

CHRISTIAN NATIONAL EDUCATION

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Christelik-Nasionale Onderwys (Christian National Education—C.N.E.), as expounded in the *Beleid* of the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kulturele Vereniginge* (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies), in February 1948, aims at establishing the Nationalists in power forever by indoctrinating all children in Nationalist ideology from the nursery school right through beyond the university or technical college.

Nationalists have always been ambivalent towards this *Beleid*. On the one hand, they have always, except for a small band at the University of Potchefstroom, been deeply ashamed of it; and even of that band, Professor Chris Coetzee, Rector of the University, once denied at Mafeking that Article 1 of the policy pamphlet means what it clearly does mean—that all “Afrikaans-speaking children must be educated according to the Christian-Nationalist view of life” (Article 1). Professor Coetzee himself had made this explicit in an article in ‘*Common-Sense*’, 1941. “Practically all Afrikaans children belong to one of the three Dutch Reformed Churches with the same confession”, he wrote; “thus for us only one type of school: Afrikaans medium, Dutch Reformed confession”. Yet at Mafeking he hedged: “We only mean our policy for those who agree with us”. He later supported the notorious Transvaal Language Ordinance, which compels all children whose Afrikaans in an official test seems only a trifle better than their English to go to the Afrikaans medium schools, no matter what their parents wish. And Dr. Jansen, even before he was made Governor-General, and Dr. Dönges, present Minister of Finance, who by rights belong to the small select band since their names appear on the *Beleid* title-page as directors of the *Instituut Vir Christelik-Nasionale Onderwys* (I.C.N.O.), have always been oddly silent about it; even when the *Beleid* came up for heated discussion in Parliament early in 1949, they uttered not a word in its defence. Nor have they since.

On the one side of this ambivalence, then, is shame; on the other, a determination to carry through the same disgraceful policy that they dare not even acknowledge. I am sure Dr. McConkey (ex-Director of Education in Natal) is on firm ground when he says that the majority of Afrikaners do not want

C.N.E., as a poll would soon discover. (And the 1948 *Beleid*, he tells us, is a pale shadow of the one issued in 1944, which even the Nationalists found too "hot to hold"). Nevertheless, the Nationalists leaders are determined that the nation shall have it, even in the rebellious Province of Natal.

This is perfectly plain, in spite of the appeasing sops that are being hopefully thrown out from time to time. "It is only the policy that shall be the Government's", says '*Die Nataller*'; "The carrying out shall be in the hands of the Province." "Thank you for nothing", say we, "it's the policy we object to—our spoons are not long enough for us to sup with *that* devil, and not be burned to ashes". "All we want is compulsory mother-tongue education", says the Nationalist Press. "Why compulsory?", say we. "So that one language-group shall not indoctrinate another language-group through the medium of education", says the editor of '*Die Nataller*', (4th Sept., 1959). But Dr. Albert Herzog, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, firmly puts the boot on the right foot for him. "Mother-tongue education", says he at a Nationalist congress (as reported in the '*Natal Daily News*,' 19th Sept., 1959), "is the foundation of Nationalism. So long as there is mother-tongue education, so long will there be Nationalism".

So there we have the cat, or rather the child-eating tiger, right out of the bag. Dr Herzog's words might have come out of the *Beleid* itself, whose foreword says:—"Our Afrikaans schools must not be merely mother-tongue schools, they must be places where our children will be saturated with the Christian and National spiritual-cultural stuff of our nation." The more skilful defenders of C.N.E. very wisely concentrate on the early history of the movement.

The original C.N.E. schools, just after the Boer War, aimed to counteract Lord Milner's policy of anglicising the conquered republics. In my opinion, it was properly self-respecting to oppose Lord Milner's attempt. Since then, the character of C.N.E. and of Nationalism have both radically changed, for it is a very long time since there was any attempt in this country to anglicise anyone against his will. Afrikaans has been one of the official languages for more than thirty years. For almost as long, no white child has been denied instruction through his mother-tongue in our parallel or single-medium schools, unless he belonged to the minority in a town where the minority members did not warrant the expense of double classes, and his

parents could not afford to send him elsewhere. Such children could be given bursaries to cover boarding costs.

