

THE BLACK SASH NATIONAL CONFERENCE, PIETERMARITZBURG 1964.

OPENING ADDRESS

BY

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S O U T H A F R I C A I N C R I S I S .
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"The temptation of our day is to accept the intolerable, for fear of still worse to come". These words of Hermann Raushning, written of a period in Germany which we all have grim cause to remember, have become tragically applicable to South Africa to-day.

After sixteen years of Nationalist rule the volume of protest against the Government's administration has decreased proportionately to the increase in totalitarian measures and Apartheid laws passed by Parliament.

For the first six years of this regime there was widespread public anger and indignation at the laws which were passed, and the devious methods which the Government employed in order to deprive the Coloured voters of the Cape of their franchise rights. The public revulsion against their intention to subvert the entrenched clauses of the South African Constitution was responsible for the rise of the Torch Commando. This powerful group had, in its hey day, a quarter of a million members. Contrast the attitude of public opinion then, with the apathy which prevails to-day.

How, one may ask, has our present Government, in a few short years, managed to prostitute the morality of an entire people, who, by and large, had a traditional and well recognised respect for the rule of law? How have they managed to seduce an honest people into the political thuggery of sectionalism?

When the Black Sash was originally formed in 1955 to protest against the debauching of our Constitution by the Senate Act - and I say debauching deliberately because the assertion of legality arising from the manipulation of an unfortunate loophole in the Constitution, does violence to our intelligence - we little thought that in so short a time we would be called upon to defend the fundamental human rights and dignities which have been the prerogative of civilised peoples since the middle ages.

In this century, having lived through two major global conflicts, and seen at first hand the hideous end results of racial persecution, we might be expected to be a little disturbed at the herrenvolk doctrines of our rulers. The moral debasement of our people, has, however, been accomplished with such base cunning, with such calculated management of group psychology, and the inherent weaknesses and fears of the human animal in society, that hardly a voice has been raised in protest, and each new infringement of our rights has met with less and less positive response, until to-day it has become the silence of acquiescence.

I think it would be pertinent here to remind you of the words of Abraham Lincoln. "There is a special place in Hell for those who remain neutral in a moral crisis". The proudest tribute ever paid to the Black Sash lay in calling it the conscience of a nation. I think it is to our credit that we have continued to perform a most unpleasant duty in the circumstances obtaining to-day and we will persist in our efforts to try and persuade South Africans to throw off their apathy and restore morality to public life.

South Africans appear to be quite unable to face the fact that this is 1964 and that the world is going through a period of change. At the same time we have no right, or title, to depart from our legal, moral and ethical traditions - and this we have done.

Just as the campaign to abolish slavery was a feature of the nineteenth century, because the world began to realise that slavery and the slave trade was contrary to the standards of Christianity; so is the abolition of race discrimination an over-riding issue of this century, because it has come to be realised that all human beings are equal in the sight of God, that they, therefore, have a right to respect for the dignity of man and that it is morally indefensible to discriminate on grounds of race alone.

At a time when Britain, other Colonial powers and the United States of America have realised that, not only is it a necessity, but also that there is a moral obligation to hand over to emergent countries their right of self-determination, South Africa has seen fit to make separate development and race discrimination the country's official policy. When the whole world, with the exception of Russia and her Sattelites, is attempting to fulfill the terms of the Declaration of Human Rights and is trying to break down old prejudices, South Africa is actually fostering racial prejudice and encouraging it. Is it any wonder that we have become the best hated people on earth?

This is the reason why the United Nations is exerting pressure to try to force South Africa to abandon her policy of Apartheid. This is why we have been forced into isolation and why there are threats of sanctions, boycotts and expulsions from World bodies.

White South Africans are antagonised by the condemnation of the world. They believe that the overseas press has misrepresented the situation; that our image abroad is unjustified. They seek to find justification for Apartheid by drawing attention to the money spent on welfare and housing for non-Europeans, for the increased numbers of African children who are now at school, and the standard of living, which on the average is higher than in any African State. But they fail to remember two things: firstly, that African wages are not in accordance with the prosperity of the country and secondly that the differential between the wages of skilled white workers and unskilled African workers is too great. We fail to remember too, that man does not live by bread alone. We do not respect the dignity of man and still regard the African as something some degrees below and not having the same aspirations and desires which are common to all people.

