



CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY!

VIOLENCE, DESTRUCTION AND THE BLAME GAME

In 1946 South African author Alan Paton penned a book entitled “Cry the Beloved Country”. It was published in 1948 and became famous throughout the world. It recounted a story of a Zulu youth and his travails after he moved to Johannesburg from his tribal home in KwaZulu/Natal. The action was set within the Valley of a Thousand Hills, a beautiful area of KZN’s heartland. The title became iconic because South Africa is indeed “a beloved country” to its citizens, of all stripes. It is arguably the most beautiful country on earth, with stunning natural resources, and it is unique in its human composition – five races with thirteen official languages. Yet there are huge disparities in wealth, education, development and entrepreneurial skills. The country stands out in the African continent because of its highly structured and efficient agricultural sector, where 35 000 commercial farmers feed upwards of 60 million people. (France has 490 000 farms feeding just over 65 million people). South Africa is not farming friendly: only 12% of its surface area is arable, and only one percent irrigated. It suffers from below world average rainfall, with only one or two perennial rivers which often run dry.

Unfortunately this beautiful land is saddled with a government of “imposters”. (Barney Mthombothi – Sunday Times 18.7.21) During the recent turmoil of looting and rioting throughout the country, and particularly within two provinces, the African National Congress (ANC) regime left its citizens in the lurch “totally exposed to and at the mercy of the scavengers”. (Mthombothi). At the end of the day when the lust to destroy was expended, and some thieves realised the lounge suite they had carried away would not fit into their house, they realised they were hungry. Food before anything else was the name of the game. Very few functioning supermarkets were left to serve the public. Available stock was dodgy because the crucial transport lung between Gauteng and Durban – the N3 - had been closed for days.

But the urgency and immediacy with which the government focused on the provision of food as problem number one in the aftermath of the riots places into focus the crucial role played by SA’s commercial farmers in the maintenance of stability in South Africa. This role will be fully explored in our next bulletin.

VIOLENCE AND DEMOCRACY

After 27 years in power, the ANC has made short shrift of South Africa's finances, its infrastructure and its operational parastatals. Through their cadre appointments they have destroyed South Africa's municipal structures, they have polluted our water and they have ruined our roads. They have left the vast bulk of the citizenry poor and vulnerable. The recent riots and plundering revealed the ruling party's impotent soft underbelly with regard to law and order and safety and security. It also exposed the hollowed out state piggy bank due to the billions stolen by their officials from the SA taxpayer and the poor who placed so much faith in them to deliver "the better life for all" they so dearly believed would come true.

The party is over for the ANC. "We watched in horror scarcely believing our eyes as wave after wave of people plundered malls and warehouses. Throngs lined a highway in Durban, pushing looted microwave ovens and mattresses on stolen trolleys, performing for the TV cameras with two-fingered salutes and toothless grins. In Soweto, amid the mayhem, a gogo (old lady) casually picked her way among the rocks and broken glass, a shopping bag in each hand and a sack of Tastic (rice) on her head". (Sunday Times 18 July 2021). Was what happened on the ground over the past week or so any different to the wholesale stealing of state assets by the ANC since 1994? Some blacks interviewed by the media made this point. The ANC have stolen, why can't we?

The full trolleys carting away the property of wholesalers, supermarkets and warehouses was repeated throughout the country. What you sow you reap. The ANC was caught with its pants down. Incredulous we all were at the brazenness of the thieves who came back with their boxes and carry bags for a second helping of other people's hard work, sacrifice and financial investment. It was there for the taking as private security guards stood helplessly by as hordes spilled on to mall parking lots to "strike while the iron was hot". Soon vehicles both private and hired joined the fray, and "big ticket" items such as fridges, tables, lounge chairs, filing cabinets and beds took their place on the backs of these vehicles as they joined the queues leaving the area, and still no police in sight. Violence and mayhem, wanton destruction and even death stalked these areas, this while president Ramaphosa spoke in stentorian tones on television, mainly about the Covid situation. He later remarked at all and sundry during a walkabout through a shattered mall that "we were not prepared for this".

WHO WAS TO BLAME?

At the outbreak of the violence, ANC spokesman Pule Mabe declared in an aggrieved tone that "this is not the ANC's fault". But it is very much the ANC's fault. On July 18 – Nelson Mandela's birthday – we reflected on the ANC's mass action campaign in the eighties to "make the country ungovernable". And let's not forget Chris Hani's threat to "make South Africa a wasteland". And a wasteland the country did become a few weeks ago in some areas!

Violence, terror and intimidation became the ANC's stock in trade during their path to power in the eighties and nineties, even after Nelson Mandela was released from prison. The United Democratic Front (UDF) adopted the Freedom Charter, thus aligning itself with the ANC. The UDF was launched in 1984 and vigorously opposed "collaboration" with state-initiated bodies. Black local authorities became key targets of UDF violence and intimidation which were seen as tactics of a policy of ungovernability. (Work in Progress, October 1985). "Make the country ungovernable" was the cry at the time, and it resounds today in the wake of the anarchy of the past few weeks.

