

The attached Statement is in answer to a questionnaire that was presented to me by the Security Police acting on behalf of the Minister for Justice and after I had made a further application for my name to be removed from the Liquidator's list of named Communist.

Approximately 12 months after this Statement had been sent by me to the Minister for Justice my application was refused.

#### Re Questionnaire

Questions 1 to 7 asked for information not only about myself, but also about members of my family.

Questions 8 and 9 asked whether my name appeared on the Liquidator's list and the date when I was informed thereof.

Question 10 asked whether I had formerly applied for the removal of my name from the Liquidator's list and the result thereof.

Questions 11 and 12 required me to furnish particulars setting out the positions held by me in the Communist Party before its dissolution.

Question 13 asked me to name the person who had recruited me to the Communist Party.

Question 14 asked me to supply my reasons for having joined the Communist Party.

Questions 15 and 16 required me to state my reasons for having left the Communist Party.

Question 17 asked me to set out the names of the organisations with whose policies I am in agreement and with whose aims I sympathise.

Questions 18 and 19 asked me to state the date on which I left the Communist Party.

Question 20 asked me whether I would be prepared publicly to repudiate the Communist Party.

STATEMENT BY VERNON CELLIERS BERRANGE  
IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONNAIRE

Ad 1,2,3,4,5,6 and 7: My name is VERNON CELLIERS BERRANGE, and my address is 621, Innes Chambers, Pritchard Street, Johannesburg (Business) and 6D S.A.F.F.A.S. Buildings, de Korte Street, Johannesburg (Residential).

I was born in Pretoria on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 1900. I am an advocate practising in Johannesburg, having been admitted to the Bar in 1924, and I have lived and worked all my life in Johannesburg.

I cannot conceive that any questions relating to members of my family or persons other than myself are relevant.

Ad 8 and 9: I am aware that my name appears on the Liquidator's List, having been informed thereof shortly after the Suppression of Communism Act was passed.

Ad 10: I have made written representations for my name to be removed from the list, but I have not as yet been apprised of the result thereof.

Ad 11 and 12: To the best of my recollection I was allocated to the Central Branch of the Communist Party in Johannesburg. Most of the time I served as an ordinary member, except for a period when I was put on a Committee dealing with Industrial Legislation and Trade Union Work. These facts are well known to the authorities.

Ad 13: I was not recruited by the Communist Party by any individual but joined the party in Johannesburg on my own application.

Ad 14: At the time that I joined the Communist Party my opinion was that it was an organization which expressed in practice those economic and social theories which appealed to me.

Ad 18 and 19: I stopped taking any part in the activities of the Communist Party when and because it was dissolved.

I later became doubtful of the validity of, and also critical of, Communist theory, and I found myself compelled to make a reappraisal not only of the practice of Communism but also of the theory that could lead to such practice.

Ad 15 and 16: I have already stated that my views on Communist theory and practice underwent a radical change some years ago and in making application for my name to be removed from the Liquidator's list I did so on the basis that I am no longer, and have not for many years been, a communist. In my view the only matter that is relevant is the question of truth or falsity of my statement.

The best proof that I can advance in support of this statement is the fact that I have, to the knowledge of the Police, not taken part in any Communist activity for many years now. This statement is supported by the fact that when my "banning" order expired in or about 1955 it was not renewed and that towards the end of 1959 a tourist

passport, with the approval of the Security Police, was issued to me.

I hold that in a democratic society the individual is entitled to his own private opinion regarding any particular ideology or political belief and that his reason for changing such opinion should not be questioned.

Ad 17:

If freedom of political belief is a basic ingredient of democratic society then I do not believe it to be permissible or proper to ask me to state the name of organizations with which I sympathise. Ordinarily I would refrain from answering such a question, but as I was formerly a member of the Communist Party, it, perhaps, became relevant, in support of my application for removal of my name from the Liquidator's list, for the question to be put and answered.

I have not for many years been, nor am I now, a member of any political organization.

My sympathies lie with all organizations that endeavour to establish in this country my concept of democracy. That, in my view, embraces bodies that strive to ensure for all citizens of the country freedom of thought and speech and the right of assembly. It also includes bodies that seek to attain for all citizens, irrespective of their colour or race, equality of opportunity and the right of participation in government: such bodies that

hold all persons are entitled to equal educational and social facilities, to the right to move freely and to compete equally on the labour market, and to live and work where they so desire. It includes bodies that are opposed to, and desire to change, the laws that deny these rights to the citizens of this country and to the laws that make it permissible for persons to be imprisoned, banished or penalised, without being brought to trial and without being given the right to answer in our Courts the allegations made against them.

If, in the opinion of those who will consider my application, my belief in such elementary democratic principles constitutes proof to them that I am a communist, then I am conscious that my application must necessarily fail and that the Suppression of Communism Act is being used not only against communists but against all those opposed to the present Government. This would be a repudiation of the views of a Minister of the State who only recently was reported as saying that every individual in South Africa has the right to freedom of speech and the right to protest against Government policy.

Ad 20:

I protest at the asking of this question. I am constrained to state that I do not think it proper, and I would be sorry to believe it to be in accordance with State policy, to suggest by inference, as this

Ad 17: question does, that the State is prepared to be a party to a bargain whereby the price payable for the success of my application is the public denunciation by me of my former friends and political associates, many of whom I still hold in high respect and for some of whom I have a genuine affection, despite our political differences.

If I allow myself to be a party to such conduct I believe that I would be following a practice that is foreign to democratic countries but which is allegedly to be found in totalitarian states.

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CHAMBERS, 15.10.1962

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