

# HOW VORSTER USES ANTI-COMMUNISM

*Savitri Azad*

DISLIKE OR FEAR of communism is a weapon in the hands of extreme reactionaries, and its potency in the South African scene needs to be examined and understood.

It is the contention of this article that anti-communism is used as a means of preventing unity among all progressive forces, and through disunity permitting the advance of reaction; that it is used as a means of paralysing activities and action on the part of those opposed to fascism; that it is the means used to silence all opponents of a reactionary regime, whether they are communists, non-communists, or even themselves opposed to the ideas of communism; and that it is the means of discrediting the actions of non-communists in South Africa, both within their own country and in the eyes of the world.

There are historical examples of this, the best-known being from Germany and America.

In Germany, the attack of the Nazis on all civil liberties and their subsequent destruction of all opposed to them began with a full-scale attack on the German communists. This was the prelude to the Nazis' rise to power, and the basis of their success.

It should never be forgotten that when the Nazis seized power their support among the German people had declined sharply; they were, in fact, already on their way out. And these were the methods they used to obtain power *against* popular support:

- \* terrorism and thugs, armed, equipped and financed by big business and large-scale capitalists who were terrified of communism;

- \* disunity and confusion among those opposed to Nazism;

- \* the Reichstag Fire plot which was engineered by the Nazis both to frighten others, to discredit communists and as an excuse for their destruction.

In the German context, anti-communism prevented world unity in action to save the Jewish people. Communists outside Germany were

the only ones who, between the years 1933 and the end of the 'phoney' war, consistently tried to force the world to believe the truth about the concentration camps and the destruction of the Jews. It was anti-communism that prevented enormous numbers of people in England and other countries from believing the truth of what was happening.

This fear of communism, or lack of understanding, or blind anti-communism nearly brought world victory for the Nazis. Their triumphal parade through Europe was made possible by the anti-communism which produced the failure of Britain, Poland and other countries to unite with the main anti-Nazi force in Europe: the Russians. In the end, this disunity was only broken by the physical attack of the Germans on the U.S.S.R.

In America, the nightmare of the McCarthy era, now regarded with shame by the vast majority of Americans, was made possible only through anti-communism. McCarthy's extraordinary hold, the powerful position he built up for himself, enabling him to be responsible for the removal from public office, from the professions, the universities, even the films, radio and television, of people of progressive, liberalistic or even just humanist ideas, all this was only possible through anti-communism.

*Anti-communism is the veil behind which an attack is made on all civil liberties. This is how it has worked in South Africa as well.*

In 1948, only three years after the downfall of the Nazi-Fascist axis, the world was shocked by the victory in the General Election of the Nationalist and Afrikaner Parties coalition, headed by Dr. Malan, over the United Party led at that time by General Smuts. However lukewarmly (he refused at all times to arm African soldiers or institute democratic reforms which would have inspired the oppressed majority) Smuts had backed the United Nations in the war; Malan and his party had backed Hitler, and many of his lieutenants, men like Verwoerd and Vorster, were open admirers of fascism. Smuts and the United Party, never true friends of democracy, had already seriously weakened civil liberties in South Africa; the Nationalists set to work in earnest to destroy them altogether.

The assault on liberties in South Africa began in earnest in 1950 with the Suppression of Communism Act. This Act was not just a preliminary to further laws limiting liberties, it was also in itself an attack on both communists and all anti-Nationalist groups. This fact was recognized at the time by very wide groups including the Johannesburg Bar, which declared: 'The objects of communism as defined in the Act are very wide indeed. They include many liberal and humanitarian

objects which are advocated and cherished by persons who are very far from being communists. These provisions have no legal bounds . . . and are a complete negation of the liberty of the subject as guaranteed by the rule of law.'

The Institute of Race Relations, after emphasizing its absolute opposition to communism in all forms, stated: 'To promote the liberties of all groups within a society is the professed aim of communists. Hence to widen the definition of "communism" as the Act does to include any person who, at any time, has "encouraged the achievement of any of the objects of communism" gives the Government unfettered power to prevent activities upon which the progress of the Western democracies has been based.'

