

ALAN PATON - PATRIOT AND SAGE

A TRIBUTE BY: MANGOSUTHU GATSHA BUTHELEZI ON
DR PATON'S 78TH BIRTHDAY

16 JANUARY 1982LINTROSE

I SPEAK TODAY AS AN OLD FRIEND AND THAT GIVES ME TWO PRIVILEGES. THE FIRST IS THAT I AM PRIVILEGED TO SHARE THOSE DEEP, SACRED THINGS WHICH ARE THE BASIS OF FRIENDSHIP. THE SECOND PRIVILEGE IS THE FREEDOM TO DIFFER AS A DEMONSTRATION OF FRIENDSHIP. I DO IN FACT TODAY SPEAK FROM A POSITION OF LOVING ALAN PATON BECAUSE THE DEPTH AND WARMTH OF HIS PERSON DEMANDS THAT LOVE. AND I ADD TO THIS LOVE ALL THE RESPECT THAT IS DUE TO ONE OF THE GREAT SONS OF THE SOIL. YOU ARE, SIR, ONE OF THE FIRST AND TRUE SOUTH AFRICANS.

YOU GREW UP IN OUR SOCIETY CONFRONTED WITH THE HARSHNESS OF OUR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT. THE INHUMANITY AND THE WAY MAN TREATED MAN AND THE LACK OF INSTITUTIONALISED LOVE FOR ONE'S NEIGHBOUR DID NOT BLUNT YOUR SENSIBILITIES. YOU EMERGED TRIUMPHANT IN THESE TERRIBLE HUMAN CIRCUMSTANCES. YOU ARE FINELY ATTUNED TO TRUTH AND JUSTICE AND RICHLY ENDOWED WITH AN ABILITY TO EXTOL VIRTUE. YOU^R BEING IS WARM AND YOUR STATURE IS INTERNATIONAL. WHY IS IT THAT YOU NEVER FOUND A WAY INTO GOVERNMENT?

I THINK WE NEED TO LOOK AT THE REASONS WHY YOU WERE NEVER ABLE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT DESPITE HAVING GONE INTO POLITICS TO FIGHT

ELECTIONS 2/

ELECTIONS AND WIN VOTES AND IN LOOKING AT ALAN PATON IN SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES, I DO SO IN THE FIRST PLACE AS A PEASANT. MY ANCESTORS WERE PEASANTS. HALF OF MY CONSTITUENCY ARE PEASANTS. I AM AT HOME WHEN I SIT ON THE GROUND WITH PEASANTS AND I UNDERSTAND AND EMPATHISE WITH THE WORLD IN WHICH PEASANTS LIVE. I DON'T INTEND, THEREFORE, MAKING CLEVER ASSESSMENTS OR SCORING DEBATING POINTS. I AM TALKING ABOUT WHY SUCH A SON OF SOUTH AFRICAN SOIL AS ALAN PATON DID NOT FORM A GOVERNMENT. I AM TALKING ABOUT IT IN SHARED AGONY.

FIRST, I WANT TO MAKE A ^{BASIC} BASIC OBSERVATION THAT WE PEASANTS WERE IN FACT LED TO BELIEVE THAT WHITE LIBERALS COULD BRING ABOUT FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THIS COUNTRY. PEASANTS AND WORKERS WERE CAUGHT IN A CONFLICT IN THE LATE 1950'S AND EARLY 60'S. PEASANTS AND WORKERS WERE BEING SUBJECTED TO A CONSIDERABLE BARRAGE OF LIBERAL PERSUASION THAT THE LIBERAL WAY WAS THE WAY TO THE VOTE, THE WAY TO POWER SHARING AND THE WAY TO JUSTICE. AT THE SAME TIME, BLACK ANGER AND IMPATIENCE WAS BEING WOODED AND MORE SUCCESSFULLY BEING WOODED BY THE MILITANT ELEMENTS IN THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.

A MAN LIKE ALBERT LUTHULI WHO PRESIDED OVER BLACK POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AT THE TIME DID NOT DESPISE LIBERALS BUT HE DID NOT FIND IT POSSIBLE TO WORK WITH THEM POLITICALLY. HISTORY HAS OBVIOUSLY YET TO PRONOUNCE ON WHETHER OR NOT MILITANCY AND THE HIGH RISK POLITICS AND TACTICS THAT MILITANCY NECESSITATES IS A MORE VERSATILE POLITICAL COMMODITY THAN LIBERALISM, AND

HERE WE HAVE TO DRAW A DIFFICULT TO DEFINE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE NEED FOR PRINCIPLES AND THE NEED FOR VICTORY POLITICS.