Mass mobilisation, stayaways, consumer boycotts and the terror of the "people's courts" were tools to keep black township residents in line. Those who would not kowtow to the UDF's armed struggle rules paid a heavy price for their so-called recalcitrance. Coercion became integral to the success of the UDF's anti-government war in the urban areas. The strategic targeting of white-owned businesses became an important focus but black South Africans were the UDF's key target. Day to day life in Soweto in the early 1980's became intolerable. Regarding rent boycotts, "if you pay, you can get the necklace", declared Ms. Nomavenda Mathiane, assistant editor of Frontline magazine.

Fully one third of a February/March 1991 survey's respondents said they had been coerced to participate in consumer, rent and service charge boycotts by the UDF's "street committees". The executive director of the SA Institute of Race Relations Mr. John Kane-Berman described this coercion as "a reign of terror". Violence took centre stage, with the stoning and petrol bombing of buses in 1989 in the Cape townships. "People's justice" was described by a member of the Mamelodi Youth Organisation as "we are trying to discipline the people. We want people to feel the struggle". They said they did not encourage "burning" (necklacing) but if it happens then "it is an example. People have to be judged".

Clearly violence, intimidation and terror were the UDF's stock in trade. The revolutionaries practised it every day. It was UDF/ANC policy, the forerunner of today's violence, mayhem, necklacing and killing which has become common practice in South Africa's black living areas. The ANC cannot complain about anarchy today when they created the template for this behaviour in the eighties and nineties. The end justified the means in those earlier years.

The UDF's Work in Progress declared that "UDF leadership admits that people have been forced to eat detergent, raw chicken and rice, or to drink cooking oil. People will have to learn the hard way." Thus coercion and terror were part of the UDF's DNA

In a summary dated 1992, the SA Institute of Race Relations outlined 59 violent terrorist incidents between 1986 and 1991 (which year was after Nelson Mandela had been released) where people were made to eat raw meat and washing powder, where they were shot at and killed for not obeying the UDF, where petrol bombs were thrown at businesses, where people's courts meted out jungle justice. Factory machines were

sabotaged, black council employees were not allowed to move from their places of work without cadre permission. Cars were searched and goods stolen. People were threatened with necklacing. Putco buses were smashed and destroyed and limpet mines were thrown at Putco bus offices.

NELSON MANDELA AND VIOLENCE

In the public mind, Nelson Mandela is unconnected to today's ANC's mayhem and destruction and the terror of the UDF in the eighties and nineties. He was clearly aware of the UDF's reign of terror in the urban areas at the time but said nothing. It is ironic that every July 18, South Africa commemorates his birthday with fulsome praise and adoration for this world icon who is portrayed as a "man of peace". When violence and mayhem engulf the country now, we are told that the ANC has "strayed from the moral high ground of Nelson Mandela".

The world is ignoring history. At a press conference on June 3 1990, Nelson Mandela declared that "the only type of violence we accept is organised violence in the form of armed action which is properly controlled and where the targets have been carefully selected". In response to this statement, violence in the country increased four fold. Attacks on black policemen increased and some were particularly brutal. One was stabbed more than 40 times after being sentenced to death by a people's court. Another was decapitated. Others were burnt to death.

Attacks on police from December 1989 to May 1990 increased from 79 to 886. Commenting on the lifting of a state of emergency introduced by the then government, The Citizen newspaper said "The lifting of the emergency is unlikely to reduce the killing in the three provinces no longer under the emergency control. The reason is that the ANC and its affiliates do not intend to let the townships quieten down, since their plan is to take over the townships via violence and intimidation. The ANC intends to continue with its armed struggle".

Thus the seeds of the violence we see in today's South Africa were sown many years ago by the ANC itself. It is now condemning violence! President Ramaphosa decries the mayhem but it is in the ANC's DNA. The destruction of Indian warehouses and places of industry in KZN was wanton and deliberate. It was structured and vicious. It accompanied the looting and it was directed at a certain group because of underlying resentment at the successes of SA's Indian community. So the non-racial South Africa described by Bishop Tutu was a circus trick. It never existed in reality.

FOOD SECURITY

The question of food security has been on everyone's lips. When the chips are down, people have to eat every day. It is rumoured that the government moved with great alacrity to engage the farming community to ensure that there was food in the pipeline, if not on the table. Transport, warehousing and retail outlets were up and running very quickly. Long queues snaked for miles from the supermarkets in KZN to buy something to eat. This shortage of food reinforced the crucial role played by SA's

commercial farming industry in the maintaining of a relatively peaceful South Africa. What would have happened if farmers and supermarkets had not moved quickly to open the N3 road to Durban?

Food chain stores placed ads in the media assuring the population there was enough food, this despite the wholesale burning of transport trucks from farming areas and from Durban harbour. It speaks volumes about the efficiency of the agricultural community in maintaining supplies despite the mayhem.

From the above it could be surmised that the changing of Section 25 of the constitution is on the back burner, and that anyone who talks about the expropriation of, especially, farmland without compensation should keep his thoughts to himself.