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# Emergency Convocation of Churches in South Africa



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Preparation material

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# Introduction



Matthew 5:14-16 'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden. No-one lights a lamp to put it under a table; they put it on the lampstand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.'

On the 2nd and 3rd of February, church leaders deliberated seriously and extensively on the deepening crisis in the country and on the need for an intervention by the church in South Africa.

They critically evaluated past attempts to persuade the government to end apartheid by negotiating with the legitimate and recognised leaders of the majority of the people in South Africa and no progress was made in this regard.

Being committed to non-violent and peaceful ways of ending apartheid, an Emergency Convocation of Churches was decided upon to work on and develop effective non-violent actions to pressure the

government to the negotiation table and for the church to refuse to collaborate with the unjust system of apartheid.

The church leaders also agreed to go beyond the violence/non-violence debate and focus on effective non-violent action to end apartheid.

This booklet has been compiled as preparation material for this important gathering.

Delegates attending the Convocation are asked to reflect on, discuss and pray about these issues -- and, most of all, to think about what creative actions the different churches can undertake in their witness against apartheid.



Section One

# **Theological Rationale**

# 1.1 Address to church leaders

Reverend Frank Chikane, February 1988

Just more than a month ago I had the privilege of reading Bishop John Carter's manuscript on 'Prophets of our Times'. In the postscript of this manuscript the Bishop expresses his pessimism about the whole South African situation. As I read it, it became very clear that it was a mirror image of exactly where I was. As the year 1987 came to a close, it seemed to me that the little hope for a peaceful settlement to the problems of South Africa was also coming to a close.

The last twenty months since May 1986 have been the darkest part of the tunnel in the life of the people of South Africa. It started with the scuttling of the Commonwealth Eminent Person's Group (EPG's) peace initiative by the hardliners within the government. This was followed by the banning of all June 16, 1986 commemoration meetings; the declaration of the National State of Emergency on the 12th June 1986; the detention of more than 30 000 peace-loving South Africans within this period, 3 000 of whom are still in detention; the detention of thousands of children; the torture and killings of thousands; the harassment and brutal assaults of many South Africans by the security forces; the emergence of vigilantes and assassination squads; the deliberate creation of conditions for the so-called 'black on black' violence, causing hundreds of deaths of innocent people; the attack on the Church and the detentions of hundreds of church-workers and some church leaders; the attack on the labour movements including a sophisticated military attack on the building of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) ... the list is endless!

It is clear that the apartheid government has abandoned all political strategies to try and resolve the problems of South Africa and has resorted to a 100% military option. The only solution for them now is the barrel of a gun. All suggestions for a

negotiated settlement, particularly with the African National Congress (ANC), have been rejected by the Botha government on the basis that the ANC should abandon 'violence' first before coming to the negotiation table. We shall return to this condition later.

You will also recall that during this very period a number of Church delegations\* and various church leaders have tried to intervene by visiting the liberation movements and Pretoria/Cape Town. All reports show that the problem is more in Pretoria/Cape Town rather than with the liberation movements. The comments of the President of the World Methodist Council, Bishop Lawi Imathin, after a meeting with the State President, Mr PW Botha sums up the frustrations of most of the church leaders who went to see Mr Botha. He said: 'I have never been in such a tough meeting - such a difficult, depressing meeting in my life, not knowing whether I achieved anything or not.' (Sowetan Wed. Nov 11, 1987).

This intransigence and violence of the apartheid regime has created a pastoral crisis for the church in South Africa as more and more victims of apartheid resort to the use of force, 'as the only option left' to stop this racist, inhuman, brutal

and violent system of apartheid. It is for this reason that the churches are landed with the Harare Declaration (on comprehensive mandatory sanctions against South Africa) and the Lusaka Statement (on the legitimacy of the government, attitude to the liberation movements and their methods of struggle, and sanctions). All of you should all know the pain of discussing these issues within your churches and at our last National Conference.

The questions facing the member churches of the SACC today is no more that of whether we as a Church in South Africa can be involved in helping to end apartheid. The question is how we



Reverend Frank Chikane

Footnote: This address to church leaders was delivered on February 2, 1988, at Khotso House in Johannesburg.

\* The SACC has had two meetings with the leadership of the liberation movements — one in Harare in 1985 and the other in Lusaka in 1987. A number of member churches have had discussions with the liberation movements as well.

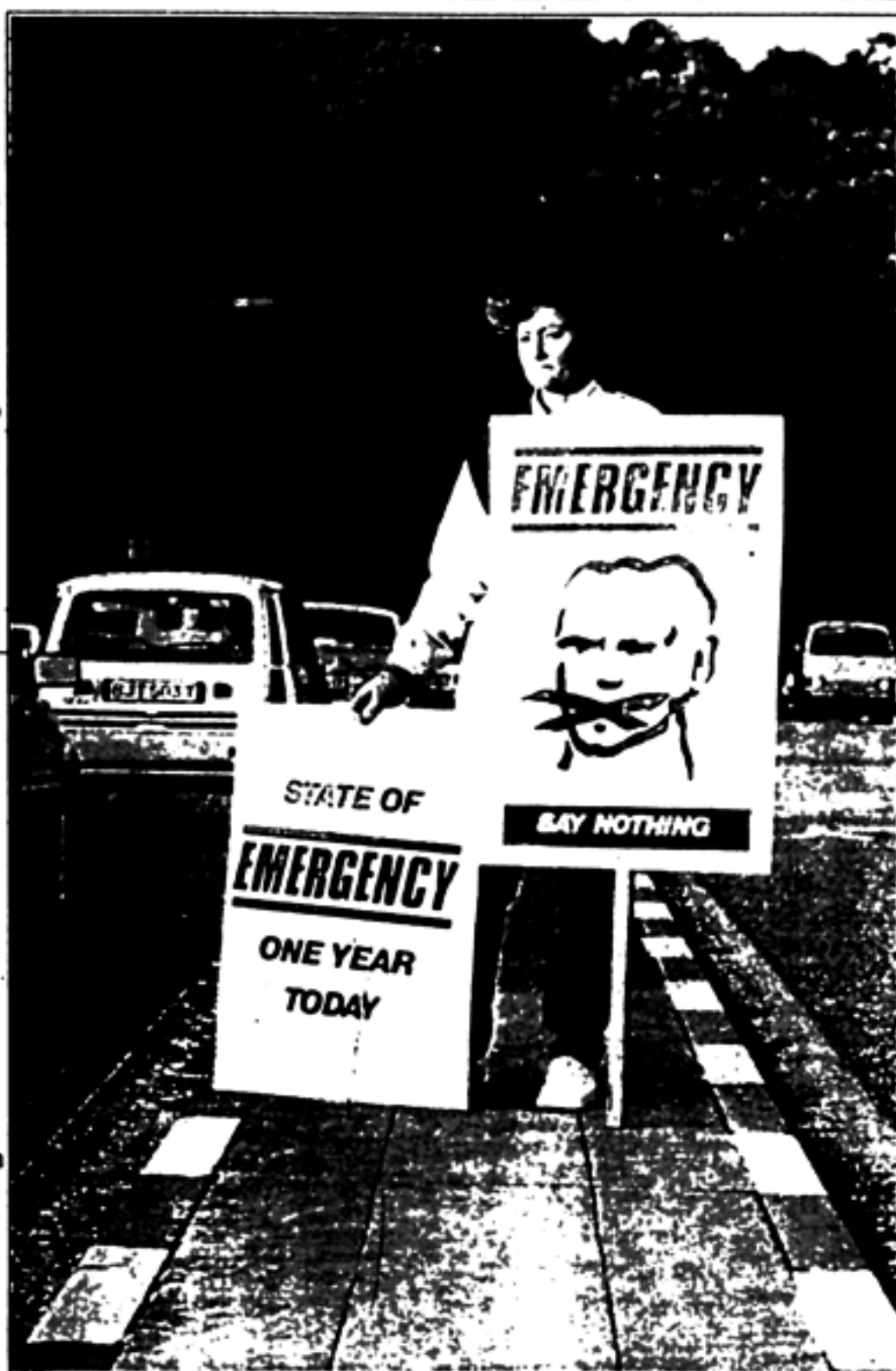
go about ending it. The question is what should we do to end apartheid. In our particular case today, where we are faced with a clear 'No' to a negotiated settlement from the Nationalist party and a willingness on our part to consider a negotiated settlement (if there is a genuine willingness by the apartheid regime to abandon apartheid), the question is what can we do to get those who are in power to abandon apartheid and go to the negotiating table.