This attitude is seen very clearly when one examines the South Africa which appears on the surface. On the surface the picture is rosy. This is a land of milk and honey. We have a wonderful climate, wonderful scenery; we have all the amenities of a modern industrial society. The standard of living for Whites is higher than almost anywhere in the world. It is one of the few countries left where gracious living is still the rule. Adequate domestic help is available at a comparatively small cost. In this connection I feel I ought to tell you a story about an American visitor who was in Johannesburg recently. He was surprised by the frequency with which tea was brought into the office, beautifully served on a tray with silver pot and china cups. He remarked "Progress will hit you one day, and you will learn to live lousy too". The economy is flourishing, industrial development is expanding; our gold reserves are rising and we balance our budget. There are no visible labour troubles except the shortage of artisans and semi-skilled workers. The building programme has reached a new peak, with luxury offices, shops, luxury flats and private homes going up like mushrooms. Life is pleasant, comfortable and easy.

Having examined this rosy picture of South Africa, let us turn to the other side of the coin. Does the average White South African stop to think why life is so comfortable? Does he know that his labourer is more or less compelled to work for him, even if his wage is small, because he cannot give up his job for fear he might be "endorsed out" to his home in the country, or possibly to a strange tribal area? Does he remember that his African employee probably leaves home at 4.30 a.m to be in time to start his work at 6 or 7 a.m? Does he remember that an African is not permitted to strike for better conditions? Does the average White man or woman know, or want to know, what are the conditions under which the Coloureds, Indians and Africans have to exist - one could hardly call it living?

Our three million whites are living in an ivory tower. The other twelve million citizens eke out an existence and are without rights of any sort, political, civil, economic or human.

We accept that there are people who are worried, who know that injustices are done in their name; but what are they doing about it? Many of us, on meeting a German national are tempted to ask "What did you do to protest during those years?" It is fundamentally tragic that, in similar circumstances, one can ask the same question of a South African to-day, and get the same reply - "Nothing". It is time that we were prepared to admit that the Nationalists are dedicated to a political dogma and are fanatical in their determination to implement Apartheid regardless of the consequences.

One must face the fact that the official opposition believes, basically in Apartheid; though, I say at once, that it would not implement it in the arbitrary and inhumane manner in which the present Government is doing so.

We must examine the reason why the Government is so determined and so dedicated to Apartheid. I believe the real motive behind its policy is to build a Nationalist Afrikaner Nation and to establish its supremacy in South Africa for all time. To this end all its policy and actions are directed, regardless of who will suffer. To make Afrikanerdom exclusive it is imperative that the Government must divide and rule. Hence the separation of Afrikaner life and culture from all other groups, and of all other groups from each other. All are to be subservient to the "volk".

The pattern is then, separation. Separation even of Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking children in the schools, in the universities, in the Churches, in cultural organisations, in commercial and industrial associations, in charitable organisations, of the Press and in every sphere of our society.

All whites must be separated from all non-whites, physically, politically and culturally. The Indian in his own race-tight compartment, likewise the Coloured and the African. The African is further sub-divided into his ethnic group areas. All contacts and association with people of a different group are cut to the minimum.

The pattern of Apartheid has been unfolding over the last sixteen years. It has been done step by step. As loopholes have been found in legislation, so they have been closed by amending legislation. The Apartheid laws, inhuman and unjust as they are, have borne very hardly on the non-White people. They have endured endless assaults on their dignity and have suffered intolerable humiliation.

The Coloured people at the Cape have been deprived of their franchise rights, a right they have had for over a hundred years. They have experienced the horrors of the Race Classification Board. They have been the victims of job reservation and have had the amenities of the beaches and pleasure resorts at the Cape denied to them.

The Indians too, who have been told that they will never have any representation in the central Parliament, have suffered gross hardship under the Group Areas Act. They have been uprooted from their homes and places of business and moved to Group Areas of the Government's choosing. All this has been done without consultation with the people who are affected. Were we not in South Africa it might possibly have occurred to someone to enquire how a minority government - a public servant - could dare to deprive any citizen of his private property or means of livelihood without compensation or redress. Nevertheless all of it has taken place with hardly a protest from white South Africa.

For the Africans too, Apartheid spells human misery. It is true that the Transkei has been established as a supposedly self-governing Bantustan; but if one examines its Constitution, it certainly is not independent, nor, I believe, is it intended to be.

It has no viable economy and even with substantial grants from the Republican Parliament, it cannot hope to support its population in the foreseeable future.

