

# ON BEING BANNED

BY PETER BROWN

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My ban was a straight forward one for its day — the contemporary 1964 model. In 1966 it was updated and had certain refinements added to it. These refinements were not designed to make life easier for me. They were designed to make life more difficult.

The main provisions of my order were that I could not attend a gathering, social or otherwise, of more than two people, I had to remember somehow to report to the police station every Monday.

Nobody could quote anything I said. I couldn't write or help anyone else to write anything for publication. I couldn't go on to the premises of any educational institution or newspaper or publishing house or factory or law court.

I was confined to the magisterial district of Pietermaritzburg but within that district I couldn't go into any African, Indian or coloured areas.

## INVOLVED

For 10 years this kept me out of Edendale, a place where I had been involved in social work and made a lot of friends. When I went back there 10 years later, I could hardly recognise the place and a whole new generation of people had grown up, who only recognised me, I suspect, as just another "whitey".

This was sad not just for me, but for South Africa. For in Edendale in 1964 there was still a reasonable prospect of building support for a non-racial movement committed to working amongst all races for a shared future here.

In fact, that movement was established and growing. What the prospects would now be for building it again, I no longer know.

The ban brought my work to an end. It was political work and I thought it was important. I still think it was, but it was over and I had to find something else to do.

Other people have of course, been far harder hit in this respect than I was — lawyers who can't go to law courts, lecturers and students who can't go to university, factory workers who can't go to factories.

Some of them go on for years, depending on the support of relatives and friends who help their families to survive.

Banned people are frustrated by Security Police visits which frighten off prospective employers every time it looks as if they might have found a job. Others do work for which neither their qualifications nor talents suit them and are bored to distraction.

In 1964 our children were approaching the point of going to high school. By 1974 they had finished university.

I did not set foot in any of the places they were attending in all those years or go to a single school or university function.

Nor did they have a single party at home during that time. All this, I am sure, raised many difficult questions for them amongst their friends.

In the normal course of events one goes through life picking up new acquaintances along the way, making new friends out of those you really come to like. In this respect 1964 to 1974 reflects a total blank in our lives.

## CONTRARY

In those 10 years, we hardly met a single new person and certainly didn't make a single new friend. On the contrary, one's immediate reaction to anyone new who tried to be friendly was that he must be a plant.

Not the most commendable response perhaps but an inevitable off-shoot of the whole banning system. This system also has its effect on people who really are your friends. You lose contact with them.

Obviously you lose contact with other people who are banned as the order forbids communication with them and inevitably these are some of your closest friends.

You lose contact with others because they no longer come to see you. They think if they do, they'll get you into trouble. This is an inhibition which anyone who has banned friends should quickly get rid of. Go and see them.

They need contact with as much of the world around them as they can get and you can help give it — even if you must see them alone. For it is very easy even for someone in partial isolation to get out of tune with the moods of the society which surrounds him.

For instance, during the second part of my ban, the Black Consciousness Movement really began to gain momentum but I had had no experience of it and by the time the ban was over, and it was a new force to be reckoned with in South Africa, I knew hardly anything about it at all.

And again, when I was labouring under the illusion that the ban might end after the first five years, I surreptitiously wrote for publication what I thought was a magnificent article.

In my mind's eye I saw it on the day after my banning expired spread across the leader pages in every newspaper in the country. It wasn't.

The ban was re-imposed and the article probably wouldn't have been published anyway. But when I resurrected that article five years later, to look at it again, it was obvious

that by then it had become totally inappropriate — left behind by the passage of time.

**DESIGNED**

Banning is designed to hurt and, to a greater or lesser extent according to the nature and circumstances of its victims, it does. The important thing I am sure each one of them would agree is not to show it. But it has hurt many people and it has hurt South Africa most.

I'm not talking about her world image. I'm talking about the fact that it has taken out of active public involvement in our affairs a host of people who, given a chance in the past

25 years might have made a decisive contribution to the cause of peaceful change.

Why were they banned apart from the fact that the Security Police didn't like them, or what they stood for? I don't know.

I don't know in my own case. All I do know was that when I was summoned to meet the Minister of Justice shortly before my second ban expired, the one incident out of my dark past which he quoted as a reason for what I had been subjected to for the previous 10 years was something, which to the best of my knowledge, had never happened. □

US CONGRESSIONAL RECORD JANUARY 13TH 1928  
p. 1446

(QUOTED IN NUX FEBRUARY 1973)

“According to the best statistics obtainable, the World War cost 30 000 000 lives and more than \$80 000 000 000 in property. In order to give some idea of what it means, just let me illustrate it in the following: With that amount we could have built a £500 house and furnished this house with £200 worth of furniture and placed it on five acres of land worth £20 an acre and given all this to each and every family in the United States of America, Canada, Australia, England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, France, Belgium, Germany and Russia. After doing this there would have been enough money left to give each city of 200 000 inhabitants and over in all countries named a £1 000 000 library, a £1 000 000 hospital, and a £2 000 000 university. And then out of the balance we would still have had sufficient money to have set aside a sum at 5% interest which would have paid for all time to come a £200 yearly salary to each member of an army of 125 000 teachers, and in addition to this to have paid the same salary to each member of an army of 125 000 nurses. And, after having done all this, we would still have had enough left out of our £80 000 000 000 to buy up all of France and Belgium and everything of value in France and Belgium; farm, home factory, church, railroad, street car — in fact, everything of value in those two countries in 1914. For it must be

remembered that the total valuation of France in 1914, according to the French official figures, was £12 500 000 000. In other words, the price which the leaders and statesmen of the entente, including the 'statesmen' of the United States, made the people of the world pay for the victory over Germany, was equal to the value of five countries like France, plus five countries like Belgium.”

Total of known dead for all fighting nations .	10 004 771
Total of known wounded . . . . .	20 297 551
About half those listed as prisoners or missing actually died, adding to the total of the dead another . . . . .	2 991 800
Perished from Spanish influenza . . . . .	6 000 000
Armenian, Syrian, Jewish and Greek victims .	4 000 000
Roumanians . . . . .	800 000
Austrian and Serbian civilians who died of starvation disease and privation . . . . .	1 000 000
War deaths of Russian civilians in excess of normal . . . . .	2 000 000
Nearly all Polish children under the age of six are said to have died of starvation. □	