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ACADEMIC FREEDOM
AND
HUMAN FREEDOM

A DECENT RESPECT FOR THE OPINIONS OF MANKIND

Right Honorable Denis Healey, M.B.E., M.P.

(5)

SPEECH OF THANKS

Horst Kleinschmidt, Acting President of the National
Union of South African Students

EIGHTH ANNUAL DAY OF AFFIRMATION OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND HUMAN FREEDOM.

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL DURBAN; SEPTEMBER 17, 1970

FOREWORD

Ever since 1959, when the Extension of University Education Act and the Fort Hare University College Transfer Act became law, NUSAS has looked for ways in which to continue its public witness of the belief in academic freedom. Although the long struggle of NUSAS, and of staff and students of Universities and University Colleges in NUSAS to preserve what academic freedom did exist in South Africa came to nothing, we felt that our struggle was not a short term one it must go on as long as NUSAS existed.

However, in our public witness, we did not wish to mourn merely the lost remnants of academic freedom, for we knew that full academic freedom, could never exist in an undemocratic country and we knew too that to mourn something that had never really existed was pointless.

We decided instead to affirm our belief in academic freedom in anticipation of its achievement but at the same time we knew that it was not enough to affirm our belief in academic freedom without affirming our belief in human freedom because we realised that without human freedom we could not have academic freedom.

On May 16, 1963 the first Day of Affirmation of Academic Freedom and Human Freedom was organised. During the days preceding the national event centres affiliated to NUSAS held individual events on each campus. Then on the 16th the Presidents of all University Student Representative Councils affiliated to NUSAS, the President of Student Representative Council of the Johannesburg College of Education and a representative of the students of Fort Hare University College, together with the NUSAS President assembled at a mass rally at the Durban city hall.

The guest speaker that evening was Archbishop Denis Hurley, chosen by us to speak because he represented so much more than political commitment or intellectual involvement. The chairman of the meeting was Mr W.T. Mhlambiso, then Chairman of the Joint Board of the Student Representative Councils of Natal University and sometime Vice-President of NUSAS. The other speaker was the President of NUSAS

In this booklet we publish the speeches made by the guest speaker at the Eighth Day of Affirmation ceremony, the Right Honorable Denis Healey, M.B.E., M.P. and the Acting President of NUSAS, Horst Kleinschmidt, as well as the dedication signed by the Student Representatives. The ceremony was also held in Durban, but on September 17, 1970, and on the campus of the University of Natal at Durban.

The organisation of such a national event was perhaps only a minor step towards the achievement of a South Africa in which academic freedom could exist. It was however public witness by a few people where too many have lost their courage even to say in public what they believe.

NUSAS is resolved that it will continue its public witness, this year, next year and the years after, until we in South Africa have gained what we must fight for continually; a democratic society in which we can have a true education.

DECLARATION
OF ACADEMIC AND HUMAN FREEDOM
IN SOUTH AFRICA

Gathered here at the University of Natal, Durban on September 17, 1970 we affirm our belief "that it is our duty to uphold the principle that a university is a place where men and women, without regard to creed or colour are welcome to join in the acquisition and advancement of knowledge

"that it is the duty of the university to guarantee the rights of participants in the opportunities and privileges made available by belonging to a university

"that academic freedom is essential to the integrity of institutions of higher education and the unfettered pursuit of truth

"that the ideals of academic and human freedom are intimately bound up with each other and that free universities cannot exist in an unfree society

"we pledge ourselves to work for the attainment of these ideals : 1 South Africa within our respective institutions, and to continue faithfully to defend them against encroachment in any form"

SIGNATORIES: THE RIGHT HONORABLE DENIS HEALEY M.B.E., M.P.

JOHN HENDERSON

President of Students' Representative Council
University of Natal, Durban

HORST KLEINSCHMIDT

Acting President of NUSAS

PAUL PRETORIUS

Deputy President of NUSAS

REX HEINKE

President of SRC
University of Witwatersrand

JAN THERON

Vice-President of SRC
University of Cape Town

GRAHAM WALKER

President of SRC
Johannesburg College of Education

ABNER MTIMKULU

President of SRC
University of Natal (Black)

OLIVER SCHREINER

President of SRC
University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg)

JOHN WHITEHEAD

President of SRC
Rhodes University

A DECENT RESPECT FOR THE OPINIONS OF MANKIND

The Right Honorable Denis Healey, M.B.E., M.P.