The African National Congress, South African Indian Congress and other organizations, including the Communist Party, recognizing the extreme dangers of the Act, joined in a campaign against the Act before it became law. The non-communist groups that participated in this campaign did not then, nor subsequently, allow themselves to be deceived by the cry of anti-communism and the unity with communists that was forged at that time was responsible for the strength and effectiveness of the national liberation front in subsequent years. But among Whites the cry of anti-communism was more potent, and weakened and disarmed opposition to the Nationalists.

The Suppression of Communism Act defines 'communism' very widely, to include not only 'the doctrine of Marxian socialism' but also any doctrine or scheme which aims at bringing about any political, industrial, social or economic change within South Africa by the promotion of disturbances or disorder, or by acts which aim at the encouragement of feelings of hostility between Black and White. It is also defined as including any doctrine or scheme aiming at bringing about any political, social or economic change in co-operation with any foreign government or institution, whose purpose or one of whose purposes is to promote any political, industrial, social or economic system similar to that in operation in any country which has a system as defined in the Act.

The Communist Party of South Africa was declared unlawful, and the Act empowers the Governor-General to declare any organization unlawful if he is satisfied it is furthering the achievement of *any* of the aims of communism. The Minister of Justice was directed to prepare a list of members of organizations declared unlawful. Persons so listed, plus those found guilty by the courts of contravening the terms of the Act ('statutory communists'), are then subject to certain bans and

restrictions. The Act also empowers the Minister to ban publications and gatherings if he considers these are likely to further the aims of communism (as defined in the Act).

Together with subsequent amendments (particularly those of 1962) the Act now gives the Minister of Justice power to take action against many categories of persons; for example: members or active supporters of any organization declared unlawful under the Act; persons listed as being members or active supporters of any organization deemed unlawful (this now includes the African National Congress, the Pan-African Congress, the Congress of Democrats, and other bodies deemed to be carrying on *any* of the activities of these organizations), and also 'statutory' communists; and persons deemed by the Minister to be promoting any of the aims of communism, or likely to do so, or engaging in activities which may do so.

One example here will illustrate the enormous range of the powers of suppression under the Act. A woman in Johannesburg who had no political affiliations, was not listed, and took no part in political activities, was called before the Chief Magistrate and warned by him to cease 'activities furthering the aims of communism' or if she did not desist, she would be subject to bans or house arrest. When she asked what she was doing to further the aims of communism, she was told that she must herself be aware of what she was doing. There was actually only one thing: she was helping in the delivery of food for political detainees in the jails. This was the activity 'furthering the aims' that she was now compelled to cease.

People who have been listed as former members of the Communist Party, or as former members of organizations such as the Congress of Democrats which was legal until proscribed under the Act, and those who have been listed as 'furthering the aims', then become subject to a wide range of restrictions.

These include: being banned from gatherings; from being in any specified area during any specified period; restrictions on movements; house arrest; prohibition from performing any specified act; communication with other listed or banned people; restrictions on receiving any visitors; being compelled to report to the police at any time specified; being compelled to notify the police of any change of job or residence; prohibitions from joining other organizations; becoming subject to bans on recording, reproducing, publishing, printing or disseminating any speech, utterance, writing, statement or extract, made at any time; being prevented from associating in any way with publishing or printing.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the 'Sabotage' Act of 1963, with its fantastic powers, consists largely of amendments to the Suppression of Communism Act.

### **HOW THE ACT WAS USED**

The immediate effect of the Act when it was first passed was to force the resignation from trade unions of a large number of leading, experienced trade union workers (about seventy-five), of all racial groups. Among them were people who had literally built the trade union movement in South Africa; many of whom were formerly members of the Communist Party, but included were people such as E. S. (Solly) Sachs, who had been expelled from the Communist Party twenty years before and had not been a member since.

A list of about 500 named people was prepared.

Messrs. Kahn and Carnesson, now listed communists, were ordered to cease to sit as members of Parliament and the Cape Provincial Council respectively.

The newspaper *The Guardian* was banned. (It reappeared under a new name—several times.)

Within the next few years, a foretaste of the powers of the Act was given. Hundreds of homes were raided by the police under the Act. Bans were issued against many A.N.C. leaders, including Chief Lutuli (in 1959).

