

15.2 Peter Brown

Dublin
13/8/69

Of all those of us who have come here to protest against the imposition of a second 5-year ban on Mr. Peter Brown, not one knows the reasons why he has been banned again. I myself do not know, yet I was more intimately associated with him in politics than anyone else. I was the first National Chairman of the Liberal Party, but I received what is known as upstairs promotion, and was succeeded by Peter Brown. I think it fair to say that I knew every political thought, every political plan, that he ever had in his mind. He never concealed any action from me. He never lied. He never intrigued. Any kind of underground dealing was foreign - and still is foreign - and always will be foreign - to his nature. Does the Minister of Justice possess information that is not known to those of us who know him so intimately? I do not believe it.

Why was he banned? He was banned because in the opinion of the Minister, he was a danger to the security of the State. If that means that he would, if he were freed, have made plans to overthrow the government by violence, or ^{have} incited others to do so, or ^{have} behaved violently, or ^{have} stirred up racial hatred, then it is an absurd and nonsensical allegation that cannot be substantiated by any proof. It is monstrous, is it not, that a Minister of State can ban a man for five years on the basis of an allegation that cannot be substantiated? It is monstrous is it not, that the Minister of Justice should ban Peter Brown on the grounds that he is furthering the aims of Communism?

/I should

D/5

Of all those of us who have come here to protest against the imposition of a second 5-year ban on Mr. Peter Brown, not one knows the reasons why he has been banned again. I myself do not know, yet I was more intimately associated with him in politics than anyone else. I was the first National Chairman of the Liberal Party, but I received what is known as upstairs promotion, and was succeeded by Peter Brown. I think it fair to say that I knew every political thought, every political plan, that he ever had in his mind. He never concealed any action from me. He never lied. He never intrigued. Any kind of underground dealing was foreign - and still is foreign - and always will be foreign - to his nature. Does the Minister of Justice possess information that is not known to those of us who know him so intimately? I do not believe it.

Why was he banned? He was banned because in the opinion of the Minister, he was a danger to the security of the State. If that means that he would, if he were freed, have made plans to overthrow the government by violence, or ^{have} incited others to do so, or ^{have} behaved violently, or ^{have} stirred up racial hatred, then it is an absurd and nonsensical allegation that cannot be substantiated by any proof. It is monstrous, is it not, that a Minister of State can ban a man for five years on the basis of an allegation that cannot be substantiated? It is monstrous is it not, that the Minister of Justice should ban Peter Brown on the grounds that he is furthering the aims of Communism?

/I should

I should like to say something about Peter Brown and his attitude towards Communism. No one was more earnest than he in his desire to bring an end to poverty and deprivation, and to give to every man a just share of the results of his labour, and to abolish gross inequalities of opportunity and wealth, and to abolish that cruel social system which makes a man's future and destiny dependent on the accident of his birth and the colour of his skin. But if these noble ends could only be achieved by cruel means, by the abrogation of the rule of law, by the silencing of all opposition, then Peter Brown would have fought such a doctrine with all the strength of his stubborn and independent soul. These particular aims of Communism are not furthered in South Africa by people like Peter Brown, they are furthered by the Government that hates Communism with a deadly hatred.

The South African Government is not the only anti-Communist Government that uses the devices of Stalin and Franco and Salazar (quote Christianity & Crisis, P.188). (quote cable sent by the U.S. Study team to President Nixon). (quote the absurd position of Mr. and Mrs. Jean Hill). The Suppression of Communism Act is a semantic atrocity. It enables the Minister to deal with Pan-Africanists, African Nationalists, Indian anti-Apartheiders, protesters against the destruction of District 6, Liberals. One may derive a secret pleasure from the fact that the arch-anti-Communists,

/the Verkramptes,

the Verkramptes, are howling with rage over the BOSS Act, which they fear might be used against them. Would they not love to get hold of the Suppression of Communism Act? They would, under the leadership of that smiling anachronism Albert Hertzog, use it against mini-skirts and editors and non-Calvinists and protesting students, and some university principals, and anyone who grumbles because he couldn't see the Moon landing on TV. And we can confidently predict, ladies and gentlemen, that if he used the Act against anyone who grumbles because he can't have TV, then lots of people would stop grumbling about not having TV. And instead of grumbling, they would begin saying "the Government must know something after all", and "there's no smoke without fire", and all those other wise things that people say when they've lost their minds and their guts.