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First let me say that I consider it a very special honour to have been invited to give this lecture by the National Union of South African Students. To be following in the footsteps of men like Bobby Kennedy and Alan Paton - and how glad we all are to see his passport restored - is in itself a formidable challenge. But the real honour derives from the character of the body which has issued the invitation. The National Union of South African Students has a record of courage and sacrifice in the cause of human and academic freedom which has given it a unique position in the modern world. With the end of the imperial era the problems of race and colour are assuming a critical importance in national and international affairs. The Declaration which you are making today puts you in the front rank of a struggle for human dignity on whose outcome will depend the survival of civilisation as we know it, perhaps even the survival of the human race.

I know you have no illusions about the difficulties and dangers which attend the responsibility you undertake by pledging yourselves to work for the attainment of academic and human freedom in South Africa. I hope you will be able to draw comfort and resolution from the knowledge that throughout the world men and women are watching your labours with admiration and respect and that for this reason you represent a lifeline for the South African people as a whole, linking them with the international community and with the historic traditions of Western civilisation. I believe that in the years to come even those of your fellow-citizens who now reject your ideals and seek to frustrate your activities will come to be grateful for what you have done, are doing, and will do to offer them a way of escape from the catastrophe which threatens to engulf the Southern half of this great continent.

I have not come to preach a sermon. Britain has not given up the job of world policeman to become the world's parson. Nor have we in Britain any moral qualification to lecture South Africans about the handling of community relations. The building of our own empire was gained by appalling crimes against the peoples of Africa and Asia. The story of our treatment of the Afrikaner people in South Africa itself contains pages, indeed whole chapters, over which we still feel a profound shame. We have our own problems of racial integration which still await solution. None of us can feel proud of the way we have found it necessary to handle the pressures created by immigration from the coloured Commonwealth. And at this moment we face in Northern Ireland a conflict between two white and Christian communities within our own borders which makes a mockery of the principles we and they profess.

I know too that there have been some Christians in South Africa who believe sincerely that the segregation of the races, with all the human consequences which attend it, is not only compatible with their religion but required by it. I believe they are profoundly wrong, and there are signs they are coming to realise this themselves. But there are more qualified than I to demonstrate the theological errors into which they have fallen so tragically. So many practising Christians of all denominations have worked so hard for so long inside South Africa itself to fight these racial doctrines in both theory and in practice that a temporary visitor can add little to their shining witness. In any case, Miss Barbara Ward last year in her magisterial lecture in Cape Town entitled "A New History", presented the moral case against Apartheid with a combination of passion, scholarship and common sense so brilliant that I would only expose my own inadequacies by seeking to elaborate it.

I have come here to learn, try to understand. The only way in which I can hope in some small way to repay the honour you have done me by your invitation is to make available some of the insights I think I have gained as an active Labour politician for the last quarter of a century and as Britain's Secretary of State for Defence in the last six years. For whatever may be thought of the morality of racial segregation - and I hope I have made my own abhorrence of it clear - I believe that it can only lead to practical disaster.

I have the impression that the economic and social handicaps imposed by racial segregation are already becoming apparent even to those who believe it is morally and politically right. Indeed no one can read the official estimates of population trends and set them against the inexhaustible thirst of modern industry for more and more skilled labour without realising that something has got to give. It would be possible, I suppose, to choose economic stagnation. But even if those who hold political power in South Africa were to renounce industrial expansion and to accept a Spartan future as the inhabitants of a white Bantustan, I do not believe that the world would let them. Nor do I believe that total political isolation from the rest of Western civilisation is a prospect which would commend itself for long. Yet unless South Africa can break out of policies which deny the fundamental human freedoms, total isolation is, I believe, inevitable.

Nearly two centuries ago, when the American colonists made their Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, they took it for granted that they must pay "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind". And so they did. But for them at that time mankind was the white peoples on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Africans were not part of the human race. The State of Virginia alone contained 200,000 negro slaves in 1790. Nearly a century had to pass after the Declaration of Independence, before the victory of the North in a bloody civil war established the American negro as part of mankind, and another century has passed without all negroes in the United States yet enjoying the full rights of citizenship in practice. But in this last century progress towards racial integration in America has been continuous however uneven in pace. And one of the factors leading for that progress has been a decent respect for the opinions of a mankind the great majority of which itself is coloured.