Twasanaland is the next Bantustan on the list to be established, and this consists of small portions of land all strung together and is probably even more impoverished than the Transkei.

For the seven or eight million Africans who live and work in the white areas, their lives, on the whole, consist of the struggle to live and work within the law. The African is a hewer of wood and a drawer of water. He has been turned, virtually, into a migrant, rootless serf with no rights or security of any kind. I do not need to remind you of the part which insecurity of tenure alone has played - in other revolutions, in other places.

The Black Sash is fully conversant, through the work in its Advice offices, with the implication of the laws which affect the urban African. The Native Urban Areas Act of 1945 is now to be surpassed by the horrors of the Bantu Laws Amendment Act. These laws have converted the African from a human being into a statistic, juggled with and pushed hither and thither by officials who are bound to carry out the letter of the law.

Thousands of Africans are "endorsed out" of the urban areas back to the tribal areas every month. Thousands of families are broken up and thousands of children are deprived of paternal care and discipline. Thousands are homeless, rootless and workless and many are even stateless. Can we, may I ask, forcibly remove a man from his wife, a woman from her children or a family from their livelihood and still call ourselves a Christian nation?

Thousands of employers spend thousands of hours in pass offices in an endeavour to have their labour registered. Thousands of Africans spend thousands of hours standing in queues waiting for permits to seek work. Thousands of Africans travel thousands of miles to their homes in the country to await permission to travel back to town to take up the employment offered to them. Thousands of employers spend from four to ten weeks waiting for their labourers to get permission to come back from home to take up that employment. Thousands of Africans come illegally to the urban areas every month and thousands of them are "endorsed out", back to the country where, in many areas starvation is rife and employment almost unprocurable. Thousands of urban families lose thousands of hours of pay by going to pass offices to get permission for their teen-age sons, who were sent to school in the country, to come back home to live with the family and work in town.

We are all paying for this, not only in vast sums of money, but in man hours wasted, in terms of bitterness and frustration, and the inefficiency of the labour force. When the day of retribution comes, and come it will, I pray that the African people will not demand an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. I am ashamed, as a member of the white group in this country, that we are perpetrating such sins against humanity and such injustices on our fellow citizens. How can a people, so incensed at the Senate Act nine years ago, now be sunk into such apathy, that the passing of the Bantu Laws Amendment Bill leaves them unconcerned by the human misery such legislation will cause.

I will digress here to quote to you three statements that were made in one week at the beginning of this month. The first was made by Mr. F. W. H. Stafford at a meeting of the Institute of Management in Durban. He is reported to have said "It is important that non-Europeans should be trained to take over the semi-skilled and skilled jobs if economic progress is to be maintained"... and he went on to say that He had always believed "that political issues cannot hold back economic progress".

The following day Dr. Verwoerd, speaking at a dinner in Bloemfontein, explained the steps which were being taken to overcome the manpower shortage, and then is reported to have said, "One thing would never be done, however, and that was to use non-Whites along with, or as substitutes for, whites".

If this is so Dr. Verwoerd should make it clear to the country. Mr. Stafford and his associates in commerce and industry may be living in a fool's paradise, not knowing that the Government intends to withdraw the labour force. Does the Government intend to sacrifice the stability and the prosperity of the South African economy for the ideology of Apartheid?

The Foreign Minister, during his recent trip to Germany, said in Cologne, "It is the Government's aim to end racial discrimination...Full implementation of our policy will bring about a situation in which racial discrimination will disappear". Did Dr. Muller mean, by this statement, that the Government means to act on the conclusions of Dr. Scholtz, the Editor of the Transvaler, when he said in his book "n Swart Suid Afrika" that Apartheid could not be justified or made to work, unless the white economy dispenses with its non-White labour forthwith and unless every African was sent back to his homeland?

In any event Parliament has just put the Bantu Laws Amendment Act on the statute book and this is discrimination par excellence. Dr. Muller's statement in view of this Act, would seem to me to be as irrational as the title given to "The Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act" or "The Extension of University Education Act."

At the same time as the Government was unfolding the pattern of Apartheid it was forced to silence legitimate non-White protest and to deal with the situations which arose from the implementation of Apartheid. We have, therefore, had a steady succession of laws since 1948 which have progressively become more arbitrary and have progressively abrogated the rule of law. From the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950, the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1953, they have proceeded to the General Law Amendment Act, (the Sabotage Act) of 1962 and its amendments in 1963 and 1964, the worst clause of the 1963 edition being the notorious 90 day detention clause. Gradually and step by step, justice has been diminished by excluding specifically the jurisdiction of the courts, and the rights and liberties of the individual have been correspondingly reduced.