But the first attacks under the Act were on listed communists. The government did not launch a full-scale attack immediately on all those opposed to apartheid. They were feeling their way, only beginning to extend their power, and were at the stage when they still had to break down organized resistance. A full-scale attack on Congress and liberals would have produced a strong, united resistance. The removal of communists from public activity was the essential first step to all that followed, and cleared the way for action against other groups. The communists were the most militant and active members of their trade unions and other organizations, and the most determined opponents of the Nationalist Party. Their warning that anti-communism was being used as a preliminary to the destruction of all civil liberties was not fully comprehended, and anti-communism among non-Nationalists prevented them from taking action to protect communists. The communists' warning: 'It is us now; later it will be everyone else' was not really believed by those infected with fear of being labelled a friend or associate of communists.

After the suppression of the Communist Party and the removal of

former communists from the trade unions, it became necessary to widen the net. This was logical, foreseeable, obvious, as long as any organized opposition to apartheid remained. The Nationalists had only two ways open to them: to permit legal opposition and allow freedom of assembly and association; or to suppress it utterly. The first choice was not possible while the vast majority of the population—practically every non-white and at that time a majority of the Whites as well—were deeply opposed to their policies.

If the names could be examined it would be found today that the majority of those now subject to severe restrictions and bans under the Act are non-communists.

By 1963 hundreds had been restricted, subject to various bans, forced to resign from jobs, prevented from entering factories or schools, silenced, confined and in other ways regulated under the Act. These included twenty-four who received house arrest orders, confining them to their homes for twelve or twenty-four hours a day; more than a hundred confined to specified districts or areas, such as townships, or kraals, or to within a mile or less of their homes; large numbers prohibited from entering factories (this was used to incapacitate the trade union movement), or mine premises, or the premises of dozens of specified organizations, or to belong to any organization which in any way discussed any policy of the State (this includes professional organizations and may compel a person to cease practising his profession); others had to relinquish their jobs as journalists; were made to report weekly or daily to the police; were forbidden to communicate with anyone at all, other than immediate members of their family; were forbidden to give lectures or enter educational institutions. The Act lent itself to tailoring to fit individual cases. Thus, for example, a courageous and outspoken member of the Liberal Party in Pretoria, Mrs. Adelaide Hain, had been in the habit of attending court and listening to prosecutions, so that she could obtain legal or financial aid for the accused where necessary. Her bans (which prevented her from being present at her own child's birthday party and attending school sports) also prohibited her from entering any court of law; an effective way of silencing someone who was troublesome in exposing injustice.

The significance of the Act emerges when it is realized that although the decimation and destruction of anti-Nationalist forces has been conducted under this Act, to date *nobody has yet been convicted* under the main definition or even under three of the four sections of the Act; the only convictions to date have been under section (b), the section

dealing with those aiming to bring about a change by promotion or disturbance or unlawful acts, and was used notably during the Defiance Campaign of 1952. The main definitions have not been employed in prosecutions, and the present trial of Fischer and others is the first to take place in the fourteen years of the Act.

Once having silenced communists, then Congressites and others; having banned newspapers and magazines; brought an end to public meetings and campaigns and public protest to apartheid policies; the cry of 'anti-communism' is now extended to cover not only liberals and other progressive groups, but in fact as the basis to attack all who do not subscribe to apartheid, to destroy the moderating influence of some Churches and further, as the basis to attack scientific thought and to plunge South Africa into the sub-twilight of medieval thought. Anti-communism has become the shield for anti-semitism and for attacks on internationalism. And the final logic: any nation of the Western world that disapproves of the racial policies of South Africa is accused of playing the game of the communists.

### **ANTI-JEW AND ANTI-CHURCH**

The three loudest voices speaking in the name of anti-communism are the Prime Minister, Dr. Verwoerd, the Minister of Justice, Mr. B. J. Vorster, and the new voice that daily pronounces throughout the land, that of the brother of the Minister of Justice; he is Dr. J. D. Vorster, an actuary of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Anti-communism has made all suspect, and all the enemy. The technique is exactly that of Goebbels and Hitler.

'The damage done by the British Churches cannot be undone . . . (they) have declared political war on South Africa', declared Dr. Verwoerd after the British Council of Churches had condemned apartheid. He slated Archbishop Joost de Blank and the former British Ambassador Sir John Maud, describing them both as enemies of South Africa. In another speech he issued a strong warning against 'social religion' which is 'driving out godliness and replacing it with lesser human feelings'. He claimed that an international organization was undermining South Africa's culture, an organization consisting of 'internationalists' who claimed great knowledge and to be deep thinkers. They aimed at one culture of Black, White and Yellow and would try to penetrate schools, universities, newspapers and churches and use these mediums to destroy the Republic's culture. 'We must be prepared to fight on every level against internationalism.' He told the Methodist Church he 'despises their hypocrisy' and accused them of 'prejudiced political attacks on South Africa'.