Professor Arnold Toynbee has pointed out that it was not until after the end of the ~~First~~ World War that the welfare of mankind as a whole became accepted even by small bodies of idealists as a reasonable objective of human endeavour. It took a Second World War to establish this as the proclaimed objective of Governments, with the United Nations Organisation as their instrument.

I know that the United Nations has fallen short of its founders' hopes. But considering the headlong speed with which the peoples of Africa, the Middle East and Asia achieved political independence and the profound ideological conflicts which have been superimposed on the traditional tensions of power politics, it is remarkable that the United Nations has survived at all through the last quarter of a century. Yet it has not only survived. It has exercised a continuing influence, however small, on the behaviour of all its member states, even when they were engaged in activities quite incompatible with its objectives. And in some limited cases, though all too few, it has assumed collective responsibility in areas hitherto regarded as the exclusive preserve of national governments.

Meanwhile the communications explosion has given the "opinions of mankind" a new meaning. Wireless and television ensure that events in one part of the world can be presented the same day - even the same moment - in all other parts of the world for judgement; and the postwar diffusion of culture means that the standards used for judgements differ far less from country to country than was ever the case in the past. I do not want to exaggerate the completeness of this revolution. I gather television has yet to reach South Africa. Not only governments but also the private controllers of news media can decide up to a point what is reported; differences of tradition, environment and interest of course still help to determine standards. But the phrase "world opinion" is far more meaningful today than it was even ten years ago, and it will develop more meaning still as the years pass.

Nor do I want to exaggerate the consistency or even the integrity of such world opinion as does exist. Peoples do tend to judge others more harshly than they judge themselves, and often they apply different standards at different situations or different governments. But certain fundamental standards of international and national behaviour have lodged themselves sufficiently firmly in world opinion for governments to be unable to violate them without paying a real political price. Despite the impotence of the United Nations in face of Russia's invasion of Czechoslovakia, Russia is still paying a price not only in the Western world but also among the non-aligned nations and more important, in the Communist camp itself for flouting the United Nations Charter.

But by far the most important standard in terms of world opinion is that relating to racial equality. Of all forms of discrimination that based on race or colour is least acceptable to the opinions of mankind. For racial discrimination is absolute and irredemiable. A man can change his views or his religion, he cannot change his skin. Moreover the long history of slavery and colonial rule gives racial discrimination a power to wound its victims which no other form of discrimination can parallel. To the Governments of coloured peoples, a state based on racial discrimination is liable to appear not just as a moral offense, but as a threat to survival; for if a coloured skin is grounds for denying equality of rights to one's own citizens, may it not be treated as grounds for denying a foreign state the same sovereignty as white states can enjoy under the United Nations Charter? Even an enlightened foreign policy will not protect a segregationist society against such suspicions, since enlightenment will be seen simply as the product of temporary limitations of power rather than of a long-term principle.

As a result a segregationist society will come under steadily increasing international pressure from two directions. On the one hand it will suffer social ostracism at the level of human contacts - in sport we have seen it often in recent months for example, and in church affairs not only the World Council of Churches but the World Alliance of Reformed Churches too has just come close to excluding the Dutch Reformed Church here for segregating its congregation. On the other hand there will be attempts to isolate it at governmental level, by limiting its diplomatic, defence, industrial and commercial activities. Sometimes such attempts to segregate the segregationist may harm his victims as much as they harm him. Sometimes they may be counterproductive by forcing the internal opponents of segregation to make common cause with the segregationist. But when this happens there will always be many who will meet the criticism as did a Jesuit priest in a recent letter to the London Times: - "The suggestion that all parties (as if they were equal in weight or numbers) need patience to be shown because a moral debate is going on among the whites is like saying that we should have been patient with Hitler because of the dramatic struggle of Nazi conscience represented by Pastor Bonhoeffer and his group. It is simple nonsense. If you are jumping up and down on my face it does not interest me that you are having qualms of conscience about it".

And if complaints are made that opposition to segregation is encouraging violence there will always be those who will ask what form of peaceful opposition is permitted to the Africans as an alternative.

No one can deny the existence of these trends. No one can deny that they are growing stronger, not weaker as time passes. If that were all, world opinion would soon achieve the total isolation of the segregationist society. But of course that is not all. Governments and peoples are influenced by many factors besides a faith in racial equality. They are also concerned with their own interest in security and prosperity. The racial problems they face at home may moderate their enthusiasm to make sacrifices in the cause of racial equality abroad. I sense in some quarters a certain complacency about the pressure of world opinion on the grounds that other factors will in the end take precedence over a dislike of segregation, that the storm will blow itself out before long. In my opinion nothing could be

more mistaken. That sort of complacency is based on a gross exaggeration of the current strength of the countervailing factors, and an even greater exaggeration of their strength in the future. Let me examine them one by one.