But that is too practical and too real a solution for the Nationalist leaders. Nationalist leaders don't really care about the mother-tongue. They care about power. They don't really care about Afrikaners. To them, an Afrikaner is not an Afrikaner by reason of the fact that he IS one. Facts, truths, don't count. By an Afrikaner they mean, in their secret hearts, "someone who agrees with *me* about everything, and will do exactly what *I* want". They tell Uys Krige, for example, that he is not an Afrikaner—though he is entirely Afrikaans, and actually descended from two of the most famous of the Voortrekkers; though he spoke only Afrikaans and not a word of English until he was ten; though he has done more for the Afrikaans language than anyone else in its history, for he writes it with sparkle, raciness, vigour and flexibility, and has added richly to its hoard of words and phrases from conversations among the gifted few and the many Cape Coloured workmen in pubs; though his patriotism is truer, finer and stronger than that of any Nationalist I know. And why is he not, for the Nationalists, an Afrikaner? Only because he doesn't agree with their political leaders! Because he won't do exactly what they want! Meanwhile the opinions and sentiments of the Afrikaners are being assiduously, indefatigably formed by such men as 'A', the assistant editor of a Nationalist weekly, who boasts that he has not a drop of Afrikaans blood in his body, and when asked if he calls himself a South African (his family having lived here for three generations), replies: "No, I am a German". 'A', at a symposium on C.N.E., had only one reiterated reply to all the facts we tried to make him answer: "Everything you say stems from Afrikaner-hatred". The sheer absurdity of this raised roars of laughter from the audience. Afrikaner-hatred? Verwoerd-hatred, if you like, or rather hatred of Verwoerdism. But that, thank God, is not, even in these bleak days, the same as Afrikaner-hatred. I think I may say, and the thousands of Afrikaners scattered throughout the country whom I have taught will agree with me, that I truly love Afrikaners, with their spontaneous warmth and naturalness, but hate the ideology to which the majority of them have become more and more enslaved. Largely under the influence of pre-war Nazi propaganda, Nationalism has totally changed its character in the last twenty-five years, and is supported by intelligent Nationalists

only because they are bred to regard disloyalty to party as somehow cowardly and shameful. My deepest reason for hating C.N.E. is that it has aimed at making the Afrikaans people inferior; and unless they can break through the irrational, inherited party loyalty that binds them to the leaders who are doing this to them, the Afrikaans people will, in less than another generation, *be inferior*.

The nationalism of any people originates in proper pride. That pride can develop in two ways. It can, as Van der Post says, proliferate like a cancer cell, killing all other good feelings, as in the case of 'B', a Nationalist acquaintance of mine, a most gifted and once charming man, who has allowed his talents and character to be corroded because his proper national pride was deeply wounded at school. This rankling sore has attracted him morbidly to those who can be counted on to keep it festering, the Nationalist leaders; and stage by stage, as the extremists of the party have, so he has abandoned his sense of truth, his sense of justice and his common-sense. Or it can develop healthily into confidence and a sense of proportion, as in the case of 'C', a pure-Afrikaans connection of mine, a very proud man belonging to an old Free State farming family. 'C's' wife had an English-speaking woman and her two sons staying on the farm as paying guests during the war. These children had evidently been indoctrinating 'C's' own little son of about five, for one day he came to his father in passionate distress, wailing:- "Daddy, is it *true* that you're an Afrikaner?" "Yes my boy, it's true", confessed the father. "Oh Daddy, try, please *try* not to be!" And what did 'C' do? Did he preach a patriotic sermon? Did he resolve that the boy should never again mix with English-speaking children? Chuckling to himself, he said comfortingly, "All right my boy, I'll try". Which of these two men, 'B' or 'C', do you think has the pro-founder pride? (I may say that 'C's' son has grown up with his full share of it.)

About four-fifths of the Afrikaners in this country are Nationalists. But Dr. McConkey is right when he says that most Afrikaners (and that includes the greater part even of the Nationalist majority) do not want C.N.E. This is not surprising, considering that this Christian-National Education is neither Christian, nor National, nor Education.

"Christian" is actually defined by the *Beleid* as adhering to "the creeds of the three Dutch Reformed Churches" (Article 1).

It also means Fundamentalist, anti-Evolutionist (Article 2); and it must never be forgotten that this and only this is what the *Beleid* means by "Christian". "National" means "embued with the love of one's own" (Article 1). "Education" means pouring into a set mould: "vorming" is the word constantly used by the *Beleid*, which reiterates that "any teacher who is not a convinced Christian-Nationalist is a deadly danger to us" (Article 9, I); that in no class may anti-Christian or non-Christian or anti-Nationalist or non-Nationalist propaganda be made" (Article 6, I); in fact, the teacher may not even be neutral towards the "confessions" (*beleidskrifte*) of the three Dutch Reformed Churches, towards Fundamentalism, or towards Nationalism. He must propagate them. The lessons in mother-tongue, Civics, Geography and History are all to teach the child the Christian-Nationalist way of life (Article 6, III, IV, V and VI). Lest he should deviate, the Church is to exercise discipline over the *life* and *doctrine* of the teacher (Article 8, IV); and this must be done through the parents (Article 8, IV), who, no doubt with the aid of their children, will act as spies—for how else can they inform themselves? And I warn those members of the Anglican Church who think that they can save their children by asking for exemption from religious instruction, that even if they get it, it will save nobody. The schools are to be permeated with "Christianity", even in the playgrounds (Article 2). In fact the *Beleid* sees no distinction between Christianity and Nationalism. According to Dr. Chris Coetzee, chief proponent of the scheme, "the struggle for national and for Christian education is actually only one struggle—they are not two separate things—as if we may plead for Christian teaching and again separately for national teaching!" (*Onderwysblad*, Jan., 1949).

