



SOUTH AFRICA AND EVENTS IN AFRICA

**Address to the Black Sash National Conference
by JEAN SINCLAIR
National President**

WE ARE AT THE END of another busy year and have done what we could to keep the flame of freedom alight in South Africa. In all Regions we have tried to bring to the attention of the public legislation which is, in the opinion of the Black Sash, unjust, discriminatory and a further restriction on the freedom of the individual.

The events in South Africa cannot be reviewed in a vacuum; the pattern of what is happening here must be reviewed against the background of events in the whole of Africa. There is no doubt that what takes place to the north of us must have a profound effect on the future of South Africa.

It has been said that the 1960's are the years of Africa's destiny. South Africa has lost a golden opportunity of the leadership she could have given to other independent countries to bring about peaceful change. Instead, our Government's policy is repudiated not only by the rest of Africa, but by the whole civilized world.

The seven years of war in Algeria, instead of being a solemn warning to the Whites in South Africa as to the probable consequences of a White minority clinging to its privileges against the rights, wishes and needs of the majority, has, in fact, had the opposite effect of strengthening this White minority's belief in Apartheid, and it has intensified its resistance to the acceptance of changing conditions.

The Government warns unceasingly of the dangers of granting rights, both human and political, to non-Whites. State propaganda uses every incident of racial friction anywhere in the world to illustrate that only chaos can result if freedom of association with people of a different colour is not restricted.

The Nationalist Government believes that, with its policy of Apartheid, it will save White civilization for the world. Africa and the Western world believe that in the policy of Apartheid lie the seeds of the destruction of White civilization.

The African Revolution

We are enmeshed in the African Revolution. There is nothing we can do to prevent it or to stop the inevitable changes which are already taking place. Apart from the ethical reasons, surely it is in our own interests to see that changing conditions bring about better and happier conditions for all of us.



**Mrs. Jean Sinclair
who was
re-elected
National President
of the
Black Sash
at the
National Conference**

The development of the new African States is of vital interest and importance to the West. The Communists are directing their main drive towards the under-developed countries. Whether Africa's choice is Communism or whether it will take the path of Western democracy may possibly determine the future peace of the world. It may also determine whether the majority of the world's people will enjoy individual freedom or whether they will be vassals of authoritarianism.

Although the newly independent States have many differing problems, many of them have important features in common. The bulk of their populations is poor and uneducated, — government tends to be authoritarian and Nationalism is widespread. The West is competing with the Communist countries for the acceptance of democratic ideals as opposed to the Communist ideology.

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South Africa and Events in Africa (Cont.)

The United States, Great Britain, the European Economic Community, the Nordic countries, Israel and others are giving financial aid on a huge scale, and are sending trained personnel to overcome the serious shortage of technologists and technicians, to institute educational schemes and to assist in the development of a money economy. The conversion from a subsistence economy to a modern economy will have a profound effect on the social and political changes which accompany economic progress.

The Influence of the Colonial System

Mr. Harry Oppenheimer, who recently gave the fourth "T.B. Davie" Memorial Lecture, had some interesting things to say. After pointing out that, with the exception of Egypt, Africa prior to the Colonial era had "failed to develop anything that could reasonably be called a civilized society", he stressed that it was the influence of the Colonial powers which provided the stimulus for African advance; that while the Colonial system could not provide democracy itself, it provided the conditions for spectacular progress and brought the explosive force of individualism to Africa. "It opened up a field of individual effort by the Africans as well as Europeans. It broke into the closed, harsh, frustrating tribal system and provided social, economic and even political opportunity for the talents of individual Africans . . . (and) it may well be found in the long run that the introduction to Africa under the Colonial system of the concept and practice of individual freedom and initiative was even a more significant change than the introduction of European organization and techniques."

If Mr. Oppenheimer's premise is correct, it holds out a very real hope that the African States, as they develop, will find the democratic institutions suitable and acceptable. It is to be hoped that these States, having won UHURU, will pursue and hold sacrosanct the rights and freedom of the individual.