First, it is assumed that racial tensions will grow in other Western countries and that this will lead more and more people to see segregation as the answer, thereby inhibiting if not reversing the present attitude of their governments towards Apartheid in South Africa. In fact, the contrary is the case. Let me offer you some recent evidence from Britain - heartening evidence, however much I may deplore the circumstances which produced it. Against the expectation of nearly all informed people, Mr Heath led the Conservative Party to victory in the recent British General Election. He did so, to his credit, on a platform of unyielding opposition to Mr. Powell on the racial question - for which, incidentally he was heavily criticised in his own party during the election. But it did not hurt his chances. I do not underestimate the danger that at a time of general economic crisis a minority of the British people, like other before them, might seek a scapegoat in a group which was easily identifiable by the colour of its skin. But as a real issue, race is of declining importance in British politics. Moreover even Mr Powell claims to oppose discrimination on grounds of race or colour against those actually in Britain. And incidentally Sir Alec Douglas Home has unequivocally expressed not only his abhorrence of apartheid, but also his belief that it will fail.

The United States is the only other Western Country where race is a major political issue. There it remains an agonising problem, compounded as it is with the myriad problems of the cities and the growth of urban violence. But, whatever the political attractions of a Southern strategy, President Nixon remains firmly committed to continue the drive towards integration. Desegregation in America's schools will be formally complete in a month's time though much still remains to be done in practice. Any slowing of the pace at home will only be politically viable if it is combined with a re-assertion of the ultimate objective; that is the last situation in which any American leader could afford to relax his opposition to Apartheid overseas. Indeed it is the politician who wants to compromise the principle of racial equality at home who is most embarrassed by the grinning spectre of Apartheid overseas. There is no comfort for degregation here.

Ah well, it is said, perhaps we are in for a long hard slog. But we have faced difficulties before and overcome them. We are not the only country in the world which must seek survival in a hostile environment - look at Israel, look at Singapore, or nearer home look at Southern Rhodesia or Mozambique and Angola. Well, look at them. Israel may not have many friends in the Middle East, but she has powerful support outside it. And her social and economic achievements against overwhelming odds have assured her a degree of international sympathy which no other small country can equal. Singapore has in ten years built up a similar international position, and is welding its diverse races into a single nation so as to buttress an internal stability already remarkable by Asian standards. There is no analogy with South Africa here.

Rhodesia and Portuguese Africa come closer to it. But they are scarcely comforting analogies. If, as now is all but certain, Rhodesia does not return to constitutional rule, the pressures already exerted on her will increase beyond what she can hope to withstand alone. This may certainly present a problem of the segregationists elsewhere but it will not bring them consolation. The cost to Portugal of keeping the status quo in Africa is fast becoming intolerable, with the call-up extended to the age of forty-five, four years military service and forty per cent of the budget spent on keeping 120,000 men in Africa. This too is not a spectacle to encourage those who hope to withstand the wind of change.

Others pin their hopes on the value of South Africa as a trading partner. This is certainly substantial for many countries, not least my own. But though commercial relations can create powerful vested interests which may attempt to influence policy in the countries concerned - they certainly do in Britain - trade is as a rule surprisingly insensitive to political relations, and vice versa. The German Federal Republic is Eastern Germany's most important trading partner in the West, but they have no diplomatic relations at all. Britain's exports to South Africa increased after the Labour Government imposed the arms embargo. There is one striking exception to this rule, it is the increasing tendency among the other African countries, where trade is more controlled by governments, to deny commercial opportunities to countries whose policy towards South Africa offends them. Western trade with the African countries between the Zambesi and the Sahara is already greater than with South Africa, and is likely to grow faster still. Against this background, the least that can be said is that countries outside Africa stand to lose as much trade by flouting world opinion on Apartheid as they could conceivably gain.

When this is pointed out, the argument shifts again, South Africa is of crucial strategic importance to the West in the struggle against Communism it is said: in the last resort it is this which will protect her against the full rigours of world opinion. This is the greatest fallacy of all. Perhaps as an ex-Minister of Defence I may be allowed to explore it in more detail.

