

**AD18**



DRAFT STATEMENT ON CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR BRETT MYRDAL.

"AD. 18"

UDF(Western Cape) supports Brett Myrdal in his refusal to serve in the SADF because of its role in upholding apartheid. The SADF is engaged in a civil war in South Africa, while at the same time defending South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia.

It is significant that despite all the government's propaganda and indoctrination, thousands of white youth are refusing to serve in the SADF. Some, like Brett, have chosen to go to jail.

The new constitution will further heighten the civil war in our country. In fact, the price that sections of the oppressed will have to pay for their sham representation in the new parliaments will be conscription into the apartheid army.

Brett's stand cannot be seen in isolation from the situation which will be faced by coloured and Indian youth in the near future. While the Apartheid constitution attempts to further divide South Africa's people, we are united in our opposition to the SADF and the new constitution, and in our struggle for a free and democratic South Africa.

Brett's participation in the democratic movement has led him to the conclusion that he cannot participate in the SADF. The UDF(Western Cape) wholeheartedly supports him, and all other objectors, in their stand.



Bew "AD 18" ①

SPEECH DELIVERED BY BRETT MYRDAL 29 SEPTEMBER 1983  
AT NUSAS UCT MASS MEETING: 'STUDENTS REJECT THE  
APARTHEID CONSTITUTION'

Fellow students; I greet you today in solidarity with all other objectors, with the thousands who have left South Africa rather than serve in the South African Defence Force; in solidarity with Paul Dobson who, after 14 months in the SADF, chose to object and will now join the other conscientious objectors in Pretoria Central.

Last week I heard a report on capital radio covering the Transvaal National Party Congress. A resolution was passed calling for the rapid implementation of the extension of conscription to so-called coloureds and indians. Magnus Malan, minister of defence, spoke to the resolution.

He explained that the law to extend conscription would, but for shortage of time, have been introduced during the last sitting of parliament. He said it only remained for the new constitution to be accepted, before the extension of conscription would become fact.

So, as I talk today, introduced as a conscientious objector, I am very conscious of the fact that conscription is fast becoming a reality for a far broader group of South Africans. And it is precisely because of the supposed political rights which are being 'given' to the coloured and indian people, that they now face the threat of conscription in defence of the apartheid under which they live.

F.W.de Klerk, Transvaal Nationalist Party leader, has stated this clearly. I quote: " You can't ask a man to fight for his country if he can't vote. Among the terms of the new dispensation is the guarantee that coloureds and indians will get voting rights. It follows that their responsibilities will increase accordingly, which means they will hold obligations to defend these rights."

This is one harsh consequence of the new constitution that we, gathered here as members of NUSAS and the United Democratic Front, reject as we reject all aspects of the government's new deal.

In July, I failed to report to Potchefstroom Medical Services Corps. I was charged at Voortrekkerhoogte and face a Court Marshall there on November 8th. As a conscientious objector, I face a maximum sentence of two years imprisonment.



(2)

But I, like thousands of others, had been morally and physically prepared for war. Why then make this choice?

I attended a high school in Port Elizabeth. Part of its 'liberal' tradition was to train us as officer material for the SADF. The military, in the form of compulsory cadet training, was a part of my life from the age of 13.

Instead of cowboys and indians, at school camps we played 'nationalists vs terrorists'. We drilled with R1's; we were trained to shoot; 600 boys went on parade four times a year for the Eastern Province Command.

Our cadet camp (and I quote from our school year book) trained us in counter insurgency warfare and attacks on mock terrorist bases.

Then in our last year of school, we all received our first call up papers. The dilemma then was-varsity or national service? This was the year after Soweto '76 - We had always been told to prepare for the war against an external communist threat. But it was clear to many of us that conflict existed within South Africa. Many who were opposed to apartheid went in: 'to get it done with' - they are still trying to get it done.

They came back, some from the border. Many friends of mine couldn't recognise themselves or come to terms with what they had done.

So I chose to come to university. Here I was exposed to new ideas. Through meetings like these, and the work of organisations on campus, I broadened my understanding of conflict in South Africa and of the role I, myself, played in this.

The question for myself and for all of us was: 'What system are we called on to defend?' For me it became clear that it was a system based on the rule of a minority; where unemployment has reached 3 million; where the country is fragmented into homelands; where people from Crossroads and KTC are removed, to face repression of the order that we see in Ciskei at the moment. A country, which calls on its top generals to mastermind a militarily defensible constitution which it then holds out to the people of the country as democracy.

For me it became immoral to participate in the SADF and defend such an unjust system. Immoral to fight against our own people - the youth of



Soweto '76 now returning. I could not participate in a war of occupation in Namibia; in cross-border raids; in the suppression of uprisings; and I could not do the work of police in staffing road blocks and resettling people.

My dilemma meant that I had to choose sides. And I had to take the side of the people working for a just and free South Africa. For me, commitment to a non-racial struggle has meant that I must refuse to serve in the SADF.

All of you, faced with this situation, will have to make an equally difficult decision. On the one hand, the state increases to 6 years the sentence for C.O.'s. But on the other, the constitution it has constructed offers no solution to the conflict. The very foundations of the constitution lie in the Group Areas Act, lie in the maintenance of the homelands.

When we oppose the constitution today, our opposition should not be limited to only those aspects of the status quo that are being modified by the constitution.

Our opposition should be directed at every way in which an embattled white minority attempts to preserve its power and privilege: detentions, forced removals, bantustan policy, and the increasing militarisation of our society.

When we demand alternatives, we cannot limit ourselves to alternatives to the constitution. Our demands must embrace a profoundly changed society, a society where people are no longer powerless and hungry, and shunted around like animals. A society where young men are no longer called on to fight their brothers in defence of a patently unjust system, a society where the people are in control of their lives - where the people shall govern.

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