Beyers Naude

South African democrat
Another three years

On Thursday last week, 67 year old Dr Beyers Naudé was rebanned for three years. His previous banning order imposed in October 1977 was due to expire on Sunday.

Dr Naudé has been Nusas honorary president for the past five years, although he has been unable to accept the appointment.

The new banning order, served on Dr Naudé by the security police on Thursday, has provoked world-wide condemnation.

The minister of police, Mr Louis Le Grange, who ordered the new banning order, stated that he is convinced that ‘Dr Naudé is participating in actions which endanger or are intended to endanger the security of the state.’

At the same time Mr Le Grange said that the reason for issuing the new banning order cannot be released ‘without prejudicing the public order’.

The terms of the banning order (Section 19(1) and 20 of the Internal Security Act:

- Dr Naudé may not leave the magisterial district of Johannesburg.
- He may not enter any group area set aside for blacks, coloureds or Indians.
- He is prohibited from visiting any factory, publishing or printing premises, or any educational institution or court of law unless he has been summoned to appear or make an application before a magistrate.
- Dr Naudé may not publish, prepare or distribute any literature and may not assist anyone doing so.
- He is also prohibited from all meetings of a social, political and educational nature and he may not be quoted.

Dr Naudé was among the seven individuals, 18 organisations and three newspapers banned by the government in October 1977. Three of those banned, Theo Kotze, Brian Brown and Donald Woods, left South Africa while still serving their banning orders. Peter Randall and Cedric Mayson had their orders lifted before they expired.

The Rev David Russel was also banned at the time. Seventeen of the eighteen organisations banned were part of what had loosely become known as the black consciousness movement (BCM).

The only organisation banned by the government which was not exclusively black was the Christian Institute. It had been founded in 1963 and in the subsequent 14 years it had sought to propagate a Christianity relevant to the needs of the majority of South Africans. Closely connected to the black consciousness movement, the Christian Institute had set up the Black Community Programmes, an organisation active in literacy, health and youth work.

Dr Naudé, a former Dutch Reform Church clergyman, was president of the Christian Institute. In 1963 Beyers Naudé presided over a safe NGK congregation at Aalvoetkop in Northdorp, one of the richest and most influential in the country; a promise of becoming the future moderator of his church and perhaps head of the Broederbond, and a top name in the country’s Afrikaner establishment.

He renounced all of this to form the Christian Institute.

Nusas issued a statement in Cape Town which read: “There can be no justification for the renewal of the banning order on our honorary president, Beyers Naudé. We strongly condemn state action in re-imposing these harsh restrictions on a man who has dedicated his life to working for a free and democratic South Africa.

We will continue to draw inspiration from Beyers and other democrats who are victims of state repression. Their suffering can only strengthen our resolve to fight for a democratic South Africa.”

Once again we have witnessed the callousness of the South African state.

Just four days before a five year banning order was due to expire, Beyers Naudé has been rebanned. At the whim of the Minister of Police, Mr Louis Le Grange, Dr Naudé will serve another three years in the ‘jail without bars’ of a banning order.

For another three years he will be forbidden to attend any ‘gatherings’ (including weddings and birthdays) without special permission from the Minister. Dr Naudé may not be quoted until the end of 1985. He may not leave Johannesburg for any reason whatsoever without ministerial consent.

Beyers Naudé had long been hailed as the embodiment of both South Africa’s conflict and South Africa’s hope for the future. In transcending the narrow confines of the Broederbond and the Dutch Reformed Church to become an outspoken critic of the apartheid state, Beyers Naudé provoked the wrath of the Afrikaner establishment.

He committed the ultimate heresy — he went over to the ‘other side’.

For Beyers Naudé, the ‘other side’ is the struggle of the oppressed majority of South Africans. To this struggle, he brought the boundless energy, the sincerity and the human compassion which have become his hallmark. For this he was ostracised, scorned, harassed, banned, then banned again.

At the same time, Beyers’ courage and resolution in the face of state repressions has inspired, and will continue to inspire, all those who work for justice and democracy in South Africa.

Wits Student expresses its solidarity with Beyers Naudé in his continued restriction and salutes his unfailing commitment to the struggle for freedom.

In the past two weeks, we have also seen two young South Africans found guilty of treason. Barbara Ann Hogan (30), a Wits student, was sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment. Suzman Nkopnae Mokoena (22), a Sowetan who went into exile after the 1976 uprisings, was sentenced to twenty years’ imprisonment.

At Barbara Hogan’s trial, the judge spoke of an ‘undeclared war’ being waged against South Africa. The judgements and the sentences of both trials were passed in accordance with the view that South African is fighting against an implacable enemy in this ‘undeclared war’.

This is true.

Barbara and Nkopnae were prepared to risk the consequences of their participation in this ‘war’. Their belief in democracy and freedom, which emerged so clearly at the trials, led them to defiance in the face of the most severe penalties. They, and countless like them, have given up material comforts — and now their freedom — for a cause that all South African democrats embrace: the struggle against the apartheid state, the ‘war’ on injustice.

The ‘implacable enemies’ of the South African system of exploitation, will be inspired by Barbara’s and Nkopnae’s courage. Their sacrifice will not be in vain.