Another five years of a kind of imprisonment has been imposed on Peter Brown. Yet his offence is unknown. He has not been brought before any court and proved to be guilty of any offence. Yet a sentence of great severity has been imposed upon him. One of the most inhuman requirements of this sentence is that he shall not attend any gathering, and this has been interpreted by the courts to mean that he shall virtually abstain from social life. One of the consequences of this is that the friends of ~~x~~ banned persons begin to avoid them lest they cause trouble for them. It so happens that Mr. Peter Brown likes people

/and their

and their company, though I must admit that he likes some people and some company better than he likes others, a characteristic that he shares with most of us. Therefore when I heard that the ban had been renewed, I experienced - as many of you did too - a feeling of grief as well as of anger. One feels grief, not only because the whole pattern of a man's life, and his wife's life, and his children's lives has been changed, but because the power that does it is a cruel power, seemingly inflexible, august in its majesty because it is the power of the State. Yet one feels anger also, because this power is puerile as well, in that it cannot abide opposition, it cannot abide those who criticise its policies, it reacts, not with gravity and dignity, but with a viciousness that ill befits so august an authority. The trouble is that the august power of the State is in the custody of a human government, whose representatives are not gods, but humans. One of them has described the wives and families of African men as appendages. Another has threatened the representatives of the South African Council of Churches that their cloth will not save them from his wrath. Another described a retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of South Africa as a mischief-maker. Every free man is required to respect the lawfully constituted authority. Every free man recognises that there can be no freedom without order. But no free man gives a slavish obedience to authority, nor can he respect an order that does not respect the

claims of justice. It is because Mr. Peter Brown does not give a slavish obedience to authority, and because he does not respect an order that permits injustice, that he has again been silenced and restricted. We are not allowed by law to tell you what he has said, or to repeat or publish his words. But luckily we do not need to. What we are saying here tonight are the things he would have said. And he would say here unequivocally that he helped to found the Liberal Party because to him Apartheid was a cruel and repressive policy, because Separate Development was to him only a new name for an old authoritarianism, because the existing order was unjust, because husbands working in our towns and cities (where their work was indispensable), were separated by law from their wives and children, because profits counted more than persons, because the working people of South Africa were denied a fair share of the wealth they helped to create. Mr. Brown sees clearly that the essence of separate development is not that it provides separate freedoms - that is the dream. In essence it is something done by people who have power to people who have none - that is the reality. (Some climb onto the bandwagon so that they too can enjoy this power).

It is not easy to criticise the lawfully constituted authority, nor to reject its policies (Archbishop Clayton). It is even less easy if one is law-abiding, if one has been brought up to be obedient, and to have respect for authority.

/And

And especially is it not easy, if for the first time in one's life one is kept under surveillance, and one's telephone is tapped, and one's mail is opened, and one's name is taken. One is accused (or one's party is accused, which is safer, but is really the same thing) of furthering the aims of Communism. And then perhaps there is the threat of a day of reckoning, and perhaps one can see that day coming, and one has to decide whether to stop protesting and criticising, and to stop making common cause with those of one's fellow-countrymen who are of different race and colour from oneself, and to be good and be quiet and be nothing at all, so that the coming of the day may be staved off - but perhaps one decides that one must not stop protesting and criticising, perhaps one decides it would be better to lie down and die than to yield one's meaning as a man, perhaps one decides that to be good and be quiet and be nothing is to betray those of one's fellow-countrymen who had made common cause, very often in the face of threats and loss and intimidation, perhaps one decides that that is what life is, not a time in which to be good and be quiet and be nothing, but a time in which to be true to the things one believes and to be true to those who also believe in them, even though it is going to change one's life, and the life of one's wife and children.