The debate around the Lusaka Statement (whether 'received', 'accepted', 'adopted', referred to some committee or commission) has helped the Churches to reaffirm their commitment to a non-violent way of resolving the problem of South Africa. But the results of the debate did not stop there, they went further to 'expose' the hypocrisy of the Church of only talking about non-violence rather than engaging in effective non-violent action to pressure the apartheid regime to end this system.

It is clear that many church people have not appreciated the fact that the classical disciples of non-violence, like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King (Jr) and Dom Helder Camara, in fact engaged in non-violent action to express their witness against unjust systems to force these systems to change. To correct this situation I would like to propose that we as member-churches of the Council commit ourselves to non-violent effective actions to bring about an end to the apartheid system. To facilitate our discussion I have identified a number of areas of possible non-violent effective action (see section four).

I do not pretend that this is exhaustive. Other areas could be identified by church groups at different times as they engage in this act of effective resistance to the apartheid system.

Lastly I would like to propose that we do all this with a goal of a negotiated settlement in mind as this will be the only way in which destruction of life can be reduced and the only way in which the total destruction of this country can be averted.

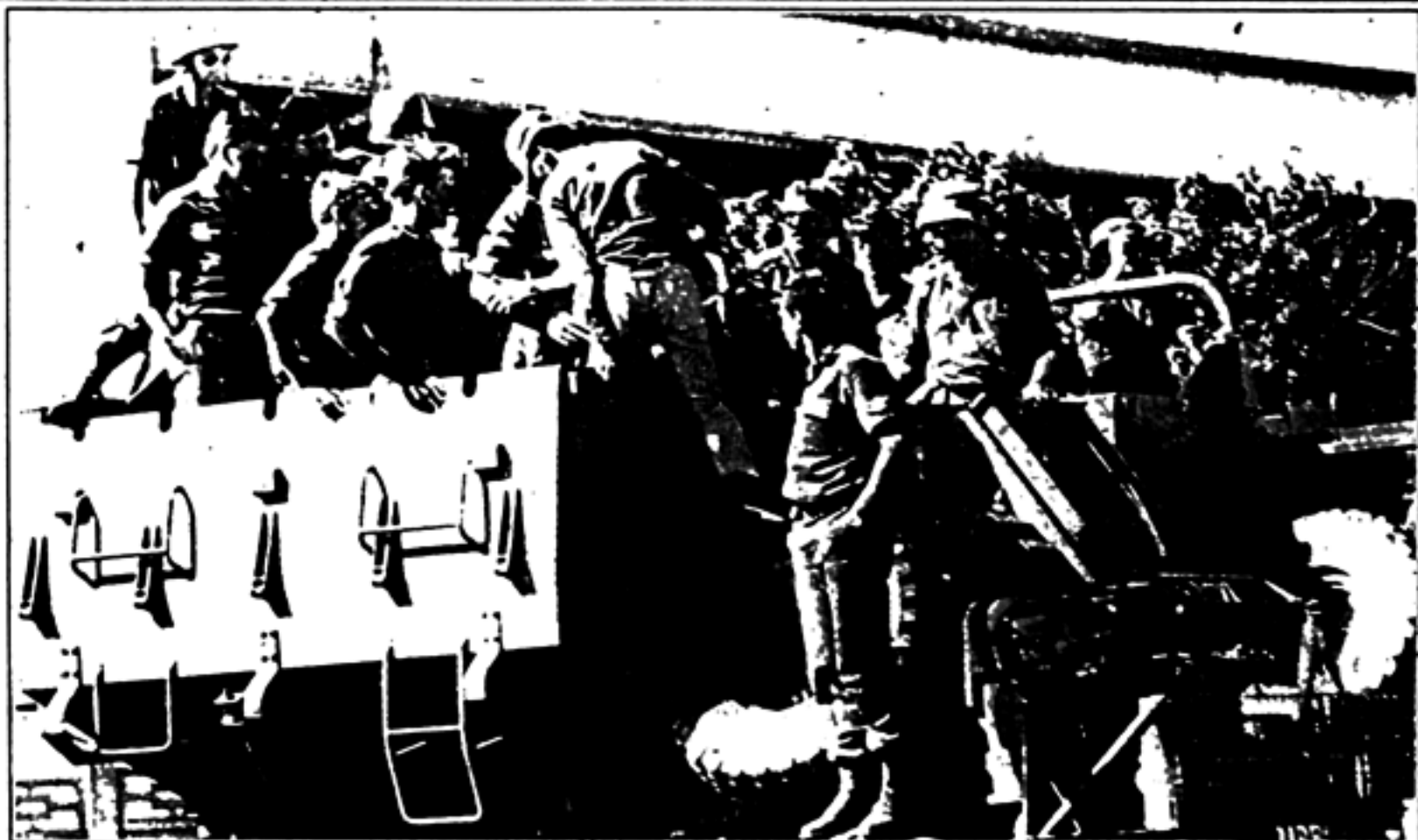


**'The declaration of the national State of Emergency on June 12, 1986; the detention of more than 30 000 peace-loving South Africans; the detention of thousands of children; the torture and killing of thousands; the attack on the church and the detentions of hundreds of church workers and some church leaders; the list is endless...'**

#### **The war in Pietermaritzburg**

There are presently two violent flashpoints but three which are a direct result of the violent nature of the apartheid system. These are Pietermaritzburg, Angola and KTC. Believing that the KTC problem is being handled locally I propose that we look at the Pietermaritzburg and Angolan situation.