'Among other people who spread the communist creed in South Africa', stated the same learned Doctor, 'are liberals and reactionaries who are sufficiently misguided to believe that they were fighting for freedom and democracy'. These fellow-travellers were as great a danger, if not greater, than the communists themselves.

'It was clear that the Jingoese, the Liberalists and the Communists lay in the same trench to shoot at the Government' (B. J. Vorster).

'Pseudo-liberalism is crushing the face of the earth . . . the cry of equality destroys all other freedoms. Anything can be sacrificed to the god of equality. Liberalism is a murderer of nations.' (Dr. Verwoerd.)

'Liberals prove of inestimable value to Communists. Liberalism does the demolition work. . . . Liberal circles thus constitute the main recruiting field of the Communists for their fronts. Liberal Christians, liberal Jews and liberal-minded universities have, down the years, rendered the greatest assistance to the Communists and have furnished the largest number of the fifth column.' (Dr. J. D. Vorster.)

'Part of the Communist onslaught on the West was through the churches, and devoted Communists were being trained as ministers and priests.' (Dr. J. D. Vorster in a speech mainly devoted to an analysis of Karl Marx, 'father of Communism, and a person of Jewish origins from an orthodox Jewish family.')

'Never before in our history have we been faced with such a threat as of late by our enemies inspired by international Communism.' (Dr. Verwoerd.)

'Schoolchildren should be taught the dangers of liberalism in the same way as they had classes on road safety . . . as a threat to what is pure and just.' (Afrikaanse Studentebond Congress.)

That liberalism paves the way to communism is the logical development of the anti-communist campaign, and the next step is just as logical: the accusation that liberalism is itself fundamentally unchristian.

The Jews are warned to behave themselves. Dr. J. D. Vorster issues warnings of the unpleasant consequences if Jews do not make the response he expects of them in his attacks on communism. The issue in South Africa, he said, is 'Where does the Jewish community stand against communism? That is the basic issue'.

*Antikom* is the journal issued by the Inter-Church Commission of the Dutch Reformed Churches, and the articles it publishes are identical or similar to those used by the Nazis, by Mosley, Father Coughlin in

the U.S.A. and others to whip up anti-Jewish feeling. Recent issues contain articles designed to prove that Jews were behind the Russian Revolution and the spread of the world communist movement.

It alleges that Lenin's parents were Jews, and his real name was Haim Goldmann. 'Bolshevism is organized and directed by Jews', and so on. Another article states that liberalism is a denial of a fundamental Christian concept that the authority for any government comes from God, not from the people; it opens the door to Communism because of 'broadmindedness and tolerance for the views of others'.

A *Volkskongres* to alert the Afrikaner volk to the dangers of communism began with a full-scale attack on the World Council of Churches and ended with a unanimous resolution asking the government to take positive action against the 'liberalistic press'. The resolution equated communism with liberalism. The leading speaker, editor of *Die Vaderland* (a newspaper owned by Verwoerd's company, A. M. van Schoor), said 'Fundamental to the re-assertion of democracy as a world force is knowledge, not this airy-fairy, hazy-crazy idealism and humanitarianism which is befogging Western thinking'.

Forward from liberalism to attacks on the Progressive Party, the all-White group that does not even want universal franchise in South Africa. The Progressive Party is contesting two Coloured seats in the forthcoming provincial elections. Dr. Verwoerd has warned them twice that Whites must not be involved in non-White politics. 'The Progressive Party continues to defy the Prime Minister's warning', says the *Rand Daily Mail*, 'and it is feared that it will be outlawed by legislation in next year's parliamentary session'. (This would incidentally make possible the removal of the lone Progressive member of parliament, the courageous Mrs. Helen Suzman, sole remaining voice of reason and protest left in the House of Assembly.)

