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# EDITORIALS

## SKOP, SKOP, SKOP.

In the last few years it has become common in liberal and radical circles to doubt the value of resounding statements of opposition to Nationalist oppression, and to prefer specific activities designed to alter, in however small a way, the unjust structure of South African society. The general movement, then, is (to quote the title of an article published in our last issue) "from protest to action". There can be no doubt that the new tendency is a healthy one. Reiterated protest can eventually become arid; there is indeed some danger that it may grow into a mere habit and that it may bolster the self-esteem of the protester instead of having some effect upon the stubbornness of the status quo.

But for all this, protest can never cease while an oppressive regime is in power. For one thing, each new arbitrary act needs to be analysed, exposed and denounced. Then of course the potentially aware and open-minded section of the white population must be continually alerted and re-alerted: whatever unfortunate effect protesting too much may sometimes have upon the protester, undoubtedly protesting too *little* dulls opposition and cheers the Government. And political and social activities of a truly constructive sort can take place only against a background of strenuous thought and articulation on the part of those who oppose the Nationalist regime.

Besides – and quite simply – how can one *not* protest in the face of outrageous actions?

### ITS SOLE AIM

In recent months the Government has been throwing its weight around in a remarkable and rather frightening way. It seems to have made up its mind to show, once and for all, that its sole aim is the perpetuation of total white domination, and that nothing will obstruct it in this aim – neither the courts, nor a sense of fair play, nor reasonableness, nor even a concern for its own "image".

Some recent bannings have been depressingly significant. Banning is always a shameful device, of course: it repre-

sents so pointed a refusal to make use of the due process of the law that one is bound to conclude that a banned person, so far from being guilty of any offence, is indeed wholly innocent. And this fact becomes especially clear at a time when the Government is obviously keen to secure as many convictions for political offences as possible, nor can it be said to have been reluctant to provide itself with legislation designed to facilitate the obtaining of convictions.

But Father Cosmas Desmond was clearly penalised simply for telling the truth. The Government was especially angered by him because the truths that he both told and published – truths about the many black people who have been dumped and discarded – were ones that it had hoped as far as possible to keep to itself. Indeed it had probably never dreamed that any man would pursue such half-hidden truths so boldly and relentlessly. Thus it found itself awarding its own grimly inverted version of the Nobel Peace Prize. Embarrassed, however, at its own largesse-in-reverse, it has steadfastly refused to give any reasons for the banning – even to Father Desmond himself, who has a "legal" right to "know" what his "offence" has been.

Then there have been the bannings of the Reverend Basil Moore and Mr. Sabelo Ntwasa of the University Christian Movement. The striking feature of these is that

they occurred very shortly after the Government's appointment of a parliamentary select committee to investigate the University Christian Movement (as well as three other organisations). It is difficult to imagine a governmental act of more transparent cynicism or (to look at it from another angle) of more grotesque naivety. Perhaps it can most accurately be described as an instance of gangster tactics: you tell a man that you are going to give him a chance to explain his case and that you will attend to what he has to say as impartially as you can, and then, as he raises his head to the ceiling (wondering, perhaps, how he is to make his point-of-view clear to a somewhat obtuse investigator), you fetch him a blow under the jaw, watch him fall unconscious to the ground, gag him, and then — bending down to him with a sympathetic smile on your face and a notebook in your hand — you prepare to listen to his story.

The Government has recently performed many acts of this calibre — the banning of Mr. Mewa Ramgobin, who in reviving the (perfectly legal) Natal Indian Congress had begun to show something of the real feelings of thoughtful Indians; the banning of Mr. Dempsey Noel, the Natal regional chairman of the Labour Party, a party brought into being as a result of the Government's grand offer to allow Coloured people freely to control their own affairs; the expulsion from the University of the North of Mr. A.R. Tiro, who in speaking at a graduation ceremony shocked certain important white people by telling a few home truths (this expulsion was the handiwork of the Turfloop authorities, but these authorities, as a subsequent statement by the Prime Minister made clear, are mere extensions of the Government); the unexplained expulsion of a number of prominent Anglicans, including the Bishop of Damaraland, from South-West Africa at the very moment when the Secretary-General of the United Nations was about to visit the territory; the arbitrary removal of passports from officials of NUSAS, another of the organisations to be studied by the parliamentary select committee. . .

All these vicious and mad acts of the Government's REALITY condemns and despises.

### RUGBY

Can it do more than that, however? It can analyse a little.

What it finds is that essentially the Nationalist Government's attitude is that of a heavy, tough, not very intelligent rugby player.

The sacredness of rugby in Nationalist circles is of course a well-known fact. It is no coincidence, for example, that summit meetings between Mr. Vorster and Mr. Smith usually take place on Test Match holy days. And indeed it might be said that just as the British parliamentary system has often been thought to resemble some aspects of the game of cricket, the South African Government's way of dealing with awkward and delicate situations seems to have been based quite specifically upon the philosophy of ruthless scrummaging and "kicking for touch". Certainly the Government's recent actions and attitudes could be distilled into five simple words: push hard and kick hard.

Two things are to be noted, however. First, rugby players, even unintelligent ones, can afford to try to be a little imaginative — to throw the ball around a bit, to "give it some air" — when things are going their way, when they feel that they are on form and in control. It is when they are in danger of losing the game that they put most of their energy into pushing and kicking. The implication seems obvious.

Second, and of course far more important, pushing and kicking are permitted on the rugby field. In the realm of government and of human intercourse they are intolerable.

P.S. A further instance of the role of rugby in South African political life has been provided, in the midst of recent baton charges upon students, in a remarkable reference to the defeat of the Springbok team made by the suddenly-famous policeman, Colonel P.A. Crous: "Many of my men have been on edge since the rugby match". □

## VIOLENCE IN CHURCH & STATE

On Friday, June 2nd, 1972, a detachment of the South African Police, armed with rubber batons, marched to St. George's Cathedral, Cape Town, where university students were demonstrating quietly in favour of a call by NUSAS for free and compulsory education for all up to Junior Certificate. The police were not summoned to quell any disturbance. They had practised baton charges on the lawns behind Parliament before marching to the Cathedral.

It would appear that, whether the police were ready and willing to use violence or not, there was no excuse for doing so, however trifling, until one of the students, using a loud-hailer, transformed the legal demonstration into an illegal public meeting. He was ordered to desist and to hand over the loud-hailer. How long he delayed is not accurately known, but according to reports it was not for long. This therefore brief delay served as the pretext for one of the most shocking events in our recent history. The police were ordered to charge.

The police then lost all control of themselves. They struck left and right with their batons, at students, reporters, passers-by, even, ironically enough, at some of their own colleagues dressed in leather-jacket mufti. When students fled into the cathedral, the police pursued them, shouting out obscenities, calling women bloody bitches, even striking them in the face with their batons. Many people had to be treated for injuries, varying from slight to substantial.

It must be reported that Colonel Crous, second in command, asserts that he was assaulted from behind before the order to charge was given. This order was apparently given by Brigadier Lamprecht. But no one knows who the assailant was. Furthermore, the reporter from the "Natal Mercury" asserts categorically that if any assault took place, it must have been after the order was given.

### NEWS OF THE ASSAULT

News of the assault quickly reached the other university centres, profoundly disturbing the English-speaking campuses. The effect on the Afrikaans-speaking campuses was considerably smaller. The effect on Indian, African, and Coloured campuses was also small, largely because each of them was already involved in demonstrations following mass expulsions at the African University of the North. The news also profoundly disturbed English-speaking people throughout South Africa, with the exception of that miserable minority led by the Warings and the Horwoods,