There is no need, Mr Chairman to detail the happenings in Pietermaritzburg. this is a publicly



**'It is clear that the apartheid government has abandoned all political strategies to try and resolve the problems of South Africa and has resorted to a 100% military option.'**

known issue. It is a known fact that the Chamber of Commerce in Pietermaritzburg has been trying its utmost to mediate between Inkatha and the UDF/COSATU but without much success. We know that Church leaders tried to intervene by making both sides sign a statement which in effect called its members to stop the violence. This as you know, took a long time before it was agreed upon, signed and published and for various reasons it has not affected the war on the ground substantially. I would like to propose, Chairperson, that this Church Leaders Meeting mandate the General Secretariate of the Council to facilitate the application of the issues raised by the statement referred to above at the local level to complement whatever efforts are made by various forces locally. I believe that the Church having its members on either side of the battle ground, has a great potential to intervene in this situation. I propose that we test this view by mobilising our membership to respect the Sanctity of life and stop the war.

#### **The war in Angola**

Chairperson, we as South Africans cannot stand and watch as the South African regime engages in a bloody war against Namibia and now Angola. I believe that we as a Church must intervene by sending a fact finding mission of eminent persons

from South Africa to Angola on the basis of which we can determine possible intervention strategies to force South Africa to withdraw from those territories.

Brothers and Sisters, we should not forget that in everything that we do, we do to advance the Kingdom of God. The mission of the Church is at stake in South Africa. Our credibility in relation to our mission depends greatly on our effective witness and intervention in the face of pain, suffering, misery and death for the majority of the people in the country.

For this mission of intervention in the national crisis, we need one another. We need a strong and broad ecumenical movement to be taken seriously, particularly by those in power.

#### **Conclusion**

During the 1987 festive-season I received a card from Mama Leah and the Archbishop Tutu with the following message: The light is shining in the Darkness and the Darkness cannot overcome it. This indeed brightened my day. It strengthened what remained of me which was almost at the point of death. I believe and have hope that the Lord can help us to intervene effectively in this situation.

May God Bless you.  
Amen.



## 1.2 Where the debate ends

### Reverend Frank Chikane

The debate about violence and non-violence in South Africa is an old one - particularly within the church. This debate has intensified since the 1960s when local liberation movements went underground and resorted to armed struggle, believing that this was the only way to force the racist South African regime to abandon the violent system of apartheid. This historical decision is best explained in Nelson Mandela's famous statement from the dock during his trial:

*At the beginning of June 1961, after a long and anxious assessment of South African situation, I and some colleagues came to the conclusion that as violence in this country was inevitable. It would be unrealistic and wrong for African leaders to continue preaching peace and non-violence at a time when the government met our peaceful demands with force....*

*This conclusion was not easily arrived at. It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark upon violent forms of political struggle... We did so not because we desired such a course, but solely because the government had left us with no other choice.'*<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere in the court records Mandela says that he did not plan sabotage in a 'spirit of recklessness' nor because he had 'any love of

violence'. He says that he planned it as a result of a 'calm and sober assessment of the political situation that had arisen after many years of tyranny, exploitation and the oppression of my people by the whites'.<sup>2</sup> He further advances his argument with the words of Chief Albert Luthuli:

*Who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately and modestly at a closed and barred door? What have been the fruits of moderation? The past thirty years has seen the greatest number of laws restricting our rights and progress, until today we have reached a stage where we have almost no rights at all.*<sup>3</sup>

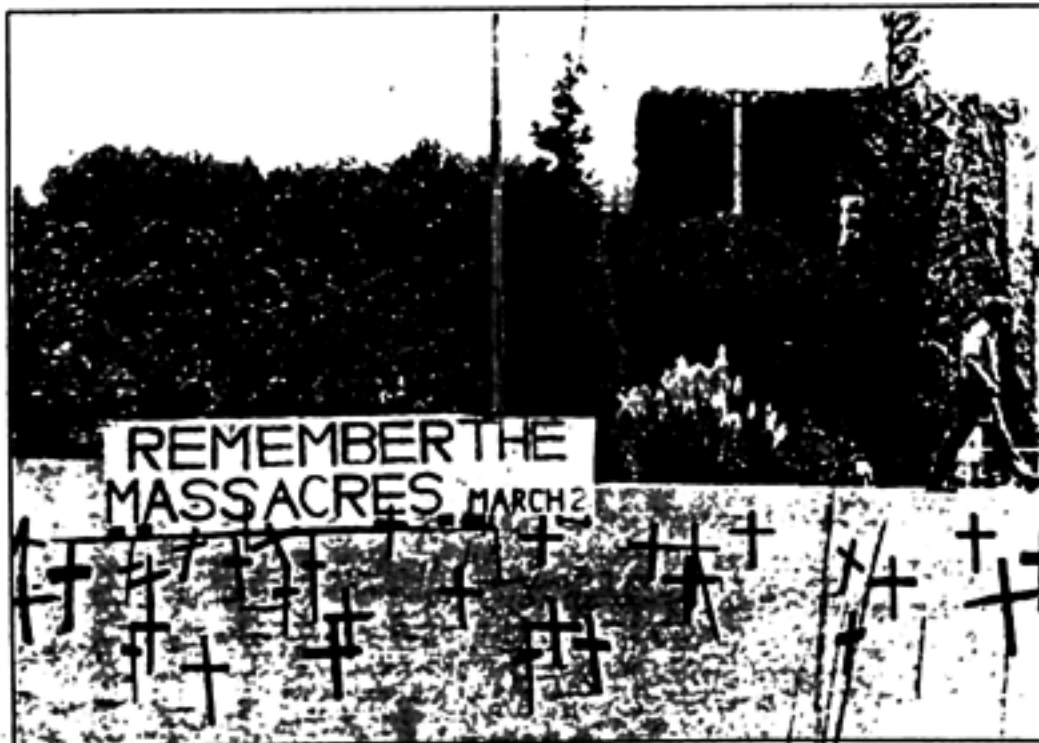
Mandela advances two reasons for resorting to armed struggle. The first is that 'as a result of government policy, violence by the African people had become inevitable and that unless responsible leadership was given to canalise and control the feelings of our people, there would be outbreaks of terrorism which would produce an intensity of bitterness and hostility between the various races of this country which is not produced even by war'.<sup>4</sup> The second reason was that without violence there would be no way open to the African people to succeed in their struggle against the principle of white supremacy.

