

REMEMBER 16 JUNE 1976

*"He was of the blood
And bore the mark
Loved the land
So gave his life for it" – William Hussey*

On the 16 June 1986, the entire population of South Africa and people from many parts of the world will recall the events which took place in Soweto ten years ago.

For family members and friends of the victims of the massacres of that period, it will be an occasion for grief and sad memories. For the oppressed people in general, the occasion will recall with awe and amazement the ferocious courage of the youth. For the oppressors, 16 June is a recurring nightmare. That is when their troubles began in earnest.

On the 16 June 1976, the children of Soweto showed the rest of the oppressed people the real meaning of struggle and sacrifice. Armed only with stones and dustbin lids and a grim determination flowing from their hatred of oppression, the youth challenged the armed might of the State. In the ensuing battles, thousands of young people were killed and wounded.

When recalling the events of 16 June 1976, it is also necessary to recall the reasons why the youth went into battle. The spark was Afrikaans which was forced on the students. It was a language which the youth did not regard as their own nor of their choice. The fight against compulsory Afrikaans was part and parcel of the struggle against the whole degrading system of Bantu Education. But the struggle did not stop there. The Youth also declared war on the collaborators who were operating the dummy Urban Bantu Council (UBC). So great was the fury of the youth against the collaborators that within days the UBC's were abandoned.

There we saw youth linking their struggle for a democratic system of education with the rejection of dummy institutions and the demand for true democracy.

In 1976 the oppressors believed that they had crushed the revolt of the youth by means of the gun and sjambok. They believed that by killing the body they had also killed the IDEA OF LIBERATION. They have now learned to their horror that they were wrong! If anything at all, it has proved that profound truth that the spirit of freedom is bullet-proof!!

Today, when we survey the political scene, we see debris, not only of cars, buildings and collaborators, but also of the slave mentality and those dummy institutions designed for an inferior people. It was 16 June 1976 which gave impetus to the forces of liberation which have reduced to shambles the schemes of the ruling class.

It was 16 June 1976 which triggered off the series of cosmetic reforms in the fields of education, petty apartheid, trade union rights, the tricameral circus etc. These reforms were designed to halt the heightening of the struggle with bribes of sops. But it was the spirit of Soweto which prevailed and put paid to all that.

The spirit of Soweto – that is the spirit of resistance and refusal to compromise on fundamentals – has grown by leaps and bounds over the past ten years. It has reached a new plateau and no amount of repression, massacres and bribes is going to stop that process.

It was 16 June 1976 which carried the oppressed people on to that new plateau. It is for this reason that long after the system of oppression and exploitation would have been destroyed in this country, the people of free South Africa will always gratefully remember 16 June 1976. They will recount to their children the heroism of the flower of the youth who eagerly shed their blood so that the future generations would not have to endure the misery and shame of oppression. It was also their desire that the future generations should be born in a free and just society where they would enjoy all the benefits which our rich and beautiful country is capable of giving.

In remembering 16 June 1976, we, of APDUSA and the New Unity Movement, salute the fallen brave and courageous youth. As tribute to their memory, we present two articles in this issue of APDUSA VIEWS which deal with the theme of the policy of DIVIDE AND RULE and the burning need for all true democrats to unite and to strive for the building of a single NATION which will be free of racism, oppression and exploitation.