To-day to our shame, South African has sunk to the level of 90 day detention, without charge and without trial and in solitary confinement, which has been scientifically proved to cause serious mental aberrations in certain people. It is a measure which offends all the tenets of Christian teaching, ^{justice} civilised values and decency. In the opinion of the world it puts South Africa in the same category as Nazi Germany, Russia and Ghana. I said in Cape Town in 1956, during the protest against the Separate Representation of Voters Bill that the Black Sash would never give in and it would never give up. I say so again to-day and we shall protest against this iniquitous law until it is repealed. Seven hundred and fifty years ago the Magna Carta laid down the basis on which Western civilised standards of justice have been founded and it might be well to quote Chapters XXXIX and XL of the Magna Carta now:

CHAPTER XXXIX reads :

"No free man shall be arrested, or detained in prison, or deprived of his freehold, or outlawed, or banished or in any way molested; and we shall not set forth against, 'hfn, nor send against', unless by the lawful judgment of his peers and the law of the land".

CHAPTER XL reads :

"To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse or delay right and justice".

In sixteen years, with the help of a mass of statutory legislation this Government has plunged South Africa back into the social anarchy of the middle ages. They have abandoned centuries of political progress, have manipulated Christian doctrine to suit their own philosophies and have subverted the common law in the interests of sectional dogma.

Whatever the future policy of this Government may be, the fact remains that for sixteen years it has entrenched discrimination, abrogated the rule of law and diminished the human rights and civil liberties of all South Africans. All this has been done with the object in view of maintaining Nationalist Afrikaner dominance in South Africa for all time.

All through these years opponents of the Government have been silenced. With the skilful use of propaganda the bogey of Communism has been magnified and the Suppression of Communism Act has been used to ban, put under house arrest, detain or charge anyone who has the temerity to oppose them publicly, and to charge them with furthering the aims of Communism. Political organisations have been declared unlawful, and for the non-Whites certainly, all avenues of legitimate protest have been closed. The S.A.B.C. pours out incessant propaganda on Communism, equating it with liberalism and, in fact, with all criticism of Government policy. In talks given by Mr. Kruger, Mr. Benson, Mr. A. M. van Schoor, Mr. Blyth Thompson and other unknown broadcasters there has been a campaign attacking Liberals and liberalism, the English speaking Press, Churchmen, academic humanists, the Progressive party, Communist lawyers and lecturers and so on. The news casts highlight racial disturbances wherever they occur in any part of the globe. The fear of Black Nationalism is instilled and the rightness of separate development is hammered incessantly.

The S.A.B.C. was established as a public utility to serve all sections of the community and is sustained by the licence fees paid by people of all political affiliations. It is now being used to disseminate the views and beliefs of the Nationalist Party. No time is ever allowed for the views and beliefs of those groups or individuals who do not support Government policy.

All these factors have led to the unhappy situation in which South Africa finds itself to-day. Ordinary decent and law-abiding people, who in the past were committed to non-violence, have felt themselves impelled to resort to the use of violence. We in the Black Sash condemn, absolutely, violence in any shape or form, from where ever it may come; but we blame the Government for having created, by its intransigence, a situation in which violence increasingly occurs. It is right to remember, too, that violence by authority towards human dignity, and, in some cases, physical violence, preceded, by many years, this era of sabotage and terrorism. We appeal to those who are using sabotage and violence to stop doing so; and we appeal to the Government to return to the rule of law.

The following facts and figures put the South African scene in a nutshell. They reflect very clearly the results of Government policy:

There are nearly 10,000 banned books.

The latest figures available indicate that 31 people are still in banishment.

404 people were under banning orders at 18th September 1964.

435 persons are listed as Communists. Even the S.A.B.C. has admitted this.

13 persons are still under 24 hour house arrest

21 persons are under night arrest.

Just over 900 people have been detained under the 90-day law in the last sixteen months.

500 detainees have already appeared in court, nearly all of whom have been found guilty.

Of the remainder 230 have become state witnesses or given satisfactory explanations and have been released.

Another 70 have also been released for various reasons after meeting the requirements of the act.