It was this agonising decision of the 1960s that intensified the debate on violence and non-

violence. The debate has been further intensified as the violent conflict between the forces of the apartheid regime and the oppressed masses escalated in recent years.

#### The absence of space for debate

The intention of this paper is not to participate in the violence - non-violence debate but to raise some questions about the debate itself. My submission is that the debate about violence and non-violence reaches a point at which it simply must end. There is a point beyond which such a debate is no longer possible. There may be times when there is a space within which the debate can take place but there is a time when this space is so violated



**'The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in time of great moral crisis maintain their neutrality' — Dante**

Footnote: Taken from *Theology and Violence*, edited by Charles Villa-Vicencio



**June 1976: One of many bitter confrontations between might of the police and black youths armed with stones, sticks and using dustbin lids as shields**

that it is no longer possible to engage in the debate. Circumstances or events at a particular stage in life can so 'squeeze' or constrict this space that it ceases to exist.

I shall elucidate this point by means of three theses.

My **first thesis** is that the only space within which the debate on violence and non-violence can take place is one where there is no war or where the war does not directly involve the participants in the debate. This space is a state of affairs in which the participants experience no immediate threat to their lives. It is a state of comfort and relative peace, a state of privilege. People in the black townships of South Africa consider this 'a luxury' of which they have been deprived. This condition, which is the only condition conducive to this type of debate exists only in theological seminaries, universities and church conferences, isolated from social reality, and at conference centers where the participants are not exposed to violence or likely to have their debate disrupted by violence.

My **second thesis** is that this space can also be artificially 'created spaces', space that has been created by violence.

This is the space within which many people operate under the illusion that they at least are non-violent. Others know that it is only by violent means that this space can be created to enable them to talk about non-violence. Most white

people in South Africa and some privileged blacks dwell within this space, condemning the violence of the townships, and expressing their abhorrence of all violence as if they were not involved in violence themselves. The fact of the matter is that this class of people is 'protected' by the violence of security forces and without this 'protection' they would not be able to engage in any debate about violence and non-violence. Violence is being perpetrated on their behalf to enable them to masquerade as non-violent and peace-loving people. This is a privilege that the ordinary person in Soweto does not have. In most cases it is those whose privileges are secured by violence who are able to debate violence and preach non-violence to those without privileges or protection.

This then is the 'created space' that exists only for the privileged and dominant classes and oppressive regimes. P W Botha, for instance, occupies this 'created space'. It is the space created by his brutal and violent apartheid forces that enables him to condemn what he calls the violence of the ANC while he prohibits the victims of violence from engaging in this or any other debate. The debate on violence and non-violence is a debate in which only one party in the conflict can participate. The other party is deprived of the necessary space.

Most of the disciples of non-violence in South Africa also have to make use of this 'created space' in order to continue with their ideal of non-

violence. The recent case of Mrs Coretta King was a classic example. In order to undertake her mission of peace in South Africa in line with the non-violence tradition of her husband Martin Luther King, she had to be protected by security police.

With regard to my own non-violent stance, the contradictions began to appear after I was released on bail during the treason trial in 1985. My house and my family were attacked with petrol bombs and my name was discovered to be on a hit list. At the time, I was preaching non-violence and preparing my case to show how peaceful I was, while the community organised itself to protect me from those agents of the apartheid system who were threatening my life. I was confronted with the reality of armed people who were committed to preserving my life and the lives of my family. I was obliged to admit that I was only able to continue preaching non-violence because others were prepared to use violence to create this space for me. There comes a time when one cannot preach non-violence without recognising the hypocrisy of enjoying a security provided by violent means.

My third thesis is that there is a point particularly for the dominated classes in society, beyond which it is no longer possible to participate in the debate about violence and non-violence. For the oppressed masses of South Africa the space for debates of this kind simply no longer exists. These people live in a situation in which this space has been completely eliminated. It is a situation where meetings are prohibited and discussions about non-violent demonstrations are forbidden by law strikes by workers are crushed and where boycotts are seen as sabotage. It is a state of war in which townships and schools are occupied by the apartheid army, some areas are under siege, the sound of gunfire has become part of daily life and teargas fills the atmosphere at regular intervals. It is a situation where hit squads and 'balaclava-men' attack the community indiscriminately. Vigilante groups are formed, with the evident backing of the apartheid security



September 1984: Police on patrol at the scene of unrest in the Vaal

forces, to attack innocent people.

Faced with this reality one can either run for one's life or fight back in self-defence. That is why people of the townships are now forming 'Defence Committees' or 'Street Committees' to enable them to defend themselves. At this point the debate comes to an end and action becomes the only option. There is no time or space to talk about the problem of violence. There is time only for responding to the violence of the system. The only way in which one could create the space to engage in a debate about violence and non-violence would be to mobilise a strong enough army to keep the apartheid army at bay, but this too has serious implications. All of which brings one back to the contradiction of created space as a space created by violent means in order to discuss and condemn violence.

The question is : how should the church handle the reality of a violent war? It is a war which is going to become more brutal as time goes by and will result in incalculable harm and untold suffering, pain and misery. What makes the situation even more critical for the church is the fact that the majority of the people involved on both side of the conflict claim to be Christians. The Kairos Document expresses this dilemma succinctly and poignantly:

*Both oppressor and oppressed claim loyalty to the same Church. They are both baptised in the same baptism and participate together in the breaking of the same bread, the same body and blood of Christ.*



The Kairos theologians conclude this paragraph by proclaiming: 'The Church is divided and its day of judgement has come'.<sup>5</sup> In other words of Leonardo Boff:

*The faithful in the Church occupy objectively different social positions according to their social class. They perceive reality in a way that corresponds to their social conditions, and so they interpret and live the gospel message out of the needs, interests and behaviour of their particular class. Thus actions that are possible, tolerable, recommended, necessary or demanding vary from one social class to another.*<sup>6</sup>

#### **The violence debate**

It was this fact of a divided church that led the Kairos theologians to critically examine the official theology of the mainline missionary churches, and especially their theology of non-violence. We first need, however, to clarify something that critics of the Kairos Document have said about violence and non-violence. The Kairos Document has not entered into the debate as to whether or not Christians could justifiably take up arms in our situation. This is not an issue in the document nor did it arise in any of the preparatory discussions leading to the publication of the document. In the face of the battle raging in the townships at the time, such a question would have been simply irrelevant. What was of paramount importance in all the preparatory discussions was the search for the causes of violence, the causes of the war being fought in the townships. And the reason for this interest in causes was quite simply the overwhelming concern of the Kairos theologians to stop the war. They had no desire to talk about the relative merits of violence and non-violence or to make any decisions about it. We simply wanted to stop the violence already existing.