This sinister idea is implied also in the articles dealing with History and Geography teaching—in which we find the following statements, for which no member of the I.C.N.O., when challenged, has been able to produce a single Biblical text: "God has allotted to each nation its own individual soil", and "God has enjoined on each nation its individual task in bringing about the fulfilment of His purpose" (6, V).

Like Dr. McConkey, I don't believe that most Afrikaners want this policy. They won't believe it is intended. To make them do so is like making a loving wife believe that her husband is an embezzler. Loyally—though with secret, black mis-

givings—they vote for the party, no matter what the evidence against it. Yet I also believe that the Government is absolutely determined to enforce this very system, possibly modified in some respects (e.g. Fundamentalism), but going further in others.

Why else have cultured men like Dr. Dönges, and the late Governor-General, Dr. Jansen, openly sponsored such a document? Why have they never repudiated it? Why was Dr. Meiring, another sponsor, appointed Superintendent-General of Education in the Cape Province? Why did Mr. De Wet Nel, when Minister of Education, Arts and Science, announce that the Government meant to introduce C.N.E.; and immediately implement *Beleid* policy by introducing into his Department's schools a religious instruction syllabus based on consultation with the three Dutch Reformed Churches alone? Why was the 'conscience clause'—forbidding discrimination in staff and student appointments on grounds of creed—abolished in Potchefstroom University, which is not paid for by the Church? Why did the Onderwyser's Unies (Afrikaans teachers' unions), all approve of the *Beleid*? Why do their congresses and journals, in spite of denials, positively reek of it, to the extent of demanding the removal of that British Kafferboetie, Livingstone, from the history syllabus; and of advocating that European history should be taught in our schools only where it directly touches South Africa? Why was the recommendation of the entirely D.R.C. Interkerklike Komitee that education should be centralised, implemented by the taking-over, almost overnight, of the technical colleges by the Government? Why has Mr Stander, notoriously pro-C.N.E., been forced on Natal as Deputy-Director of Education, despite the unanimous refusal of the Executive Council of the Province to accept him? Why is Provincial control of education to be violated on this account? Why does Dr. Verwoerd say that more than one policy of education cannot be tolerated in this country? Why are we threatened by Nationalists with compulsory mother-tongue education in Natal, which the *Beleid* regards as the broad highway to everything it desires? Why? Why?

The Transvaal has already implemented the *Beleid* in pockets of that Province. This has been achieved by the Language Ordinance, by the abolition of parallel-medium schools (still incomplete), by the School Library Censorship, which forbids teachers to lend or give children books not in the official book guide, (which I may add, makes Afrikaans literature, about 50

years old, look as big as English Literature of five centuries); by the adoption in many schools of history, civics and other text books shamefully inaccurate as to fact, and Christian-Nationalist as to tone. Scholars, the public, the Transvaal Teachers' Association, the Parent-Teachers' Association, many of the churches have protested against these measures—they have beaten against the iron will of Nationalism, in vain. Some Afrikaans parents have even banned Afrikaans from their homes to keep their children out of the Afrikaans-medium schools.

And we already have, grinding slowly into gear, some wholly C.N.E. schools in this country. I refer to the field of "Bantu Education", which, as the *Beleid* demands, is now in the hands of "die Boerenasie". Adhering to the grand *Beleid* principle that every teacher who is not a "Christian" is a deadly danger to us, the Government has removed the education of Africans from the hands of those non-Afrikaans missionaries who have done infinitely more for it than the Dutch Reformed Churches ever have. The Extension of University Education Bill (sic!) decrees that any teacher in the proposed colleges who criticises Government action in any field shall be punished or dismissed; and last year the Government flaunted its contempt for academic and human standards by sacking half-a-dozen members of the oldest non-white university college, Fort Hare. In the Bantu Education Department a teacher who displeases in any way (unspecified), simply finds at the end of the month that the salary earmarked for him is not paid.

In fact, the Government means to go much further than the *Beleid*. The *Beleid* concerned itself only with Afrikaners and non-Europeans. Dr. Verwoerd, it would appear, means to interfere with the English-medium schools as well—possibly even in some ways on the model of the Bantu schools! And let not the Anglican Bishop of Natal and others lay the flattering unction to their souls that the private schools will not be molested. Dr. Verwoerd finds it intolerable that there shall be more than one education policy in this country. And we all know what happens when Dr. Verwoerd finds things intolerable. This year's Speech from the Throne promised Government control of education this parliamentary session.

We are not, however, Dr. Verwoerd's humble and obedient slaves. We are free human beings, and some of us intend to behave as befits free men and women.