For Britain the importance of military facilities in South Africa depends directly on her defence responsibilities outside Europe. Fifteen years ago those responsibilities were still substantial, in Africa as well as Asia and the Middle East. And when in 1955 Britain handed control of the Simonstown base to South Africa, she did so on condition that the Union Government helped her in the defence of Southern Africa, Asia and the Middle East gateways to Africa.

Since 1955, nearly all Britain's defence responsibilities in these areas have disappeared. Britain's only remaining military task is the Beira patrol. It seems likely that the Conservative Government will end its last defence commitments in the Middle East by withdrawing from the Persian Gulf at the end of next year as planned by Labour. Reports suggest that it will only slightly delay final withdrawal of the last handful of troops from

Singapore and that less as a symbolic tribute to its election promises, than as the price for getting agreement to the liquidation of the only firm treaty commitment Britain still retains East of the Suez, the Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement. Thus the naval facilities at Simonstown, which for years have been useful rather than essential to Britain, will decline sharply in value over the next few years. Similarly the communications facility in South Africa which Britain has hitherto found useful will lose much of its importance with the introduction of the Skynet satellite communications system. Britain has strictly fulfilled her obligation under the Simonstown agreement as it stands and her position has been understood and accepted by the other African countries; but she has no strategic interest in assuming new and additional obligations under it, particularly if this were to damage her relations with other African states.

It has nevertheless been argued, in Britain as well as in South Africa, that the growth of Soviet naval activity in the Indian Ocean presents a major threat to Western shipping on the Cape Route which can only be met by a substantial build-up of the South African Navy and by much closer defence co-operation between South Africa and Britain. I do not believe this to be the case.

Of course, it is impossible to be certain about the purpose of this Soviet naval activity. It is clearly calculated to exert political influence on the maritime states of the Indian Ocean through a visible Soviet presence; showing the flag has always been a function of sea-power. It may be related to an imagined threat from Western missile-carrying submarines, it may be related to an imagined conflict with China. But of all purposes, the least likely is to sink Western shipping round the Cape.

Why should Russia waste her submarine strength in trying to sink Western ships in the area furthest from her own naval bases where they can swing wide clear of the Cape, when she can attack them closer to home where they must converge on the approaches to Europe? And given the growing size of the Soviet merchant navy and its vulnerability throughout the world, is it conceivable that Russia would sink Western ships except in general war, when her submarine fleet would have much more important jobs? No Western Government is now planning on another Battle of the Atlantic. If there were anything in this fantasy N.A.T.O. as a whole would be urgently involved; but no N.A.T.O. Government except the present one in Britain has ever shown any interest in this imagined threat.

More important, however, than these purely military arguments are the political realities in the world today. As I said in the House of Commons the other day, Russia's immediate targets in Africa are the mind of men, not strips of concrete or naval dockyards, though these may follow if she wins the battle for men's minds - as they have already in the Eastern Mediterranean. For the greater part of the human race the so-called struggle between East and West is monumental irrelevance. For them the real division in the world is between North and South, between the rich white peoples on both sides of the Iron Curtain and the poor, mainly coloured people to the South of them, in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America.

If to the handicaps of history and poverty which already burden the people of the Southern world we add discrimination on grounds of race or colour, we shall rightly incur their bitter hostility - and hand the other battle to the Communists on a plate. The reaction of the rest of the Commonwealth to the imbroglio over arms for South Africa is a small indication of what might follow. So far as I can tell, not one single Commonwealth Government has positively supported Sir Alec Douglas Home's intention. All but one have fiercely opposed it. If the intention were carried out, the break up of the Commonwealth could follow. And a large stride would have been taken towards clearing the way for Russia to establish air and naval facilities in the states of East and perhaps West Africa too; this is a potential threat to Western interests which no conceivable advantages in South Africa would offset. That is why so many Western Governments outside the Commonwealth - the United States in the lead - are trying to dissuade the British Government from its intention. Indeed the international concern generated on this issue seems to be causing the French Government also to reconsider its policies, to judge by assurances given to the Organisation of African Unity the other is asserting a steadily more powerful and consistent influence on the policy of Governments towards racial segregation.

Mr Heath has said that whatever the opinion of the world, he will take his final decision on South African arms in the light of his view of Britain's national interests alone. But, as I have been trying to show, world opinion can have as powerful an influence on Britain's interests as on South Africa's. Fourteen years ago a British government did defy world opinion in the mistaken belief that it was protecting Britain's national interests. It colluded with the Governments of Israel and France in a military attack in Egypt. The operation was a humiliating failure. It destroyed for good a position of paramount influence in the Arab world which Britain had taken half a century to build; it led directly to the atrocious murder of Britain's best friend in the area, Nuri Said, and it established the Soviet Union for the first time as a major political and military power inside the Middle East.