What concerned the Kairos theologians about the stance of the official church was that church theologians were talking about the morality of the use of violence in the war instead of doing something to stop the war by tackling its causes. This point has not been generally understood and as a result the Kairos Document has become the centre of the very debate on violence and non-violence -- a debate that the Kairos theologians had no intention of entering into. But perhaps this misunderstanding is inevitable, since it is a misunderstanding that arises out of a particular social position or class. Those critics who accuse the Kairos theologians of promoting violence, murder, terrorism or communism all come from a

particular social class. They are simply incapable of appreciating the concerns of the Kairos theologians.

The fundamental question raised by the Kairos theologians goes beyond the violence and non-violence debate. It starts a 'debate' about the debate itself. It starts a debate about the way in which the church responds to the issue of violence in South Africa. The document contends that the church's response is subtly weighted against the victims of the system. And the reason for this is found in the underlying theme of the Kairos Document the question of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the South African regime.

#### **Legitimate and illegitimate authority**

The supporters of the apartheid regime, the disciples of the ideal of non-violence and many of those among our church leadership always begin with the assumption that the existing political authority is legitimate. The Kairos theologians on the other hand, have argued that the present regime in South Africa is illegitimate and tyrannical. Consequently they approach the problem of violence and war in South Africa with a different premise. Until the critics of the Kairos Document recognise this radical difference of initial assumptions, they will never understand the radically different conclusion reached as to how the church should respond in this situation of crisis.

Social position plays an important role here. Someone who does theology from the heat of the struggle in Soweto will always come to different conclusions from someone who theologises from the luxury of a suburb in Johannesburg. As Leonardo Boff says: 'they will perceive reality in a way that corresponds to their social condition or class'.<sup>7</sup>

As perceived by the Kairos theologians, the problem is that the church usually starts with the assumption that the existing authority is a legitimate authority. This assumption needs to be seen in its historical context. Throughout its history since Constantine came to power in the fourth century the church has enjoyed a position of privilege and served to legitimate the activities of the ruling classes. After Constantine the church became what Leonardo Boff calls 'the legitimating religious ideology for the Imperial social order'.<sup>8</sup> The persecuted church of the apostolic tradition (the early church) became the persecuting church; the suffering church became the accomplice in perpetuating the suffering of others; the church of the poor became the church of the rich, and the



servant church became the dominating church.

During the period of colonisation, which was also the period of missionary expansion, the church, in order to secure its missionary activities, was bound up with the European colonial powers. It did not seem to matter how totalitarian or tyrannical these powers were. What mattered to the missionary church was the privilege of being allowed to preach 'the gospel'. This 'privilege' was granted by the colonial powers as a trade-off for legitimation. The church gave legitimacy to colonial expansionism and the colonial and imperialist powers in turn legitimated the church, so that the legitimacy of the church was no longer derived from its heavenly Lord but from the lords of this world.

It should therefore not surprise us when we observe that even today the church seldom questions the legitimacy of political authorities. The evils of the system can be condemned in the strongest possible terms but the legitimacy of the existing authority cannot be questioned. Thus the church will regret the 'excesses' of these 'legitimate' authorities while condemning the 'violence' of the victims of these authorities. What this means is that those in power have the legitimate right to use violence to keep law and order provided they do not exceed reasonable limits, while the victims of the system have no legitimate right to use violence to defend themselves against those who are in power. Once the legitimacy of existing authority is taken for granted, one is bound to view the violence of the victims as illegitimate.

If the church is to minister effectively to the oppressed in South Africa, and if, in this war, the church is to exercise its pastoral responsibility in a credible manner, it will have to face up to the question of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the present regime. If the church wants to participate meaningfully in the debate about violence and non-violence, it will have to begin by debating this question of legitimacy and illegitimacy in the light of God's justice and the coming Kingdom of God. On the other hand, if the church does not ask itself this question in the near future, it will lose its credibility in the eyes of the people and forfeit any legitimate right to participate in the debate about violence and non-violence, or to condemn those who engage in violence to defend themselves against the violence of the system. In other words, the church will lose its own legitimacy.

The consequences of a church statement that the present regime is illegitimate would be far-reaching. The church would then have to take

appropriate action in solidarity with others to ensure that the tyrant would be removed from power and a legitimate political authority set up in its place. Whatever methods of doing this might be approved by the church, whether violent, non-violent or a combination of the two, they would have to be tried and tested. Thus if the church could approve only non-violent methods, it would have to lead the way in proving that non-violence could be effective in removing an illegitimate regime from power. But if the church stops short at the 'traditional' line where religion is said to end and politics to begin, if it does not cross this imaginary line in order to test its non-violent methods in the field, it will forfeit any legitimate right to condemn those who go further into the arena of life and death for the sake of justice. Once one recognises the illegitimacy of the regime one cannot hesitate in order to create the 'space' for a lengthy debate on violence and non-violence. One can only go forward with whatever methods are judged best to remove the tyrant.

#### Beyond debate

What Emilio Castro has said of Latin America applies even more pertinently in our situation:

*'In the urgency of the Latin American situation there is no time to lose in discussion on violence and non-violence. Those who are committed to non-violence should prove the efficiency, the validity of their approach, not by discussing it with those who do not share their conviction, but by struggling with the factors of oppression in society.'*<sup>9</sup>

In South Africa today, there is no time or space left for discussion.

At this critical point the debate ends and action begins.

#### Notes

1. T Karis and G Carter (eds) *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol 3.
2. Extract from the court record of the trial of Mandela, held in the Old Synagogue court, Pretoria, from October 15 to November 7, 1962.
3. A Luthuli, *Let My People Go*.
4. Extract from the court record of the trial of Mandela.
5. The Kairos theologians, *The Kairos Document*.
6. L Boff, *Church Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. E Castro, *Amidst Revolution*.