Racial Groups in Africa

The problems of the countries to the north of us differ from those in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia in one important facet. The northern countries are in the main Black countries. South Africa and Southern Rhodesia are multi-racial countries. In both these latter countries, there is a substantial White population which is there to stay and which accepts that it has no other home. South Africa belongs to all groups, to the Africans, the Coloured people, the Asians and the White people. They are all part and parcel of the South African population, a multi-racial population — and therefore, multi-racialism has got to be made to work.

The days have already passed when any civilized country will accept that any minority group has the right to dominate the majority by virtue of the colour of its skin. Although prejudice has always been, and always will be, a human failing, it is only in comparatively recent times that colour prejudice has come to the forefront and that its implications have assumed such large proportions.

It is generally accepted by the Governments of Western countries that discrimination on grounds of colour, race or creed is morally indefensible. It is accepted, too, that a man is judged by his own worth and that all men are equal before the law. The official attitude of the governments in most countries is that the State will protect the freedom of the individual and it will endeavour to break down bitterness and hatred caused by prejudice.

This is the background against which we must review the events here in South Africa.

The South African Government is almost alone in the world in its policy of racial discrimination. It rejects multi-racialism; it believes in separate development and the formation of Bantu Homelands in which, eventually the Africans will have a modicum of independence. If this policy were practicable — and the general consensus of informed opinion is that it is not — it might be an attempt at an honest solution. However, all races are so interdependent and so necessary to the industrial economy of the country that it is not now possible to separate the racial groups. Is it not reasonable, then, to believe that in multi-racialism lies our solution?

The South African Economy

The economy of South Africa is basically sound. We have mineral wealth, a sound agriculture, a developed industrial economy and a large labour potential. The economy is capable of great expansion. In fact, the war years and the years immediately following were a period of unprecedented expansion in South Africa.

What are the reasons for the slowing down of the rate of development and why are our overseas markets decreasing?

After Sharpeville and until April last year, there was an outflow of capital so severe that the Government was forced to impose restrictions on capital leaving the country in order to build up the Reserves, which were perilously low, and to stabilize the country's finance.

The Reserves have accumulated and now stand at a high level, the Government has been telling us for months that a boom is just round the corner; but it has never happened. There is a reluctance on the part of foreign investors to invest capital; the restrictions on the selling of shares abroad, the compulsory repatriation of capital, the uncertainty over the political situation, are all factors causing this stagnation. All this adds up to one thing only — the Government's obsession with ideological matters and their determination, in spite of the opposition of the civilized world, to pursue the policy of Apartheid.

The second most important point is the fact that the Government has persistently refused to do anything about developing the considerable potential of the home market. The very low wages of the unskilled worker have resulted in the inability of the non-Whites to buy any but the bare necessities to maintain life. The Apartheid legislation which affects the lives of our non-Whites so adversely therefore to the same degree adversely affects the efficiency of the labour force.

The severe drought in many parts of the country over several years has brought to light the 'national scandal' of malnutrition and starvation among such large numbers of the population.

The differentiation between the wage levels of the skilled and the unskilled worker, resulting in a very high standard of living among the White people and the very low standard of living among the non-Whites, compared with the restrictions and the frustrations imposed on the non-Whites by the Apartheid legislation; the use of fear propaganda, such as the repetitive allusions to the dangers of Communism and liberalism and the appeal for White unity — all are indicative of a 'facist-style' state. A situation such as this can only be maintained by force.

Events of the Year

Let us now turn to the current events of the year. As usual this has been another year of apprehension and anxiety in South Africa.

Provincial by-elections followed the General Election. In the Transvaal, these were in turn followed by a Municipal General Election. Black Sash women, as always, played their full part, working for their own political parties.

The Parliamentary Session this year was crammed with controversial legislation, much of it being a further deprivation of rights of all sections, but in particular of the non-White people.

