THE BLACK SASH

DIE SWART SERP

Privileged People

A SOUTH AFRICAN now living in Canada, who had been closely involved in political and social work here, wrote to a *friend about his life in his new country.* He was comfortably settled in Canada, he said; he liked the people and was enjoying the experience of living in a stable and progressive democracy. Yet something was missing: he felt the lack of no longer being engaged in the pursuit of an ideal.

Many who read this article may well feel that they would happily change places with our Canadian friend, that the privilege of being engaged in the present grim struggle is something they could easily do without. Yet the comment from Canada contains a great truth, *of which we should remind ourselves in these* days. It *is* a privilege to be a South African — white, brown or black — who is fighting in some constructive and positive manner to replace the present order with a new way of life expressing the values of Western civilization.

To appreciate the extent of the privilege one must understand the nature of the struggle. It can be stated simply. The struggle arises from the contention that people of different

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You cannot climb a ladder by pushing others down. *English proverb.*

Bevoorregte Mense

'N SUID-AFRIKANER wat tans in Kanada woon en intiem met politieke en maatskaplike werk in ons land betrokke *was, het aan 'n vriend geskryf oor die lewens*wyse in sy nuwe vaderland. Hy was reeds goed gevestig in Kanada, het hy gesê; hy het van die mense gehou en het die ondervinding geniet om in 'n stabiele en vooruitstrewende demokrasie te woon. Maar tog het daar iets ontbreek: hy was sterk daarvan bewus dat hy nie meer besig was om na 'n ideaal te strewe nie.

Baie wat hierdie artikel lees sal heel moontlik voel dat hulle graag met ons Kanadese vriend sou omruil, dat die voorreg om in die huidige onverbiddelike stryd betrokke te wees nou waarlik iets is waarsonder hulle maklik kon klaarkom. Tog steek daar 'n groot waarheid in die verklaring uit Kanada; en in hierdie tyd kan ons dit gerus voor oë hou. Dit *is* 'n voorreg om 'n Suid-Afrikaner te wees — wit, bruin of swart — wat in een of ander opbouende en positiewe manier die stryd voer om die huidige orde te vervang met 'n nuwe lewenswyse wat aan die waardes van die Westerse beskawing uiting gee.

Om die mate van die voorreg te besef moet *'n mens die aard van die stryd verstaan. Dit* kan heeltemal eenvoudig gestel word. Die stryd ontstaan uit die aanvoering dat mense van verskillende rasse, kultuur en agtergrond nie in één samelewing vreedsaam kan saamlewe

races, cultures and background cannot live peaceably together in one society. It has been referred to as the doctrine of irreconcilability of interests. This doctrine is held by many more white people than the number that vote Nationalist. It is also, like a disease, infecting non-white people. This doctrine we in the Black Sash reject.

Like most doctrines, it is almost impossible to refute by logical argument. If a man says that it is impossible for him to live in amity with his neighbour, because he does not like his neighbour and he is sure that his neighbour will harm him as soon as he gets a chance, one can only say that, for oneself, one refuses to allow one's life to be governed by such a proposition. Basically, it is a matter of ethical judgment, and ethical judgments stand beyond argument.

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Nevertheless, the views one holds have practical consequences, and one can see the practical consequences of apartheid philosophy. We deem these consequences to be evil. As the effects of one legislative enactment after another have become apparent we have tried to point them out and to protest against them. We have seen people removed from their homes, restricted in their employment opportunities, denied entry to the established universities, banished to distant parts, confined in their movements, prohibited from engaging in political activity, relegated to inferior social status. Every year the State's control over the lives of the citizens has become tighter. And now we have reached the stage where anyone who is considered to be "dangerous" may be locked up without trial.

These evil consequences of the ruling political philosophy cannot be condoned on the ground that they are temporary. Oppressive laws can never remove opposition to oppres-

nie. Hierdie leerstelling word deur meer mense aanvaar as dié wat vir die Nasionale Party stem. Dit is ook besig om soos 'n siekte onder die nie-Blankes te versprei. Ons in die Swart Serp verwerp hierdie leerstelling.