# 1.3 Prophets of non-violence

## 1.3.1 Reflections on Gandhi — Arun Shourie

Gandhi's life and teaching affirm that rulers do not have a divine right to their office or to the allegiance of the ruled. When they betray the trust of the people the latter have a right and a duty to drive the rulers out. He felt that if the ordinary citizen is somnolent the powerful will invariably abuse their office. But that - and he laid equal stress on this proposition - the rulers can abuse their position only so long as the citizenry puts up with misrule. He felt that the citizenry does not take the steps that would bring the rulers to book because it does not realise the "immutable maxim" that the hegemony of the rulers depends solely on the subservience, the tacit and active cooperation of the ruled and that, therefore, the people can bring misrule to an end at any time by withdrawing from the oppressors, the rulers, their co-operation in every detail. The people do not take the steps also because they are weighed down by fear, by feelings of helplessness and impotence vis-a-vis their rulers, their exploiters.

So as to set people free from fear, so as to make them realise their strength vis-a-vis their rulers, Gandhiji led the people in a series of tactical engagements

— a number of satyagrahas — that, ostensibly, had specific, limited aims, but which were, in fact, intended to drive the fear of their rulers from the minds of the people and to teach them that once they are prepared to accept hardship, to make sacrifices, they can bend the regime, to their will.

Gandhiji's experience affirms that as the fundamental task is to change the people's attitudes, the principal - though not the only - focus of such movements must be the broad, dispossessed masses. The principal vehicle for changing the people's attitudes must be to engage them in direct action, to pit them directly against their rulers, their oppressors. For a variety of reasons he felt that such action must be non-

violent. The movement for independence that he led - a movement spread over many decades, a movement marked by many ups and downs - taught him that people's attitudes cannot be changed overnight. The struggle to change people's attitudes - to awaken them to the true nature of their rulers, to their strength relative to that of their rulers - such a struggle has to be a protracted one. It does not ascend along a straight unbroken line. Rather, it proceeds with the motion of successive waves battering a rock.



Mahatma Gandhi

Finally, and this is perhaps the most important lesson that Gandhiji's teaching and example hold out for us, the sine qua non of such movements is not the single leader, the Messiah, but the band of individuals who are prepared to forsake all for the cause of the people, the country, for justice.

Much of Gandhiji's writing and all of his life was devoted to affirming the right and duty of the people to demand excellence from their rulers, to throw the leaders out in case they palter with the people or with the interests of the country. He was unequivocal on this point.

Once a government has become autocratic and corrupt,

violent and unjust, once it has begun to 'prostitute its own laws', once it has stopped listening to the ordinary citizen, once its conduct is keeping the country and the people back, the citizens, he affirmed, have 'the inherent right' to withdraw their co-operation from the regime and to bring to a halt, that a citizen who barter with such a State shares its corruption or lawlessness', that he cannot surrender his 'birthright' to resist such a regime, he used to say, without surrendering his self-esteem. Disloyalty to such a regime becomes a duty, sedition a religion, obedience to its laws a sin and disobedience a virtue.

Moreover, the people must evaluate the regime as a whole. A regime cannot lay claim to

Footnote: This is a shortened version of an article in the Gandhi Legacy, published in New Delhi, India, and kindly supplied by the Rev Rob Robertson.



The young Mahatma Gandhi — as a barrister in Johannesburg

the people's allegiance by an occasional good deed, by one or two reforms. These do not change the essential character of the regime. At one point, Gandhiji tells us. 'I said to myself there is no State run by Nero or Mussolini which has no good points about it, but we have to reject the whole once we decide to non-cooperate with the system.

For Gandhiji the right and duty of each citizen to judge the regime for himself was an absolute one.

It is idle, he said, to raise questions about the legality or otherwise of this right and duty. Law in the ultimate analysis, specially law as decreed, interpreted, altered, mutilated by the authorities is he, said, but the convenience of the powerful. In any case, what does 'legality' mean when 'laws' are being changed every day? Is the country bound to accept, say, the Rowlatt Act (an act that seems

such a mild one in retrospect) just because some persons who have arrogated the mantle of the State to themselves have decreed it; just because it has been printed on government stationery or notified in the government's gazettes?

It is even less relevant, he would say, to chastise the citizen for adopting non-parliamentary methods. Parliamentary methods, he said, as long ago as 1920 should indeed be used but the satyagrahi is not to wait forever, he must not just sit back and wait for officials and lenders to heed his petitions, to see the error of their ways. 'So long as the superstition that men should obey unjust laws exists,' he concluded, 'so long will their slavery exist.'

But if his assertion of this fundamental right of the citizenry were to be accepted, 'would not' he was asked, 'ordered government be impossible?' His answer was straight forward: 'Ordered government cannot be impossible if totally inoffensive people break the laws. But I would certainly make government impossible if I found it had taken leave of its senses.' Misrule, he was to affirm repeatedly, is worse than no rule for it spells ruin and stagnation for the country. Obviously no one willingly opts for chaos, but a government that is holding back a country and a people cannot charge the satyagrahis with fomenting chaos and disorder.

If the regime is setting itself up as a roadblock and is refusing to mend its ways, if an intermediate stage of disorder is the unavoidable consequence of efforts to teach the rulers a lesson, then the satyagrahi must gladly opt for such disorder rather than countenance a regime that is holding his people and his country back. The responsibility for such disorder as may follows rests on the regime that has betrayed the trust of the people, that by its obduracy has refused to mend its ways, that has clung to office, to so-called 'power' by petty machinations and police methods and which has left the satyagrahi no choice but to resort to direct action.

The ancient adage - *yatha raja tatha praja* - Gandhiji would say, is only half the truth. Its



converse, *yatha praja tatha raja*, is just as true. 'Where the subjects are watchful a prince is entirely dependent on them for this status. Where the subjects are overtaken by sleepy indifference, there is every possibility that the prince will cease to function as a protector and become our oppressor instead. Those who are not wide awake have no right to blame their prince..

Thus, Gandhiji affirmed not just the 'birthright' and duty of every citizen to judge his rulers and to bring down a regime that had become a force for evil, he also taught us the 'immutable maxim' that a people can be governed in a particular way only so long as they - consciously or unconsciously - consent to be so governed, that 'no man loses his freedom except through his own weaknesses': that 'no government can exist for a single moment without the cooperation of the people, willing or forced, and (that) if people

suddenly withdraw their cooperation in every detail, the government will come to a standstill'.

Far from being invulnerable as the ordinary citizen now assumes it to be, a regime is vulnerable to each act of conscience.

Even very small groups can inconvenience it a great deal. If, for instance, just the top 100 persons in each profession were to decide that they would have nothing to do with a regime as it had come to manifest evil, it would be greatly inconvenienced.