I RELATE THE TWO ISSUES. THE ONE ISSUE OF WHY ALAN PATON DID NOT FORM A GOVERNMENT AND THE OTHER ISSUE OF PRINCIPLES VERSUS ACTION.. IF WE ARE HONEST, WE COULD DISCUSS THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT MEN IN EXTREME POSITIONS CAN BE EXPECTED TO PUT PRINCIPLE ABOVE SURVIVAL. POLITICS IN THIS COUNTRY AS FAR AS WE BLACKS ARE CONCERNED IS ABOUT MEN IN EXTREME POSITION. I WILL BE PROPHETIC WHEN I SAY POLITICS IN THIS COUNTRY WILL YET BE ABOUT THE POLITICAL CONTROL OF HORDES OF PEOPLE WHOSE FIRST REACTION IS TO GRAB STICKS AND STONES AND SEEK BLOOD.

IN THE DECADE WE NOW FACE, I PREDICT SQUATTER AREAS WILL DOUBLE IN SIZE, UNEMPLOYMENT WILL INCREASE AND THERE WILL BE NO WHITE ACCOMMODATION OF BLACK POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS. WE ARE HEADING FOR AN ERA OF THE POLITICS OF ANGER, THE EXTENT OF WHICH WE HAVE NOT YET WITNESSED. I CLEARLY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IN THE 60'S OR NOW, VIOLENCE WAS OR IS A VIABLE OPTION OPEN TO BLACKS. MANY WHITES AT THIS STAGE CAN EMPLOY VIOLENCE IN THE PURSUIT OF POLITICS. THEY HAVE THE WHEREWITHAL TO DO SO AND THEY DO SO SUCCESSFULLY. I WAS NOT PART OF THE INNER COUNCILS OF LIBERALISM WHEN IT FACED THE ISSUES WHICH THE IMPROPER INTERFERENCE ACT IMPOSED ON IT, BUT PEASANTS DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE DISMANTLING OF A POLITICAL INITIATIVE BECAUSE OF GOVERNMENT OPPOSITION TO IT.. THIS IS AN ANALYTICAL STATEMENT RATHER THAN A JUDGEMENTAL

ONE. I AGONISE VERY OFTEN ABOUT WHAT I MYSELF SHOULD DO IF ~~THE GOVERNMENT TOOK SIMILAR ACTION AGAINST~~ IMAGINE 4/

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IMAGINE THAT I WOULD BE THE LAUGHING STOCK OF BLACK POLITICS IF I EVEN AS MUCH AS ENTERTAINED THE THOUGHT OF DISBANDING INKATHA IF THE GOVERNMENT TOOK WHATEVER STEPS AGAINST IT. I WOULD SAY THAT INSTINCTIVELY THE PEASANT WOULD DISTRUST ANY ARGUMENT, NO MATTER HOW GRAND, HOW ELOQUENT, OR HOW MORAL IT SOUNDED, THAT JUSTIFIED THE DISBANDING OF INKATHA. THE PEASANT WOULD SEEK AND FIND THE PRINCIPLES WHICH GAVE SURVIVAL MORALITY. AS A CHRISTIAN, I HAVE FIRM AND CLEAR MORAL PERCEPTIONS AND I HAVE MY OWN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC AND MY MORAL INSTINCTS TELL ME, AND MY CHRISTIAN CONVICTIONS TELL ME THAT IN THE SECULAR WORLD OF POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT, TACTICS MUST BE SUCCESSFUL BEFORE THEY CAN BE REGARDED AS MORAL. I SAY THESE THINGS SHUDDERING BECAUSE I DO NOT QUITE ENVISAGE WHAT KIND OF OPTION I WILL FACE SHOULD SUCH ACTION EVER BE TAKEN AGAINST ME OR INKATHA. I KNOW JUST ONE THING THAT IT IS UNLIKELY TO AN ^{BE} EASY OPTION. _A