Soos met die meeste leerstellings, is dit amper onmoontlik om dié een deur logiese redenering te weerlê. As 'n man verklaar dat dit vir hom onmoontlik is om in vriendskap met sy buurman te woon, omdat hy nie van sy buurman hou nie en hy seker is dat sy buurman vir hom kwaad sal aandoen sodra hy die kans kry, kan 'n mens alleenlik antwoord dat sover dit jou persoonlik aangaan, jy beslis nie sal toelaat dat jou eie lewe deur so 'n stelling beheer word nie. Fundamenteel is dit 'n saak van etiese oordeel, en etiese oordeel is iets wat bo redenering staan.

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Nogtans het 'n mens se sienswyse praktiese gevolge, en 'n mens kan die praktiese gevolge van die apartheidsfilosofie sien. Ons beskou dat hierdie gevolge boos is. Soos die gevolge van een wet na die ander duidelik geword het, het ons probeer om aandag daarop te vestig en om daarteen te protesteer. Ons het gesien hoe mense uit hul huise weggeneem word, in hul werkgeleenthede ingekort word, toegang tot die gevestigde universiteite geweier word, na afgeleë plekke verban word, in hul bewegings ingekort word, verbied word om aan politieke bedrywighede deel te neem en tot 'n ondergeskikte sosiale status verdoem word. Elke jaar het die Staat se beheer oor die lewe van die burgers strenger geword. En nou het ons die stadium bereik waar almal wat as

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sion. As the laws are multiplied so does the opposition become more bitter and more determined. "I know of only two ways in which people may be governed," someone once said; "one is by their consent and the other is by the sword." The terrible alternative to government by consent is now facing the Nationalist government. Yet in the long run there is no alternative to government by consent.

It is no privilege to be in opposition to a regime that must inevitably fail. The privilege lies in having the opportunity to work for its peaceful failure, and to do one's best to ensure that the evil will be succeeded by good. It is accordingly one's prime duty to bear witness to the good. This, in the South African context, means that one must assert, by deed as well as by word, that apartheid is a crime against humanity; that man can, indeed, live peaceably with man; that what we have in common — whether we be black, brown or white — is of a transcending order of importance compared with the accidents of race and cultural background. We are called upon in South Africa to put into practice, and thereby to prove the practicability of, the doctrine of human brotherhood that philosophers and religious teachers have taught throughout the ages.

This is the thought that leads our friend in Canada, and others in different parts of the world, to look at us here in South Africa, fearful and depressed though many of us are, with something akin to envy.

This magazine, as the official journal of the Black Sash, carries authoritative articles on the activities of the Sash. The leading article adheres broadly to the policies of the organization which does not, however, necessarily endorse the views expressed by contributors.

„gevaarlik" beskou word sonder verhoor opgesluit kan word.

Hierdie bose gevolge van die heersende politieke opvatting kan nie verskoon word op grond daarvan dat hulle tydelik is nie. Onderdrukkende wette kan nooit weerstand teen onderdrukking uit die weg ruim nie. Soos die wette vermeerder, so word ook die teenstand meer bitter en vasbeslote. „Ek weet van net twee maniere waarop mense regeer kan word," het iemand eenmaal gesê; „één is met hul instemming en die ander is met die swaard." Die Nasionaliste-regering staan nou voor die ontstellende alternatief tot regering met instemming. Tog is daar op die lange duur geen alternatief tot regering met instemming nie.

Dit is geen voorreg om teen 'n bewind gekant te wees wat sonder twyfel sal misluk nie. Die voorreg bestaan daarin om vir die vreedsame ondergang van dié bewind te kan werk, en om alles te doen wat ons kan om seker te maak dat die bose deur iets goeds opgevolg sal word. Dit is dus 'n mens se eerste plig om van die goeie te getuig. In die Suid-Afrikaanse verband beteken dit dat 'n mens deur daad en woord moet verklaar dat apartheid 'n misdaad teen die mensdom is; dat die mens wel in vrede met ander mense kan saamlewe; dat wat ons in gemeen het — of ons nou swart of bruin of wit is — ver, ver belangriker is as die toeval van ras en kulturele agtergrond. Daar word 'n beroep op ons in Suid-Afrika gedoen om praktiese gevolg te gee aan die leerstelling van menslike broederskap wat filosowe en godsdienstige leraars deur die eeue verkondig het — en om sodoende te bewys dat hierdie leerstelling wel in die praktyk toegepas kan word.

Dit is die gedagte wat ons vriend in Kanada, asook ander mense in ander lande, na ons hier in Suid-Afrika laat kyk — hoewel baie van ons besorge en neerslagtig mag wees — met iets wat amper op benyding neerkom.