It isn't just that it would lose their services but, even more important, non-cooperation of this kind would damage the regime's standing. Its iqbal; and, in the ultimate analysis, regimes are able to hold countries in their thrall because of their iqbal, because of the esteem in which people hold them and not because they have the army and the police at their command.

: legitimacy



Followers of Gandhi: The crowd outside the Transvaal court when he and other leaders were on trial in 1908

Experiences such as these convinced Gandhiji that regimes are not as powerful as they seem at first sight. The instruments on which they rely — their control over the armed apparatus of the State, their ability to direct and manipulate media, their access to money, their legislative majorities and the like — these instruments cannot be pitted against an aroused citizenry that is prepared for hardship and sacrifice.

Thus, a regime secures an initial advantage because of its access to — licit and illicit — money; eventually this very access smears it in the public's mind. The regime is able to keep people in line by centralising patronage and then co-opting the ring leaders so that the latter keep their followers in line. The machine seems invulnerable for a while. Yet, soon enough, the arrangement brings disrepute on the ring leaders; the people see through the fact that their leaders have been bought over and so the pillars on which the regime rests suddenly give way.

In the Gandhian doctrine, to begin with direct action and popular movements are an integral part of democracy. They are an insurance against tyranny and abuse. He did not feel it necessary to lay down hard and fast rules about their frequency and extent. These depend on the state of affairs: if the rulers are working for the interests of the people there will be no reason to initiate such movements: but whenever misconduct has become the order of the day, when the behaviour of rulers has shown that they are beyond the reach of parliamentary institutions and electoral processes, it would be the right and duty of citizens to launch such movements, to launch them ten times a year if necessary, to continue them for decades if necessary.

Gandhiji knew from his own experience that the enormous sacrifices that these movements entail will themselves ensure that the people will not resort to them lightly. They shall do so only after they have exhausted parliamentary and electoral means. If misrule persists then the churning and shaking up that these movements entail will indeed be the things that the country needs.

Second, his protracted attempts at changing people's attitudes and the limited success that attended them taught him that the attitudes of an entire people, their perceptions about themselves, about their governors, about their strength — these cannot be changed in a few months or in a year or two. The withdrawal, resignation, compromise that had brought the country to its knees by the end of the 19th century (and that

have brought us to our present state) after all were not (and are not) just a day or two old. They had marked (and they have marked) decades of our national and personal lives. Therefore, reconstruction of a polity is a protracted task.

Gandhiji's view was that when the people were pitted against an oppressive regime, when they had decided that the regime was evil, then two deductions followed immediately: that, as the regime was an oppressive one, the people should know in advance that it will not hesitate to use every weapon in its armoury to keep itself in power; and second, that in such circumstances it is futile to hope that we can outwit the regime by mere cleverness in the forums it has prescribed — legislatures, courts, the newspapers it controls, etc. As soon as our clamour becomes too loud, as soon as our pressure begins to really inconvenience it, the regime will not hesitate to change the rules of the game.

Thus, for instance, when the Press Act was passed in 1920 (a very mild act in retrospect) Gandhiji's advice to the editors was that rather than see them publish a censored report he would 'rather see a complete stoppage of a newspaper if the editor cannot without fear of the consequence freely express his sentiments or publish those which he approves'. To publish a censored piece, he felt, is much the worst alternative. The mere appearance of a censored paper gives the most disheartening signal at a time of crisis: the signal that things are nine-tenths normal.

Thus, he said, 'non-cooperation while it gladly avails itself of the assistance that may be rendered by the press, it is — has to be — by its very nature independent of the press. There can be no doubt that every thought we print is being printed on sufferance. As soon as the circulation takes effect, the government for the sake of its existence will try to prohibit it. We may not expect this or any government to commit suicide. It must either reform or repress.'

In the ordinary course, Gandhiji said, 'repression must precede reform under a despotic government such as ours. The stoppage of the circulation of potent ideas that may destroy the government or compel repentance will be the least among the weapons in its repressive armoury. We must therefore devise methods of circulating our ideas unless and until the whole press becomes fearless, defies consequences and publishes ideas, even when it is in disagreement with them just for the purpose of securing its freedom.'

He added: 'An editor with an original idea or an



effective prescription for India's ills can easily write them out, a hundred hands can copy them, many more can read them out to thousands of listeners. I do hope, therefore, that non-cooperation editors, at any rate, will not refrain from expressing their thoughts for fear of the Press Act. They should regard it as sinful to keep their thoughts secret — a waste of energy to conduct a newspaper that cramps their thoughts. It is a negation of one's calling for an editor to have to suppress his best thoughts.'

Thus, his counsel to citizens was, first, that they must withdraw their cooperation from the regime in every detail — to abide by the rules of an oppressive regime regarding the procedures to be followed in courts and legislatures, regarding what could or could not be printed or broadcast, to abide by these rules was to cooperate with the regime, to play its game, to coquet with evil. Second, that instead of wasting their time in trying to outwit the regime by mere cleverness the people should devise alternative forums, alternative means for getting their voices heard.

Gandhiji realised that the fundamental task is to change the attitudes of the broad, unpropertied and unorganised masses, to awaken and organise them. Hence they — and not the rulers or the elite — should be the principal focus of the reformers' efforts.

He said the British government was behaving in the only way that was natural to it — that is, in the way it thought it could be protect British interests in India. A few petitions were not going to persuade it to abandon interests that it perceived to be vital. Thus, change would not come by persuading the government but by awakening the people. Once the people awoke, once they saw through the ruses of their rulers, once they realised their strength vis-a-vis their rulers, the latter would not be able to preserve the system for a day. Hence, he counselled, stop wasting your time in addressing petitions to the government; start talking to the people.

This insight and conviction explain, for

instance, Gandhiji's insistence that participants in political meetings must speak in Hindi or the provincial language. Until he came upon the scene, most leaders used to speak and write in English in the fond belief that only when they did so would they be adequately reported in the English language press, that only when they adequately reported in the English language press would their views reach the government. And, after all, the important thing was to convince the government. Was it not the government that had the ultimate power to take decisions for the constitutional changes that the movement wanted? What was the point in wasting time convincing the street

hawker. He could not decree constitutional changes.

Gandhiji turned all this around.'

Beneath all this was the insight that the ultimate outcome would depend on the people and not on the formal decisions and decrees of the government and that, therefore, the so-called leaders must turn their sights away from the rulers and towards the broad masses.

