason, as leaders of a monstrous fifth column. Only then could Stalin be sure that their execution would provoke no dangerous revulsion; and that, on the contrary, he himself would be looked upon, especially by the young and uninformed generation, as the saviour of the country." (our emphasis) (ST ALIN: by Isaac Deutcsher, Pelican Books, 1966, page 374)

Lest Deutcsher be dismissed by "young and uninformed" as a Trotskyist and therefore unduly biased, let us quote Nikita Kruschev, a self-confessed penitent Stalinist and leader of the Soviet Union from 1956 to 1964. The quotation is from the speech Kruschev delivered at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union:

> "Stalin originated the concept "enemy of the people." This term automatically rendered it unnecessary the ideological errors of a man engaged in a controversy be proven; this term ("enemy of the people") made p~ssible the usage of the most cruel repression, violating all norms of revolutionary legality against anyone who, in anyway, disagreed with Stalin, against those who were suspected of hostile intent. . . .
> This concept "enemy of the People", actually eliminated the possibility of any kind of ideological fight or the making of one's views known on this or that issue. . . In the main, and in actuality, the only proof of guilt used was the "confession" of the accused himself, and as subsequent probing proved, "confessions" were acquired through physical pressures against the accused." (our emphasis)

Once Stalin got the taste of settling political differences by means of the firing squad, he did not rest with the slaughter of the Old Guard. He turned on his own followers with a terrible vengeance. In the same speech quoted above, Kruschev recounts how 70 percent of the members of the Central Committee elected in 1934 were arrested and shot in the Great Purges of the 1937-38 period.

It is estimated that during that nightmarish blood-letting one million were directly killed and another two million people perished in the harsh and inhuman conditions and treatment meted out in the labour camps. Altogether, some twelve million people were imprisoned.

We make no apology for the digression caused by the use of the historical analogy since its relevance is obvious. Two points emerge as lessons for us:-

(l) The denial of the freedoms of thought, conscience, speech, etc, initiates a process which must have a bloody end. People are bound to defy the bans and that in turn would invite State reprisals. A vicious circle is created and must inevitably introduce the element of violence. No ruling class or power group can sleep peacefully when it knows that there are people who disagree with it and are denied the right to express that disagreement.

(2) The danger of branding people as "enemies" or agents of the system, without sufficient proof or no proof at all, invites violence on such people even though, not necessarily by those who commenced the whispering slander to the sword. Those outside the Soviet Union earned the undying contempt of all honest and decent people.

As for Stalin himself, it took only three years after his death to have his reputation dragged in disgrace. The discrediting of dictators is a universal phenomenon which has been captured by Shelley in a poem which describes the ruins of a huge statue of one of the Egyptian kings. Only the "trunkless" legs remained standing. The pedestal had the following inscription:-

> "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings Look upon my works, ye mighty and despair."

The poem continues:

> "Nothing beside remains. Round the decay Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare The lone and level sands stretch far away."

Today, Stalinism has no public defenders. The Russian people regard the dead dictator a nightmare and his rule as the Russian holocaust, the recurrence of which they would do everything in their power to prevent. Thus wrote Yevtushenko, the poet:

> "So I ask our government To double To treble The guard Over this tomb." (From "Heirs of Stalin")

We trust that our point has been adequately illustrated. That which today seems all powerful will not necessarily remain so forever. Only those actions, which intrinsically advance the cause of our struggle, and, therefore, that of humankind, will be kindly judged by the future generation.

Thuggery and violence and intimidation in the liberatory camp can at best bring short term gains. Some may be browbeaten into silence. But others will rise to question and challenge and they will right the wrong by restoring these freedoms and relegating the violators to their rightful place in history, namely, the dung heap.

Let the clique be warned!

Let them learn from history!

NO MONOPOLY OF THE STRUGGLE

(1) No organisation, regardless of its numerical strength, can rightly claim to be sole representative of the oppressed people and therefore expect their organisations to either disband or be absorbed.