In most cases investigations were completed during the first term of 90 days.

The figures on 90 Day Detention were given to the "Star" by Brigadier van den Bergh

3 persons have committed suicide while in 90 day detention.

5 persons have received psychiatric treatment or have received treatment in mental institutions as a result of 90 day detention.

4 persons have been kidnapped from territories outside the Republic. 3 of them have been returned by the South African Government

137 Political trials have been completed,

At least 12 more are pending.

1162 Poqo terrorists were found guilty of **Poqo** crimes

269 others, excluding Poqo have been brought before the courts and charged with sabotage.

150 were found guilty.

126 persons have been found guilty of leaving South Africa to receive training in sabotage and then returning to South Africa. (Hansard June 10th 1964)

Hundreds of persons have been raided by the Security Police, their homes, offices and personal belongings have been searched.

Thousands have left the country legally.

Hundreds have fled the country.

66, 575 persons, on average, are in gaol at any one time.

3, 127 Whites,

51,761 Africans,

11,291 Coloureds.

396 Asians.

This means that one in every 225 persons, taking the population at 15,000,000, is, on average, in gaol all the time.

In giving you the picture of the two faces of South Africa, I have tried to illustrate, on the one hand, how the determination of the Government, and here I couple with it the Broederbond, to achieve the exclusiveness and the dominance of "the Volk" is resulting in great hardship, human misery and injustice to the non-White South Africans; how the arbitrary laws necessary to implement Apartheid have led to sabotage and terrorism. On the other hand, despite these facts, the South African economy is flourishing and bouyant. On the surface there is prosperity and, for the Whites, stability and calm.

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This state of prosperity is a factor which contributes to the apathy of the White public; but it is not the only factor. Another very important reason is FEAR, and it is fear which I now want to discuss.

Fear is an instinct. We all have it. We were born with it. It is an instinct which we have to learn to control if we are to reach full maturity and be a whole person. It is an instinct which can so easily gain the upper hand if we are not constantly watchful to keep it within reasonable bounds.

Fear is the deadly enemy of a free society. When fear governs, freedom ceases to exist. If fear comes to the surface and gets out of control, panic ensues. Panic is infectious, it knows no reason and can result in physical reaction, such as a stampeding crowd; but there is also the fear which causes mental panic and which induces stupid and irresponsible action. Victims of panic are often victims of intimidation.

Fear distorts perspective and unreasonable and un contemplated action may follow. Fear impairs judgment, disregards beliefs and intentions, and irresponsible action or inaction results.

Fear inhibits independence of thought. It may not be comfortable to think differently from friends or business associates, so silence is prudent. On the other hand outspoken criticism could bring to light a surprising amount of sympathy and support. Courage to speak out gives courage to others to do likewise.

Fear causes insecurity; it takes away peace of mind and it destroys faith, hope and even love. It leads to escapism, it obscures the facts and it forces the victim into the isolation of an ivory tower.

Fear blinds the truth. It inhibits understanding, it stills the conscience, because the truth often demands action. Ignorance may be bliss; but it will surely lead to disaster.

Fear can reduce a people to an amorphous mass of indecision, of escapism, of subservience to authority, floundering about, soulless and impotent in a tyranny which it has no power to change.

We saw fear take hold in Germany in the 1930s. It has taken hold of us and if we do not come to our senses now, we are doomed. The majority of the White electorate, it would seem, is governed by fear - fear of the unknown, of Black Nationalism, of change, of criticism, of losing a job, of losing a contract, of speaking out, of offending the Government, of liberalism and Communism, and non-conformity. Let us not forget that fear begets fear.

Let all South Africans join the forces of right and justice. Let us inspire courage; refuse to be intimidated. Take heed of what the Churches are saying; of the courage of the English-speaking press; of the fight that some of our National leaders are putting up and remember the stoicism of the African, the Coloured and the Indian people. In the words of the Rev. S. P. Freeland, "It is time to get off the fence - Take sides - Freedom is precious."

In conclusion, I quote from the writings from prison of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a theologian imprisoned and executed by the Nazis :

"To do and dare - not what you would, but what is right. Never to hesitate over what is within your power, but boldly to grasp what lies before you. Not in the flight of fancy, but only in the deed there is freedom. Away with timidity and reluctance ! Out into the storm of event, sustained only by the commandment of God and your faith, and freedom will receive your spirit with exultation".