Forward from liberalism and the Progressive Party to undermine all rational and scientific thought in the name of the struggle against communism. Blasphemy trials, heresy trials, exhibits on the evolution of man removed from museums because they offend the D.R.C.—this is like something from the middle ages. And now 'The South African Association for the Promotion of Christian Science' has been formed by D.R.C. theologians and professors from the universities of Potchefstroom, Pretoria and Bloemfontein, a move to influence the whole approach to scientific thought in South Africa. This brings neo-Calvinist Christian National ideology for the first time officially and through an organized body into the sphere of science.

'Our chief object is to ensure that the Christian attitude is maintained in science', states Professor J. A. L. Taljaard, secretary of the

association. The Christian approach could give science a new face. 'For those who believe in evolution, all the consequences must be faced . . . liberalism, socialism and communism—with the underlying philosophy of humanism—must also be seen for what they are.' He further said the Christian approach must be applied to every branch of science, including those such as cultural science, economics, mathematics, biology and agriculture. Professor Stoker of Potchefstroom University stated 'The truths of scripture are relevant to science . . . the aim of science was not to gain scientific knowledge for power to serve human interests, but to honour and glorify God'.

As with science, so with the arts. At the Afrikaanse Studentebond Congress Mr. Hans Swanepoel of Pretoria University said authors' 'freedom should be restricted' if they ignored their responsibility and preached liberal dogma harmful to the character and ideals of the volk. He spoke of a well-known Afrikaans author as being prepared to 'send little liberal monsters into the world and sit back to watch how they spread corruption and demoralization among the Afrikaner people'. He warned against liberal influences in cultural life, and even against 'liberal music' forced on the volk from outside.

These are not the ravings of the 'lunatic fringe'. These are the policies of the rulers of South Africa. This is the logical end-result of anti-communism: the denial of science, the denigration of art and culture, the vilification of humanism, the outlawing of all liberal thought, of ideas that widen horizons and enrich life; the fitting of a nation into a straitjacket—fascism. It is the final proof, if any is needed, that fascism and communism stand at opposite poles of man's thinking. Far from equating them, as so many non-communists of the Western world are fond of doing, the first condition of a successful fight against fascism is to defend the rights of communists.

For it is not sufficient for those non-communists who believe in the rights of man simply to assert their 'non-communism'. They must actively join *against* the anti-communist witch-hunt, or in turn themselves be hunted.

The African National Congress has been smeared because its leaders have for years been prepared to co-operate with communists, and because they have refused to be side-tracked into anti-communist witch-hunts, and have maintained as their clear objective the fight for human rights. Outside South Africa, the breakaway Pan-Africanist Congress won acceptance from certain circles, in spite of its narrow black nationalism, because of its avowed anti-communism. Certain groups were prepared to back and help build P.A.C. simply on this basis, and could as readily ignore the stronger claims of the A.N.C. for assistance on the grounds that it was *not* anti-communist.

The A.N.C. is not, and never has been, a communist-dominated or communist orientated organization, and a careful examination of the Freedom Charter, its stated programme, said by some to be 'communist' will reveal this. The Freedom Charter does not even accept the necessity for socialism. It calls only for the nationalization of mines and land as basic to the development of South Africa. Unlike Britain, which does not claim to be a socialist country, simply a 'welfare' state, the Charter does not even propose the nationalization of such public enterprises as transport. In the context of Africa today, with scarcely any country's leading men who do not accept the necessity for some form of socialism, the Charter is indeed a very moderate statement of aims. Only as a stick to beat the A.N.C. has it been labelled 'communist', an example of the destructive dishonesty of anti-communism.

Non-communists, unless they themselves are fascists, must defend the *rights of communists*, for this is the first line of attack on themselves. It is too often accepted that undesirable action may be countenanced if it is against communists. Then it only becomes necessary for the Minister of Justice to say that certain people were, or are, communists, to silence the sense of outrage at his actions. The house arrest of Helen Joseph, the first person to be so confined, aroused such a storm of protest in South Africa precisely because she was known as a non-communist. But had she been a communist, would such cruel restrictions upon her life then have become permissible in the name of the fight against communism?

No. Non-communists must now face this fact: when any government has powers to restrict and terrorize communists, the definition of what constitutes communism will continuously widen to embrace all those who are opposed to the despotic authority in power.

To follow anti-communism to its logical conclusion is to sink completely into the black pit of fascism—as South Africa is doing today.