(2) Our struggle for liberation stretches over three quarters of a century. During this time, various organisations made their entry into the struggle and all have made their contributions in varying degrees of importance.

(3) The history of our struggle has been riddled with disunity. Therefore there is no single national organisation representing all the oppressed. With the passage of decades, the separate functioning of the organisations has become entrenched and in the near future there is little likelihood of these organisations dissolving and forming a new single national organisation. THAT IS A HARD FACT OF LIFE.

(4) Given this situation, a wise leadership will not seek to eliminate rival organisations. It will realise that organisations do not vanish simply because their members get killed or beaten up. On the contrary, a wise leadership will conscientiously cultivate a working relationship among the various organisations by emphasizing aspects of common interest and encouraging debates and discussions.

(5) Employment of thuggery or incorrect handling of non-antagonistic contradictions can convert such contradictions into antagonistic ones which can only benefit the common enemy. The Hungarian Uprising of 1956 is an example of what we are saying. Hungary was ruled by a clique of Stalin's henchmen headed by the gangster Rakosi. When the workers and intellectuals revolted against the Rakosi regime, they did not stop at overthrowing it. They went further.

Led by reactionaries and influenced by the imperialists, the workers and intellectuals were all set to turn back the clock of history and restore Hungary to capitalism. The non-antagonistic contradiction between a state claiming to represent the forces of socialism and the working class had been converted into an antagonistic one, by the denial of basic civil liberties. This resulted in the savage suppression of the uprising by the Soviet Union.

CONCLUSION

(1) If we believe in the freedom of thought, speech, press, association and assembly, then it is our sacred duty to defend any segment of the liberatory movement which has been attacked in the exercise of these freedoms.

(2) It is hypocrisy of the worst kind to condemn the ruling class for violating these freedoms when those who condemn do the same to sister organisations.

(3) Serious debate and discussion within the liberator):' movement can only do good. It would enrich the ideology of the entire liberatory movement. We will not win over people by use of the cudgel. To quote Mao T se Tung again:

> "The only way to settle questions of an ideological nature or controversial issues among the people is by the democratic method, the method of discussion, of criticism, of persuasion and education, and not by the method of repression or coercion."

(4) If we look back at the history and development of liberatory organisations we will find that present positions held by organisations are quite different from those held decades ago. This is largely due to changed circumstances which gave rise to serious debate, criticism and self-criticism. There is no shame in admitting errors. It is no crime in learning from others.

(5) When these freedoms are attacked, all sections of the Liberatory movement are duty-bound to close ranks and to defend the freedoms.

POSTSCRIPT:

While the present issue of "APDUSA VIEWS" was in the process of being published, the ruling class, through the government and the liberal establishment (PFP, the English Press and the university authorities), launched an all-out attack on students who were allegedly involved in incidents which resulted in people like Dr Denis Worrall and others being prevented from addressing meetings at certain Universities.

Since the present issue of "APDUSA VIEWS" deals with the importance of the freedom of speech and other related freedoms and a criticism of those in the liberatory movement who deny others in the liberatory movement these rights, we consider it necessary to state our position so as to prevent any confusion.

OUR POSITION (1) The criticism contained in this issue of "APDUSA VIEWS" is NOT to be construed in ANY WAY as an endorsement of the attack of the government and the liberal establishment on the students.

(2) We make our criticism from a totally DIFFERENT position. We do so as one section of the liberatory movement addressing itself to other sections of the same liberatory movement.

(3) Our plea is that these freedoms must be practised by all sections of the liberatory movement in their dealings with one another.

(4) The upholding of these freedoms does not mean that we must view them in the abstract and thereby facilitate the penetration of ruling class ideas in the ranks of the oppressed. On the contrary, we consider it our duty to combat ruling class propaganda unceasingly and to prevent its spreading amongst the oppressed.

(5) The oppressed have no tears to spare for the likes of Dr Worrall who has earned the notoriety reserved for shameless opportunists.

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CORRECTIONS

On page 8, the correct spelling is "DEUTSCHER" On page 7, line 23, insert the word "first" before "workers 'state"

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