

ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

Peter Randall

The announcement that the World Council of Churches has decided to give money to guerilla groups in Southern Africa will force Christians in this country to examine their own positions, motives and strategies. The apparently simple question whether one supports or condemns the WCC's move involves a complex of convictions, hopes and fears. In fact it is not a simple question at all, and hasty or panic reactions are quite unhelpful.

LAW AND ORDER - THE NUB

The immediate reactions of local Church leaders, as quoted in the press, seem to fall into this category. The Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg is reported as saying that it is intolerable for support to be given in the name of Christianity to subversive movements which stand for violent attacks on law and order'. This begs the most important questions: what is law and order - the present position in South Africa? Is the maintenance of 'law and order' in our country by such violent means as arbitrary detentions, the break-up of African family life, and the whole vast machinery of discrimination and oppression tolerable to the Christian conscience? Since local efforts, including those of the Churches, to bring about meaningful change have been ineffectual, it is at least understandable that the WCC should look for more extreme methods. This is not necessarily

to condone the methods they have chosen.

CLOCKWORK PREDICTABILITY

The totally predictable response of the Actuary of the N.G. Kerk, that the WCC took its decision because it 'is biased in favour of Communism', merely shows the dangerous effects of isolation from the mainstream of Christian thinking. The amazement and incredulity of the 'Archdeacon of the Cape' is similar evidence of an even less forgivable lack of understanding of what has been happening in the Christian Church outside the Republic. No one who has been aware of this can be particularly surprised by the WCC's decision.

It looks as though we are heading for a polarisation among South African Christians, which may unfortunately largely follow racial lines, between those who support and those who condemn the WCC for its decision. There will undoubtedly be a great deal of theological argument in the coming months to justify standpoints one way or other.

DISASSOCIATION - GREATER ISOLATION

There are at the same time a number of mundane and practical aspects of the matter which should not be lost sight of in what will probably be an emotion-laden debate. Undoubtedly there will be a stronger movement for all the Churches in South Africa to pull out of the World Council. If this succeeds it will only worsen the position within the country,

making us, in our greater isolation, all the more impervious to desperately-needed change.

Some of the more mundane considerations can be expressed in the form of pertinent questions which one would like the WCC to clarify:

The amounts of money granted to the liberation groups such as the ANC and SWAPO (between R14,280 and R17,850) are hardly sufficient to do more than give some moral encouragement to them. In the face of the economic and military might of the South African government, which these groups are openly working to overthrow, and which thus will take every step to protect itself, the sums of money are pitifully inadequate to bring about change in the Republic.

AID AN INEFFECTUAL GESTURE?

So do we have here yet another futile and ineffectual gesture which the gentlemen of Geneva have made from the safety of their committee rooms to appease their own consciences or to appease the world's desire for radical change in Southern Africa?

Is the WCC in fact guilty of the crime, the old man's crime, of encouraging young men to go to war and lose their lives, while they sit comfortably behind the lines? Few will be naive enough to believe the pious assurance that the money given to the liberation movements will be used for 'non-military' purposes. The liberation movements are essentially military in nature and whatever

resources they command will ultimately be used for military purposes. Or is the WCC trying to persuade White South African Christians of the seriousness with which they view apartheid? If so, then their chosen method indicates a misunderstanding of the psychology of White South Africans, most of whom will merely be strengthened in their prejudices and determination not to change. It would also be merely a repetition of previous ineffectual moral gestures, with the possible distinction this time of causing a few deaths.

AFTER VIOLENCE - WHAT?

Giving support to Frelimo, the ANC etc., implies that the WCC would like to see these organisations succeed in their aim of taking over control of the White-led countries of Southern Africa. Have the members of the responsible committee of the WCC given thought to the kind of society that they would like to see emerging in this region, or have they, again, merely made a gesture, hoping that after the take-over everything will turn out well? The aftermath of a bitter guerilla war in Southern Africa does not augur well. Are the WCC leaders satisfied that they have exhausted every other possible approach before giving tacit approval to violence?

These are some of the questions that arise in the mind of at least one White South African who is probably as passionately eager for change in his country as the members of the WCC executive committee. It is possible, of course, that the latter gave full consideration to these matters when they made their decision which has so many implications for Christianity in South Africa and the world at large. *Christians in this country* will be hoping that the committee will share fully with us their thinking and motivation. Even those whom the WCC would, by implication, like to see killed, have a call on the compassion of their fellow Christians. Or have White South African Christians finally been written off as beyond redemption?

A SOCIAL WORKER NEEDED

Woman Social Worker required to assist part-time in a Community Development Project among the women of the African Independent Churches. A recognised qualification will be a recommendation, although not essential.

Phone: Mrs. te Siepe - between 8.30 and 9.00 a.m.
724-0346.

ENDORSED OUT - TO IRELAND

David Shanahan

At the end of July 1970, Father David Shanahan received a letter from the Secretary of the Interior, dated July 24, 1970, informing him that his exemption from having to get a permit to remain in South Africa had been withdrawn and that a temporary permit had been granted allowing him to stay until August 31st 1970. He was further informed that the privileges usually accorded to citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies had been withdrawn in his case and that if he ever wished to visit South Africa he would have to apply for a visa, which he was advised to do well in advance. No reasons were given for this action either in the official letter or in subsequent interviews which Father Shanahan had with various officials.

On August 28th, five days before

the expiry date of his permit, Father Shanahan was told by his Religious Superior to be ready to leave that evening. This he did.

Father Shanahan had been in South Africa for only one year, after having spent six months studying in Sesotho in Lesotho. He was first stationed in Sharpeville and moved to Evaton Township, near Vereeniging, in January, 1970.

At the airport Father Shanahan insisted that he had not been involved in any political activity and did not understand why he had been refused permission to stay. The only reason that he could think of was that he had "preached against unjust laws, in particular the migratory labour system".