The analogies with Mr Heath's current predicament over South African arms are all too close and numerous. I cannot believe that any Government with a sense of Britain's real interests in the modern world will ignore them. And if, by any mischance the present Government were to repeat over Africa, the same catastrophic errors as it made over the Middle East in 1956, no one should assume that the next British Government would be bound by its blunders.

I have spent a little time in exploring the implications of the British Government's self-inflicted wound over arms for South Africa because, whatever decision Mr Heath may make in the end, it has uncovered for all to see the real strength and effectiveness of the opinions of mankind on the issue of racial equality. It has revealed the countervailing factor on which the segregationists place their hopes as far less powerful than they believed. The trend towards isolation of the segregationists is far stronger today than it was ten or even five years ago. It will grow steadily stronger in the years to come.

There is perhaps one last illusion I should mention - some people seem to envisage as a last resort if all else fails, the concept of the white laager surviving in a hostile world by its mastery of military technology. But this too is fantasy. Such a society would be bound to crumble, if not under the attacks of what the Prime Minister of Singapore has called a black Cong then under the new techniques of violence with which desperate men in South American and the Middle East are beginning to experiment - techniques which seek to use the very superiority of their opponents in administrative and technological skill as a means to their destruction.

The hijacking of aircraft and the kidnapping of diplomats are weapons which no Government, Communist or non-Communist, can afford to use against another Government. They are exclusively reserved to those who have no form of order offered to them which is preferable to anarchy. They face all Governments alike with a problem to which there is as yet no solution in sight. But for this reason if no other, I believe Governments in future will see a direct interest in acting together to remove the cause of the depair in which alone this type of violence can breed. The London "Financial Times", a paper not noted for its devotion to the principles of Mao Tse Tung or Che Guevara, put its finger on the spot when it wrote last week; "It is perfectly plain for example, that in the case of hijackings we are all having to pay for allowing the problems of the Palestine refugees to foster for 20 years in the squalid camps on the borders of Israel. And while it is probably too late to do anything with that particular problem now except defend ourselves from its consequences, we would be mad if we did not survey the world with care to see where the cause of future manifestations of violence are to be found and try, somehow, to eradicate them". These are wise words. I hope their resonance is not lost on those to whom they represent a warning.

I return to my theme.

That "decent respect for the opinions of mankind" of which the American colonists spoke 200 years ago is in the modern world not simply a moral imperative - it is a political necessity. On many issues mankind is still deeply divided. But the one issue on which the overwhelming majority of peoples and governments have already achieved a total solidarity is the rejection of political discrimination based on race or colour. However daunting the immediate prospect, those of you who have pledged yourselves to support the Act of Dedication presented by NUSAS are part of the wave of the future. You may on occasion feel yourselves along in your own country, but you are part of a vast movement for human freedom which is daily growing stronger in the world. You and those who think like you represent South Africa's best hope for a return to the mainstream of Western civilisation. You offer South Africa a way of escape from what could otherwise become a human tragedy with few precedents in history. It is not yet too late, but time is short. That is why I believe that the work of those who share the ideas of NUSAS is of such importance to the future of your people. That is why those like me who live in countries where the racial problem presents far less terrible an aspect can draw faith and inspiration from your dedication and self sacrifice.

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SPEECH OF THANKS

Horst Kleinschmidt, Acting President, National Union of South African Students

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In thanking you tonight, Sir, I am honoured to thank a man who, throughout his life has stood for ideals for which the National Union of South African Students also stands. You have come to speak to us in this, our unfortunate country, to share with us our belief in principles which only a handful of people in this country cherish today. The majority of the citizens in this country have never had the opportunity to voice their opinion and those who are vested with authority are rapidly curbing any free thought which might still prevail.

You have addressed us tonight on the most vital matter affecting this country today: Academic and Human Freedom. These two freedoms cannot be separated. We want our academic freedom returned by those who removed it in 1959 and before then; from those who deny our universities the right to be institutions in search of truth, irrespective of the criteria which an authoritarian system imposes. I speak of a genuine tolerance to race, religion and creed. We want to be able to choose the best lecturers, we want to choose any students and we want to study whatever we desire.

