

BANTU EDUCATION GOES TO UNIVERSITY

— by NELSON MANDELA

The Nationalist Government have frequently denied that they are a fascist Government inspired by the theories of the National-Socialist Party of Hitlerite Germany. Yet the declaration they make, the laws they pass and the entire policy they pursue clearly confirm this point. It is interesting to compare the colonial policy of the Hitlerite Government as outlined by the leading German theoretician on the subject Dr. Gunther Hecht, who was regarded as an expert on colonial racial problems in the office of the German National-Socialist Party, published a pamphlet in 1938 entitled "The Colonial Question and Racial Thought" in which he outlined the racial principles which were to govern the future treatment of Africans in German Colonies.

He declared that the German Government would not preach equality between Africans and Europeans. Africans would under no circumstances be allowed to leave German Colonies for Europe. No African would be allowed to become a German citizen. African schools would not be permitted to preach any "European matter" as that would foster a belief amongst them that Europe was the very peak of cultural development and they would thus lose faith in their own culture and background. Local culture would be fostered. Higher schools and universities would be closed to them. Special theatres, cinemas and other places of amusement and recreation would be erected for them. Hecht concluded the pamphlet by pointing out that the programme of the German Government would stand in sharp contrast to the levelling and anti-racial teachings of equality of the Western Colonial powers.

In this country the Government preaches the policy of baasskap which is based upon the supremacy in all matters of the whites over the non-whites. Under this policy fundamental human rights are denied to the non-whites. They are subjected to extremely stringent regulations both in regard to their movement within the country as well as in regard to overseas travel lest they should come into contact with ideas that are in conflict with the herrenvolk policies of the Government. Through the Bantu Authorities Act and similar measures the African people are being broken up into small tribal units, isolated one from the other, in order to prevent the rise and development of national consciousness amongst them and to foster a narrow and insulated tribal outlook.

During the Parliamentary debate on the second reading of the Bantu Education Bill in September, 1953, the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. H. F. Verwoerd, who studied in German Universities, outlined the educational policy of his Government. He declared that racial relations could not improve if the wrong type of education was given to Africans. They could not improve if the result of African education was the creation of a frustrated people who, as a result of the education they received, had expectations in life which circumstances in South Africa did not allow to be fulfilled; when it created people who were trained for professions not open to them; when there were people amongst them who had received a form of cultural training which strengthened their desire for white-collar occupations. Above all, good racial relations could not exist when the education was given under the control of people who believed in racial equality. It was, therefore, necessary, that African Education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accord with the policy of the State. The Minister concluded by declaring that if his department controlled African Education it would know for which type of higher profession the African could be trained, where he would be able to make a living with his knowledge.

The Bantu Education Bill has now become law and it embodies all the obnoxious doctrines enunciated by the Minister in the parliamentary debate referred to above. An inferior type of education, known as Bantu Education, and designed to relegate Africans to a position of perpetual servitude in a baasskap society, is now in force in almost all African primary schools throughout the country and will be introduced in all secondary and high schools as from next year. The Separate University Education Bill, now before Parliament, is a step to extend Bantu Education to the field of higher education.

In terms of this Bill the Minister is empowered to establish, maintain and conduct University Colleges for non-whites. The students to be admitted to the University Colleges must be approved by the Minister. As from the 1st January, 1958, no non-white students who were not previously registered shall be admitted to a European University without the consent of the Minister. In its original form the Bill provided for the transfer of the control and management of the University College of Fort Hare and of the Medical School for Africans at Wentworth to the Government and all employees in these institutions would become Government employees. Though this provision has now been dropped, for technical reasons, for the time being, it will no doubt be introduced later.

By notice in the Gazette the Minister can vest the control of Fort Hare in the Native Affairs Department. The Government is empowered to change the name of the college. For example, he can call it the HENDRIK FRENCH VERWOERD University College for Bantu persons. The Minister is entitled to dismiss any member of the staff for misconduct which includes public adverse comment upon the administration of any department of the Government or Province and propagating ideas or taking part in or identifying himself with any propaganda or activities calculated to impede, obstruct or undermine the activities of any Government Department.

As soon as the Bill becomes an Act of Parliament no mixed university in the country will be permitted to enrol new non-European students any more. The mixed English universities of Cape Town, Witwatersrand and

Rhodes will thus be compelled to fall in line with the Afrikaans universities of Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Stellenbosch and the Orange Free State whose doors are closed to non-Europeans.

