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APDUSA AND THE LIBERALS.

*for Mack Paul.*

APDUSA SEES A liberal conspiracy at work in South Africa. In its time it has acted as an imperialist agent and subverted the Congress Movement; It now threatens to do the same to the UDF and even the National Forum, leaving only APDUSA uncontaminated. What a marvellous thought, to be possessed of all that hidden capacity for intrigue and seduction! The truth is a good deal more humdrum than that, but the propagation of such myths makes it possible for APDUSA, and others, to blame the influence of liberals for everything that has gone wrong <sup>in the past</sup> in the struggle for a just society here, and anything else which might go wrong in the future. Scapegoats are convenient, particularly for ideologues who would rather blame them than reexamine critically their own preconceptions and programmes every now and again.

Liberals shy away from dogmatic, ideological positions. They see South Africa's problems as immensely complicated, and suspect that a simple, ideological formula to explain what has already happened, or what might happen next, is just as likely to prove wrong here as it has so often in other parts of the world. To be stuck in a hard and unchanging ideological position in a world and country which is in a constant state of flux, doesn't make sense to them.

Like APDUSA the Liberal Party was committed to the view that a non-racial organisation was the best vehicle to achieve a non-racial society, and it regarded that principle as non-negotiable. Like APDUSA it was committed to full civil liberties for all. Unlike APDUSA it was an organisation undergoing continual change. Between 1953 and 1968, when the Improper Interference Act closed it down, it reformulated its policies from ones heavily influenced by the old Cape Liberal qualified franchise tradition, to a much--radicalised Liberalism based on universal suffrage. I have no doubt that this process would have continued and that Liberal Party policies in 1984 would be more radical than they were in 1968. APDUSA, on the other hand, still seems to be committed to the Unity Movement's Ten Point Programme formulated more than forty years ago, and is only now beginning to <sup>think that it</sup> contemplate it ~~might do with a few changes.~~

Liberals have certainly failed to come anywhere near achieving their aim of a non-racial, adult-suffrage democracy in South Africa. In this respect their record is no worse than that of anyone else opposed to apartheid, for none of them has come anywhere near achieving their aims yet. The Liberals' failure is not because, as 'imperialist agents' at heart, they really want things to stay much the way they are, but because of the reality of the Nationalists' power and their willingness to use it to the full. And so it is with everyone else, including APDUSA.

It was always the policy of the Liberal Party to work with other organisations on agreed issues, whatever differences they might have with them on other matters. This continues to be the attitude of Liberals to-day. They will work with and in organisations whose aims, in any particular instance, are the same as theirs. Such cooperation would obviously be totally unacceptable to APDUSA, which would regard it as tainting. APDUSA, we are told, does not want "to rub shoulders with liberals whatever their colour

*P.T.O.*

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liberals whatever their colour". Are they afraid they might be seduced by their views ? Or are they afraid they might not fit the stereotype they have allocated to them ?