But instead we are forced into a straight-jacket which manifests itself in more ways than the Act which was passed in 1959. Our universities are influenced by other laws; our thinking is restricted through censorship to cite but one example.

These restrictions cause the university community and others to impose their self-restriction. Our own minds are corrupted and the contracting circle of free thought that still remains is affected by stagnation. Our present student generation has never known what life is like in a free society. When we were born, the present government was already in power.

It is therefore that we are deeply grateful that you came to see us in this country even though you may be criticised; and that you have injected us with uninhibited thinking; and that you have made us aware of freedoms which rust very quickly if they are not exercised daily. We thank you for this Sir, but this is only one aspect about which you have spoken.

Human Freedoms are absent in South Africa and because of this we have to answer questions: Why do we want a free university in a society which is in chains? What is the relevance of freedom during my years at university if these freedoms will be forgotten when I leave university? But more: can I justify my demands for academic freedom when large numbers of people in my country go hungry, die because of neglect, are denied all that makes man live in the hope of something better? And if I am black, do I need academic freedom, if my family is starving, if I am denied much more elementary freedoms? Do I need academic freedom?

Noam Chomsky writes in "The Responsibility of Intellectuals" that "Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments, to analyse actions according to their causes, and motives and often hidden intentions. In the free countries they have the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression. For a privileged minority Western democracy provides the leisure, the facilities and the training to seek the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology and class interest, through which the events of current history are presented to us". At our universities, thus, a particular function is performed. This function we carry out at the risk of being crippled through the actions of a ruthless government which moves with the greatest subtlety to silence any remaining opposition.

But even in this very statement we realise that our human freedoms are of basic concern. We may be concerned with specific issues that we want to see corrected in our country, but we should never forget that a protest over 22 detained people, who were not found guilty in a court of law, yet were re-arrested and waited in prison cells, suffered interrogation, for more than a year, merely represented one aspect of an entire system of apartheid which is the root of all evil.

And now that we realise that it is one of the terrible things about this Day of Affirmation that, as we affirm our belief in academic and human freedom, we mourn for our country, mourn for what is being done to it in the name of "White civilisation", by those who think of themselves as the custodians of all that is good and proper. We are here to tell them what we think is good and proper, what we believe is the basis of civilisation. And it is through this that we strive for a society which guarantees both freedoms: The one to return to the people their humanity, the other to safeguard this humanity continuously.

For this reason, I hope I shall be forgiven if I have addressed much of what I have said to white South Africans in this audience. I did this, not because of any sort of racialism, but because, since the people of this country have been divided into black and white, we are sometimes forced to speak directly to white or to black.

Yet it is too late for warnings. We are not here to warn the white people of what their cruelty, their selfishness and stupidity have caused, nor to warn them of the demons they have roused. Neither are we here to explain to the black people of South Africa that we understand what has been done to them, that their lives are misery, that their work is slavery, and that their humanity has been forgotten. But let us not beat our breasts in self-pity. Let us remember that words or mourning will never change our country. Let us define and act upon, what we consider our function to be. The Afrikaans universities have pledged their unfortunate support for the policies of Apartheid. Recently students at black universities created their own organisation - and defined their function, but have the English universities come to terms with what their function in this country is? It is not here that I want to elaborate on this point.

We have come to gain a perspective of what this society is heading for. Abraham Lincoln, a great President and in many ways, just like me, an agitator, said to white America in 1858:

"When you have succeeded in de-humanising the Negro, when you have put him down, and made it impossible for him to be but as the beasts of the field, when you have extinguished his soul in this world and placed him where the ray of hope is blown out as in the darkness of the damned, are you quite sure that the demon you have roused will not turn and rend you? If you make yourselves familiar with the chains of bondage, you prepare your own limbs to wear them. Accustom yourself to trample out the lives of others and you have lost the genius of your independence and become the fit subjects of the first cunning tyrant who rises among you."

So I say now, to white South Africa, what I think they have done to themselves by their stupidity of race superiority, what hatred they have created, and what they have done that makes it necessary to mourn for our country.

This we have come to affirm - this the Lord's song that we must sing in a strange land, in this unfortunate country of ours. Whether the Devil we fear is the Anti-Christ, or the cunning tyrant, or exploitation, or ignorance, or hunger, we are here to speak against the Devil, and to speak for human freedom in South Africa and in the whole world.

They can jail us, but they can never jail these ideals.

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