As far as Africans are concerned the main purpose of the Bill is to extend the principle of Bantu Education to the field of higher education. Non-Europeans who are trained at mixed universities are a menace to the racial policies of the Government. The friendship and interracial harmony that is forged through the admixture and association of various racial groups at the mixed universities constitute a direct threat to the entire policy of apartheid and baasskap and the Bill has been enacted to remove this threat. The type of universities the Bill envisages will be nothing more than tribal colleges, controlled by party politicians and based upon the doctrine of the perpetual supremacy of the whites over the blacks, such colleges will be used by the Government to enforce its political ideology at university level.

They will bear no resemblance whatsoever, to modern universities. Not free enquiry but indoctrination is their purpose, and the education they will give will not be directed towards the unleashing of the creative potentialities of the people but towards preparing them for perpetual mental and spiritual servitude to the whites. They will be permitted to teach only that which strictly conforms to the racial policies of the Nationalist Government. Degrees and diplomas obtained at these colleges will be held in contempt and ridicule throughout the country and abroad and will probably not be recognised outside South Africa.

The decision of the Government to introduce university segregation is prompted not merely by the desire to separate non-European from European Students. Its implications go much further than this for the Bill is a move to destroy the "open" university tradition which is universally recognised throughout the civilised world and which has up till now been consistently practised by leading universities in the country for years. For centuries universities have served as centres for the dissemination of learning and knowledge to all students irrespective of their colour or creed. In multi-racial societies they serve as centres for the development of the cultural and spiritual aspects of the life of the people. Once the Bill is passed our Universities can no longer serve as centres for the development of the cultural and spiritual aspects of the entire nation.

The Bill has aroused extensive popular indignation, and opposition throughout the country as well as abroad. Students and lecturers, liberals and conservatives, progressives, democrats, public men and women of all races and with varying political affiliations have been stirred into action. A former Chief Justice of the Union, Mr. Van der Sandt Centlivres, in a speech delivered at a lunch meeting of the University Club in Cape Town on the 11th February this year and reported in the Rand Daily Mail of the 12th of the same month, said:

"I am not aware of any university of real standing in the outside world which closes its doors to students on the ground of the colour of their skins. The great universities of the world welcome students from other countries whatever the colour of their skins. They realise that the different outlook which these students bring with them advances the field of knowledge in human relations in the international sphere and contributes to their own culture."

The attack on University freedom is a matter of vital importance and constitutes a grave challenge to all South Africans. It is perhaps because they fully appreciate this essential fact that more and more people are participating in the campaign against the introduction of academic segregation in the universities. Students in different parts of the country are staging mammoth demonstrations and protest meetings. Heads of universities, lecturers, men and women of all shades of opinion, have in speeches and articles violently denounced the action of the Government. All this reveals that there are many men and women in this country who are prepared to rally to the defence of traditional rights whenever they are threatened.

But we cannot for one moment forget that we are up against a fascist Government which has built up a massive coercive state apparatus to crush democracy in this country and to silence the voice of all those who cry out against the policy of apartheid and baasskap. All opposition to the Nationalist Government is being ruthlessly suppressed through the Suppression of Communism Act and similar measures. The Government, in defiance of the people's wishes, is deporting people's leaders from town and country in the most merciless and shameful manner. All rights are being systematically attacked. The right to organise, to assembly and to agitate has been severely fettered. Trade Unions and other organisations are being smashed up. Even the sacred right of freedom of religious worship, which has been observed and respected by governments down the centuries, is now being tampered with. And now the freedom of our universities is seriously threatened. Racial persecution of the non-whites is being intensified every day. The rule of force and violence, of terror and coercion, has become the order of the day.

Fascism has become a living reality in our country and its defeat has become the principal task of the entire people of South Africa. But the fight against the fascist policies of the Government cannot be conducted on the basis of isolated struggles. It can only be conducted on the basis of the united fight of the entire people of South Africa against all attacks of the Nationalists on traditional rights whether these attacks are launched through parliament and other state organs or whether through extra-parliamentary forms. The more powerful the resistance of the people the less becomes the advance of the Nationalists. Hence the importance of a united front. The people must fight stubbornly and tenaciously and defend every democratic right that is being attacked or tampered with by the Nationalists.

A broad united front of all the genuine opponents of the racial policies of the Government must be developed. This is the path the people should follow to check and repel the advance of fascism in this country and to pave the way for a peaceful and democratic South Africa.