Dr. Verwoerd announced the Government's policy for the Transkei, the first stage in the carving up of South Africa into so-called independent states.

There was yet a further amendment to the much-amended Group Areas Act; this time the Provincial franchise rights of the Coloured people at the Cape were removed.

Mrs. Suzman failed in her Bill to repeal the portions of the Immorality Act which govern interracial sex relations. We congratulate Mrs. Suzman for her courageous speech.

The announcement of the Orange River Scheme — admirable in itself — had the desired effect of diverting public attention away from the disturbing facets of Apartheid legislation.

Then came the famous speech of the Minister of Defence. He appealed to the Whites to climb into the White laager and to fight until 'the blood rose to the horses' bits to defend South Africa' against an enemy which, he said, 'was advocating and secretly planning' an attack on our shores.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the United Nations Committee on Colonialism visited South Africa and South West Africa in April and May. It is regrettable that the Chairman, with his statements, denials and accusations, has not only made a laughing stock of his Committee, but has left South Africa with the misgivings that the mission did not come with the intention of making an impartial and objective investigation.

The General Law Amendment Bill, the most controversial Bill in a controversial session, was passed in spite of wide-spread criticism from the Legal Profession, the political parties, the Black Sash and many other organizations and individuals. Its provisions are a denial of the rule of

law, they provide further restrictions on individual freedom and on the freedom of the Press, and the penalties for conviction under this law are harsh in the extreme.

We have already felt its effects on the freedom of speech. The ban on the publication of statements made by banned persons without the permission of the Minister and the deposits required before a new publication is contemplated are forcing not only the Press but printers to be particularly cautious.

We ourselves have had difficulty in finding a printer willing to print the Black Sash magazine. Our Editor had many a sleepless night in her endeavour to get a firm to undertake this job. We are happy to say that she was successful.

The end of the Parliamentary session left not only the members of Parliament exhausted, but the public bewildered, frustrated, nervous and, if I may use a hackneyed phrase, 'punch-drunk'.

There has been a definite move to the Right by the White electorate during the last year, and a hardening of White opinion against more liberal thinking.

The disturbances in the Congo, in Southern Rhodesia, in Kenya, in Ghana and in other parts of Africa have all had an influence on public opinion here. The fact that these disturbances were dissimilar in all the countries and had no bearing on our situation here has not been appreciated. It is assumed that these disturbances result from giving the Black man political rights, when the Black man is not civilized enough to be able to exercise power responsibly, and it is felt that it must be a lesson to South Africa to keep "die Kaffer op sy plek" for the foreseeable future.

The Work of the Black Sash

In the context of the African scene as a whole and of the Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary activities in South Africa, the Black Sash finds itself working for justice and for no discrimination on grounds of race, colour or creed. We are working to see that the inevitable change will come about as peacefully as possible.

On the one hand we have both a Government whose beliefs are the antithesis of the beliefs we hold, and an apathetic and privileged electorate reluctant to accept change; on the other hand, the majority of the population, frustrated, harassed and poor, unable to protest against the unjust laws which govern their lives.

Our activities have included a petition addressed to the Prime Minister and members of his Cabinet against the misuse of the S.A.B.C. Twenty-five thousand signatures were obtained from listeners who considered that the S.A.B.C., a public utility, was being used to propagate the views and opinions of one section of the White population.

The Prime Minister acknowledged the petition in a reply sent through his private secretary which stated "that the Government, as you should readily understand, have no confidence in your organization. It cannot, therefore, be impressed by any petition sponsored or instigated by it."

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South Africa and Events in Africa (Cont.)

It is a sorry state of affairs when a government is not prepared to listen to a minority view point if those opinions are contrary to the opinions held by the ruling party. This is totalitarianism and it is contrary to the principles of democracy to which this Government professes its adherence.

Many demonstrations have been held on different issues, the most important being the determined stand against the General Law Amendment Bill.

