



APDUSA VIEWS

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BLOODBATH IN UITENHAGE!

INTRODUCTION

South Africa's latest bloodbath in Uitenhage has been greeted with horror and abhorrence by all freedom-loving people, here and abroad. One more notch in the rifle stock of a trigger-happy system. One more massacre in the long and blood-drenched struggle of an oppressed and exploited people.

The bloodbath highlights once again how deeply ingrained political violence on the part of the ruling class has become in the fabric of South African society. The penalty for taking part in a procession, which at worst may have been technically illegal, is death by bullet – an on-the-spot execution without judge, jury or trial.

FACTS

A reading of the newspaper reports presents two conflicting versions.

(a) OFFICIAL VERSION

According to the Minister of Law and Order, the members of the procession had pelted the police with sticks, stones and petrol bombs. The police opened fire in self-defence.

(b) UNOFFICIAL VERSION

- 1 A denial that members of the procession had carried stones, sticks and petrol bombs.
- 2 The procession was a peaceful one.
- 3 There were two Casspirs (armoured vehicles), one ahead of the procession and one following it.
- 4 The police contingent was under the command of a lieutenant, the lowest rank of commissioned officers.
- 5 The first victim to fall was boy on a bicycle.
- 6 Police strewed stones among the dead to fabricate evidence.
- 7 There were no reports of injury sustained by any member of the police force.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Whenever the ruling class engages in blood-letting in excess of “acceptable levels”, it resorts to the setting up of commissions of inquiry. There were commissions of inquiry after Sharpeville, Langa, Cato Manor, Pondoland, Soweto and now one has been set up in Uitenhage. Its immediate purpose is to muzzle condemnation of the massacre under the *subjudice* rule and to defuse the situation by directing hope to the commissions as the source of justice.

From experience we know that nothing could be further from the truth. Numerous commissions were set up in the past. Volumes of evidence were recorded. After long delays the findings were published. For the ruling class, commissions of inquiry are a “no-lose” affair. If the findings suit the ruling class, they are adopted and implemented. However, where the findings are in conflict with the attitude and policy of the ruling class, those findings are unceremoniously dumped in the archives for moth food or source material for a student working for a Master’s or Doctoral thesis.

We are, therefore, entitled to conclude that the findings of the Kanne-meyer Commission would be irrelevant to the real problems which gave rise to the massacre. The findings on whether or not Lieutenant Johan Fouché had been drinking earlier that day, or whether or not the crowd was riotous are not going to touch on the real issues of the day. These issues go far deeper than any Government-appointed commission of inquiry can dare delve into.

NATURE OF RULING CLASS

Whenever the ruling class removes the velvet glove and strikes with mailed fist, people are caught unawares. To them it is unexpected. Somehow all the seductive talk on television by Government spokesman of reform, peace and goodwill is taken seriously and at face value. The attitude reveals a lack of understanding of the true nature of the ruling class.

We set out below famous descriptions of the ruling class from the pro-Unity Movement Newspaper, *"The Torch"*.

"Imperialism – Herrenvolkism has no "conscience", or "soul" or "sense of decency". It is not moved to pity or reform by the misery and suffering of the oppressed and exploited people. It causes and lives off this oppression and exploitation, of which poverty, tyranny and suffering are inevitable and in separable parts . . . It never repents, because repentance would mean suicide. It never parts with anything voluntarily. It gives up only what is forced from it. It never departs from the scene of its own accord. It fights with every means at its disposal . . ." (19/08/1952)

Again: –

"Every politically-minded person knows that the conscience of the South African ruling class lies locked up in the Reserve Bank and the Constitution, and is guarded by the sjambok, the police force, the gaols, the skietcommandos, parliament, the law courts – high and low, and by every member of the Herrenvolk – whether organised in the OB, the Broederbond, the Torch Commando or the United Democratic Front." (10/06/52)*

When oppressed people learn these words by heart and understand what they mean, the struggle for liberation would have reached new heights. They will then learn that the system of oppression and exploitation is a ruthless and an inhuman entity and that it is not to be taken lightly. They will also learn not to expose themselves in a manner that they can be mowed down. They will learn finally never to engage the ruling class in battle without meticulous planning and preparation so as to ensure victory.

With the rest of the oppressed we mourn the dead and condemn this act of barbarity.

* In 1953, the United Party, the Labour Party and the Torch Commando formed the United Democratic Front. No relation to the present UDF.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

- 1 The PFP spokesperson who visited the Uitenhage disaster area, while finding that the procession was a peaceful one, nevertheless wanted to know why the police had not used teargas on the people since the weather was ideally suited for that purpose?

Presumably, the PFP demanded the use of teargas on a peaceful procession on condition that the weather is ideal. What if the weather is not ideal? Bullets, we suppose, will do!

- 2 (a) When the tragedy at Westdene occurred:—
 - (i) The mayor offered condolences and any assistance to the bereaved parents, including burial costs.
 - (ii) P W Botha expressed condolences to the families.
 - (iii) Pugnacious Pik followed suit?
- (b) When the massacre at Uitenhage took place, no such condolences and no offers of assistance?

The public wants to know why the discrimination? Perhaps, the Government seriously believes that the oppressed are incapable of grief. Perhaps, it even believes that oppressed do not bury their dead!

A LAMENT

“I think our Country sinks beneath the yoke
It weeps, it bleeds; and each new day a gash
Is added to her wounds.
Each new morn
New widows howl, new orphans cry; new sorrows
Strike heaven in the face, that it resounds
As if it felt with Scotland and yelled out
Like a syllable of dolour.”

— *“Macbeth”, Shakespeare*