So if we grieve for Peter Brown and his wife and children, let us not grieve inordinately. There is no other way in which he could have lived his life. We may

/grieve

grieve for him, but would we have had him be something else? If he had been something else, then we would all have been impoverished. There are those who ask, what good has it done? It has done a lot of good. It enables us to say South Africa is a land of fear, but it's a land of courage also. Yet nevertheless, whatever evil, whatever good, has come of this, we are here to make our protest against this act of tyranny and inhumanity. Why can't the Government say to a person ~~xxxxxxx~~ whose ban is about to expire, your ban is not to be renewed, but we can impose a new one on the day we believe that your words and actions are a danger to the security of the State? Why can't they say that? Is there any reason, can there be any reason, for them not to say that? It at least allows some measure of freedom to the person whose ban is about to expire, to decide how he will live his life in the future. Who is the danger to racial peace, Mr. Brown or Dr. Ras Beyers? And which one walks free?

I said earlier that Peter Brown's offence is unknown. By that I meant that he has committed no known offence against the law. But he has committed an offence all the same, and that is that he won't go down on his belly and lick the boots or the august posterior of the Government. He won't say "Yes, Boss," and he won't let anyone say "Yes, Boss" to him. He knows that the official policy of the Government is racial separation, and separate development, and separate freedoms, and separate bludgeons for all those who don't
/believe

believe in it. But he doesn't see why he has to believe in it, or why he should ^{REFRAIN} from saying he doesn't believe in it. He doesn't see why he should refrain from making common cause with any South African who believes in the same things that he believes in. There are some people who think that if he would only sign an affidavit saying that he was against Communism and violence, that the Minister would let him go free, but unfortunately he doesn't sign that kind of affidavit, not because he isn't against Communism and violence, but because he has an odd belief that free men don't sign that kind of affidavit. While we may grieve over the consequences of his beliefs, we can also be grateful that he has them, and we can be grateful that quite a lot of other people have them too, though not enough to change the course of events. One thing ~~xxxxxxx~~ one has to learn in South Africa, and that is that there are some things that one must do and some consequences that one must suffer, even if they don't seem to change the course of events. One does these things and suffers the consequences because that is what it means to be oneself, and there is a much worse fate than banning, and that is to cease to be oneself, and to have to lie and prevaricate and deceive, oneself as well as others, and to have tremendous principles and also tremendous reasons why one shouldn't stick to them, so that in the end one's children,

/some of

some of them, become alienated by all this hypocrisy, and go out and get themselves into trouble (Say something about young people if enough are there).

Robert Birley, quoting from some classical source that I cannot remember, and wanting to encourage his South African audiences, would say there is a time for sowing and a time for reaping, and one must not be disheartened when there is nothing to reap, because obviously that is a time for sowing. Well this is a time for sowing, and there are even signs that the seed is sprouting, and this is encouraging even though we know that the tender shoots will have to survive drought and locusts and big Boss himself, who may plough them all under in the belief that they are weeds. A book is going to be published this month in Cape Town, called "Beweging Uitwaarts" which is "Movement Outwards". And in this book Dr. J.J. Degenaar, professor of political philosophy at the University of Stellenbosch, questions the need for nationalism "in a world which is becoming smaller and in which a larger form of solidarity has now become necessary". Dr. Degenaar says "personally I think man should start endeavouring individually and collectively to think and to act in terms of loyalty to the race". He says that the new age demands new values, "humanity rather than nationality, reasonableness rather than emotionality, truth rather than ideology,....justice rather than self-preservation, civilisation rather than purity of race,

/co-responsibility

co-responsibility rather than maintenance of one's own at all costs". Dr. Degenaar goes one step further, and distinguishes between the open and the closed society. In the open society the freedom of the individual is respected, and in the closed society, order is maintained with an iron hand. And this, ladies and gentlemen is from the professor of political philosophy at Stellenbosch. It's worth while sowing seed after all, even if one sows by holding protest meetings.

Let me say in conclusion that the responsibility for making South Africa a Land of hope and courage does not rest on Peter Brown alone. It rests on all of us who love South Africa, and want to see her right not wrong, just not cruel, so confident in her cause that she does not need to deprive one of her best citizens of his freedom to try to make her cause better still.

Collection Number: AD1169

Collection Name: Alan Paton Papers, 1952-1988

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

Location: Johannesburg

©2016

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.