In Johannesburg this demonstration was a revelation. For the first time we realized that the police, with notable exceptions, were not prepared to be impartial or to protect all persons against assault and obscene language, as is the duty of a police force. In Parliament, the silence of the Minister of Justice on the hooliganism on the City Hall steps of Johannesburg, led us to conclude that if this behaviour did not have his approval, at least it had his acquiescence. Our attackers, those hooligans who kept up a constant barrage of eggs, fish and vegetables, who spat in the flame and who threw lighted cigarette-ends in our hair, were uncomfortably reminiscent of Hitler's S.A., that body of young thugs who were used to break up political meetings and strike terror into the hearts of the public.

We were deeply touched and deeply moved by the numbers of women who came to stand with us. Not only did all our old members join us, but very many women, whom we had never seen, came to do their turn round the Flame of Freedom. I was proud when I arrived at the City Hall on several occasions, to find women not only enduring the indignity of obscene missiles thrown at them, but their mien unflinching and their faces impassive. Their dignity and bearing won the respect and the sympathy of the general public.

Another great surprise to us was the effect that the symbol of the Flame had on the general public. It came to mean something to every freedom-loving person. On one occasion a man brought his children to look at the Flame. He said to them: "Look at this and remember it, for this is History."

The routine work of the Black Sash has continued throughout the year, various activities being carried out by different Regions. It is invidious to single out any one Region, but our admiration and congratulations go to Cape Western for the remarkable work being done by their Athlone Advice Office. I hope you have all read the article in *Forum*, "Endorsed Out" by Mrs. Noel Robb. It has made a tremendous impact on a large number of people whom for years we have been hoping to influence. The introductory remarks to the article referred to the Black Sash as "South Africa's conscience and mission of mercy". It is praise indeed to be recognized as South Africa's conscience — a conscience combined with compassion.

Moral Principle

The great strength of the Black Sash is that it took its stand on moral principle. It has always spoken up, without fear or favour, to uphold the ideals in which it believes.

AIMS AND OBJECTS OF THE BLACK SASH

THE BLACK SASH is non-party political and undenominational, and, by non-violent and peaceful means, strives for the following objectives:—

1. To conduct propaganda and enlist support and aid for the observance of political morality and the principles of parliamentary democracy within the Republic of South Africa.
2. To secure the recognition and the protection by law of Human Rights and Liberties.
3. The political education and enlightenment of citizens of South Africa, and other persons.
4. The doing of all such things and the carrying out of all such activities as may further the objects of the organization.

The values which are our standard, date back to A.D.1215, to Magna Carta. Chapter XXXIX states: "No freeman shall be arrested, or detained in prison, or deprived of his freehold, or outlawed, or banished or in any way molested; and we will not set forth against him, nor send against him, unless by the lawful judgment of his peers and by the law of the land." This is what we understand by the rule of law, this is our traditional way of life.

We value truth, honesty, justice, freedom of speech, of association, of worship, of movement; freedom from want and freedom from fear. These are the values which civilized people believe to constitute liberalism. We are not interested in doubletalk or double meanings. Our values mean what they were intended to mean. We make no apology for being liberally-minded nor do we intend to keep silent.

What is the White civilization we are asked to preserve? In 1931 Jan Hofmeyr said that he feared in the effort to preserve White civilization, we would sacrifice the ideals of Western civilization.

Has this country not already sacrificed those ideals? What of the rule of law? What has happened to individual freedom? Where is the freedom of the press? Where is justice? Is this White civilization?

Our survival is of no account if our ideals, our values and our principles perish.

We have a just cause, we shall defend it and we shall go on working, as we said nearly eight years ago, day in and day out, for the things in which we believe.

The Black Sash will not be intimidated by threats, nor will it be diverted from its objective. We are dedicated to the service of our country. We can "bear to hear the truth we've spoken, twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools". (Kipling)

We shall keep the Flame of Freedom burning in our land and in the end, we shall succeed.