ONE OF THE BLACK SUSPICIONS ABOUT LIBERALISM IS THAT LIBERALISM CAN AND HAS ESPOUSED PRINCIPLES WHICH DO NOT WORK. PERHAPS DR PATON NEVER FORMED A GOVERNMENT BECAUSE LIBERAL PRINCIPLES HAD QUALITY TO POLITICS, BUT DID NOT FORM THE SUBSTANCE OF POLITICS. AS FRIENDS WE CAN SHARE THE AGONIES OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THOSE WHO ACTUALLY DO FORM GOVERNMENTS, AND THOSE OF US WHO SHOULD FORM GOVERNMENTS. THERE IS IN THIS COUNTRY ANOTHER BRAND OF LIBERALISM WHICH NEVER FORMED CONSTITUENCIES AND MOBILISED THE PEOPLE INTO POLITICALLY POWERFUL GROUPINGS. IT IS LIBERALISM I OFTEN SPEAK ABOUT WHICH CAUSES MANY LIBERALS ^{A GREAT DEAL} OF CONCERN ^{which} WHICH I DO SO. IT IS A LIBERALISM WHICH APPLAUDS

PROTEST5/

WHO WOULD HAVE CALLED THEMSELVES 'CONSERVATIVES', THE EXTENT TO WHICH ONE WAS PREPARED TO GO IN OPPOSING RACIALISM AND THE GOVERNMENT; THUS PATRICK DUNCAN WAS 'VERY LIBERAL', A 'LEFT-WING LIBERAL'. SOMETIMES ONE'S LEFT-WINGNESS IN TERMS OF ONE'S COMMITMENT TO SOCIALISM; THUS PATRICK DUNCAN WAS 'NOT VERY LIBERAL' OR A 'RIGHT-WING LIBERAL'. SOMETIMES 'LIBERAL' WAS DEFINED IN RELATION TO THE CONGRESS MOVEMENT. BRIAN BUNTING WROTE IN 1958: 'THERE IS NO IDEOLOGICAL UNITY IN THE LIBERAL PARTY, THERE ARE ONLY LIBERALS AND LIBERALS. ONE WING OF THE LIBERAL PARTY CAN ALMOST BE DESCRIBED AS REACTIONARY; BUT ANOTHER WING IS MOVING EVER CLOSER TO THE CONGRESS POINT OF VIEW, AND ALREADY WORKS CLOSELY WITH THE CONGRESSES IN SOME CENTRES'. IN THOSE TERMS DUNCAN WAS 'VERY LIBERAL' IN HIS DESIRE TO COOPERATE WITH THE CONGRESSES, BUT 'REACTIONARY' IN HIS ATTITUDE TO COMMUNISM. YET ANOTHER COMPLICATION IS THAT, WHEREAS MANY WHITES WERE 'LIBERAL' OR 'LIBERALIST' OR EVEN 'LIBERALISTIC' IN A PERJORATIVE SENSE OF 'NON-RACIAL' (ALSO 'IMPOLITIC', 'IMPRACTICAL', 'DANGEROUS' AND 'WICKED', MANY BLACKS (NOT ONLY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA) USED 'LIBERAL' IN A PERJORATIVE SENSE OF 'HALF-HEARTED', 'CONDESCENDING', OR OCCASIONALLY, AS A SYNONYM OF 'BOURGEOIS', OR - MORE PARTICULARLY - 'NOT IN FAVOUR OF COMPLETE EQUALITY OF WHITE AND BLACK'.

YET, FOR ALL THE PROBLEMS OF THE TERM AND FOR ALL THE LACK OF 'IDEOLOGICAL UNITY' OF THE LIBERAL PARTY, THERE WERE WAYS IN WHICH MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY WERE LIBERALS,

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CHOOSE TO LEAVE SOUTH AFRICA, TEMPORARILY OR PERMANENTLY, AND WERE ABLE TO LEAD SATISFACTORY LIVES ELSEWHERE (IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR BLACK EXILES TO FIND THIS KIND OF HOME ABROAD). IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT ONE IS DISCUSSING NO MORE THAN A FEW THOUSAND PEOPLE; THE LIBERAL PARTY NEVER HAD MORE THAN FIVE THOUSAND MEMBERS (AND OF THESE ONLY A PROPORTION WERE WHITE), CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATS ABOUT FIVE HUNDRED. THAT IS, FOR ALL THEIR IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES, THEY HAD SOCIOLOGICAL LINKS, THOUGH NOT ONLY BECAUSE THERE WERE SO FEW OF THEM AND IN THAT SOCIOLOGICAL SENSE THERE IS A CERTAIN 'LIBERALITY' LINKING THEM. WITHIN NON-SOUTH AFRICAN SENSES OF THE WORD, DUNCAN WAS IN SOME WAYS NOT A LIBERAL AT ALL, EVEN AFTER HE JOINED THE LIBERAL PARTY. OF COURSE THE LIBERAL PARTY, LIKE ALMOST ALL PARTIES WAS IN A SENSE A COALITION; PATON EXPLAINED TO DUNCAN BEFORE HE EVER JOINED THE PARTY, 'A ^TWING PARTY THROWS UP A GREAT RANGE OF VIEWS IN A SMALL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS, AND THUS THROWS UP A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALISTS'. BUT DUNCAN WAS, EVEN IN A PARTY OF INDIVIDUALISTS, EXCEPTIONAL; HE WOULD HAVE FOUND IT HARD TO FIT INTO ANY POLITICAL PARTY; 'I WAS ALWAYS A BAD COMBINER', HE TOLD LEWIN, 'BUT I HAVE DECIDED THAT NOTHING IS EVER DONE IN POLITICS WITHOUT COMBINATION, AND I'D DAMN WELL BETTER START NOW'.

IT WAS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THAT THOSE OF MY FRIENDS IN THE LIBERAL ESTABLISHMENT MUST SEE WHATEVER REMARKS I HAVE MADE LOOSELY ABOUT LIBERALS IN THE PAST. THE TERM INCLUDES MANY

KINDS OF PEOPLE. IN PAYING TRIBUTE TO THIS GREAT SON OF SOUTH AFRICA I WANTED TO DO SO AGAINST THAT WIDE CANVASS ENCOMPASSING ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE WHO APPEAR ^{WITHIN} IN THAT WIDE CANVASS.

IN SAYING THESE THINGS ABOUT LIBERALISM, I MUST BALANCE THEM WITH WHAT PERHAPS CAN BE CALLED MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES. I AM AWARE OF THE FACT THAT A PERFECT GOVERNMENT CAN ONLY BE FOUND IN A UTOPIA. I AM AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THE PRINCIPLES UPON WHICH A PERFECT GOVERNMENT SHOULD OPERATE SHOULD BE EXPOUNDED AND EXTOLLED AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY. I SAY WITH PRIDE THAT ALAN PATON IS A SOUTH AFRICAN BELL WHICH EXTOLS VIRTUE IN HIS WRITING, IN HIS THINKING AND IN HIS SPEAKING. HE ESPOUSES VIRTUE AND JUSTIFIES WHAT HE WRITES AND SAYS WITH A QUALITY OF HIS LIFE. THAT IS WHY I CONSIDER IT TO BE ONE OF THE GREATEST PRIVILEGES OF MY WHOLE LIFE TO HAVE KNOWN SO GREAT A SON OF SOUTH AFRICA.

ALAN, I EMBRACE YOU ACROSS WHATEVER DIFFERENCES MAY EXIST BETWEEN US AND I HOPE YOU EMBRACE ME, DESPITE THE FACT THAT I DON'T APPLAUD JUST ANY LIBERALISM, ABOVE PRAGMATIC POLITICS THAT ACTUALLY WORK. BUT I HAVE GREAT PRIDE TODAY TO PAY TRIBUTE TO A GREAT SON OF SOUTH AFRICA WHOSE WORK AND COMMITMENT TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS LAND ~~HAS~~ REPRESENTS ALMOST ALL THE BEST ELEMENTS OF LIBERALISM, IN THE BEST SENSE OF THE WORD. WHEN THE HISTORY OF THIS LAND IS WRITTEN IT WILL BE SAID THAT SOUTH AFRICA WAS LUCKY TO HAVE A SON LIKE YOU AT THIS MOMENT OF HER ^{HISTORY} HISOTY. I SAW TE A GREAT SON OF SOUTH AFRICA - ALAN STEWART PATON.