While the dispossessed masses must be the principal focus of the movement's attention, Gandhiji realised and stressed that reformers must make sure their message reaches other sections also. In particular, it must reach those who man the state apparatus — the bureaucracy, the police, and the armed forces. If these individuals remained uneducated in the broad political sense then they would be the unthinking instruments that could be unleashed against the people at any time. Even though in the long run these functionaries would realise that they were propping up an oppressive regime, a great deal of harm would be done in the meanwhile. It was for this reason that leaders during the national movement took care to get their message across to functionaries of the regime and, on occasion, to address direct appeals to them.

Gandhiji wanted the people to focus on the system that was holding them down. He knew that in India we tend to lose ourselves in following, adulating or condemning individuals, and so he wanted us to look beyond individuals.

Gandhiji's wanderings around the country and



1908: Followers of Gandhiji burn their registration certificates

his intimate contact with people taught him that, just as at the national level the people are apt to focus on one or two leaders, each of us as an individual is apt to view his particular difficulties as having their origin in his particular circumstances, as being caused by the unreasonableness of his particular employer, the rapacity of his particular landlord. He felt that through praxis, through actual confrontations with representatives of the system, popular movements must teach each of us that their particular difficulties have common causes that have to do with the fundamental nature of the system itself.

Finally, Gandhiji believed that the movements must remain non-violent. For him, of course, ahimsa was a religious principle. He commended non-violent satyagraha partly on the grounds that if the satyagraha happened to be wrong, then by adopting a method of persuasion that imposed suffering only on himself would he be certain not to injure his adversaries in any way. He also believed that the satyagraha must believe in ahimsa absolutely, without any reservations whatsoever. He felt that as satyagraha were protracted struggles and as they could bring great suffering upon the satyagraha, unless the satyagraha was absolutely committed to ahimsa, he would falter at the crucial moment and lose himself in violence.

He was conscious that a large proportion of his followers did not believe in ahimsa as a creed. He urged it to them as a political method, emphasising at times that 'a right act is right whether done for policy or for its own sake', and acknowledging on other occasions that 'I have enrolled under the banner of justice all those who wish to secure it; and in doing so, as a practical reformer, I have not hesitated to take in those who I know are actuated by hatred'. And he always stressed that violence was preferable to inaction; that he would recommend violence rather than countenance the emasculation of the country; that he would much rather citizens were openly violent than that they were non-violent out of cowardice — out of fear of being killed or injured in violent engagements.

Doesn't it all depend on a leader? After all, so much incendiary material is always lying around in a poor country and yet nothing has ever come of it. What can anyone do until the Messiah appears?

Gandhiji's view was that just as we must look beyond individuals who occupy office, so also we must look beyond individuals who happen to be leading popular movements at any time. Deliverance will not come by the strength of one leader but by the effort of the people themselves. It

follows by implication that, if conditions remain unchanged, they would have remained that way not because the leader who called them to battle has failed to do his job but because the people at large have not made the requisite effort. A leader can only point the way; the people, if they are to reach the goal, must trudge the road themselves.

Gandhiji used to say that his object was not to transform the people into parasites by making them dependent on a leader; his object was to make them self-reliant. It was neither his mission, he said, and it was beyond his capacity to be 'a knight errant wandering everywhere to deliver people from every difficult situation.' His humble occupation, he said, had been to show people how they could overcome their own difficulties.

Gandhiji's entire life was a search for the methods by which individuals could fortify themselves against the pressures that regimes and their agents would undoubtedly bring to bear upon them. Much of his teaching was devoted to specifying these ways and to dispelling the various hesitations that keep all of us from joining the great struggles of our times. The Gita, Gandhiji was to affirm after his experiments and introspection, spelled out the conditions that would make the individual invulnerable: that he give up all attachment to his possessions including among these the attachment to his ultimate possession — his body, that he rid himself of all false attachments to his friends and relatives, that he free himself from conventional ambitions.

We do not have to think long to see the relevance of these teachings to our concerns. If I am attached to my possessions, then I am vulnerable to anyone who can deprive me of them and I am beholden to anyone who can help me enlarge them. As governments can do all this better than anyone else, I am both vulnerable and beholden to these governments. If my attachment to my brother takes the false form of an obsession to help him get along by acquiring jobs and licences, I am naturally mortgaged to the authorities who can give or deny jobs and licences.

Gandhiji used to say that the test of a man's devotion to the ideals he espouses is his willingness to die for them and that we would attain true swaraj only when we had learned to die with fearlessness and love in our hearts.

The individual who has imbibed these teachings is always prepared to, and indeed is happy to, face the consequences of his acts. It was this spirit of willingly accepting the consequences of following



their conscience — that distinguished the satyagrahas during the independence struggles.

Gandhiji — even as Krishna in the Gita — was just as concerned to dispel the hesitations that keep individuals from consecrating themselves to the country's cause and that of the people.

Among these was the fear of failure. The fruits of political action do not ripen for decades and decades. The individual hesitates to enter the fray fearing that it may all turn out to be a failure, that he may devote all his life to a cause and yet in the end the cause may elude him, that he may put in decades of effort only to discover in the end that he has not made the slightest difference to the existing state of affairs. Out of this fear of failure most of us stand back till we are more or less certain that the cause has a good chance of succeeding. And so, recalling once again the teachings of the Gita, Gandhiji emphasised that the satyagraha must take up a cause because he believes it to be right and not because some calculus has shown him that he is likely to succeed in the conventional sense of the term. Indeed, Gandhiji taught, failure is impossible in a righteous struggle for the vital thing in such a struggle is not to reach a conventionally defined goal — even though one's struggle to reach the goal — but to make the effort. ^

Just as the individual should not wait for others, so should he not postpone the first step for the day when he has perfected himself in every way. Instead, Gandhiji stressed, he should take the first step forthwith and then concentrate on each subsequent step — acquiring in this way perfection through praxis rather than sitting back helplessly until full perfection descends upon him. Nor should he postpone the first step until some great battles are joined; instead he should make right conduct the hallmark of everything he does, acquiring strength for the great battles through his daily conduct. Nor, indeed, is the first step shrouded in great mystery: as a first step the individual must dissociate himself from the regime that is harming the country and the people. A single act of defiance, an uncompromising declaration about the true nature of the regime



1914: Strikers march through Volksrust in a mass display of non-violent protest

anything, in fact, that ruptures the individual's links with the system that he has concluded is pernicious for the country — is as good a first step as any.

Only the individual who is performing tapas in this form — who is striving ceaselessly to improve his conducts, whose efforts to serve the people are unremitting — only he can claim that he is taking his stand in his conscience. We have noted earlier that Gandhiji reaffirmed the individual's right to defy all authority when his conscience convinced him that obedience would be a compromise with untruth and evil. This affirmation of the right was not, he said, a license for everyone to do as he pleases, for everyone to insist that he had a right to go his own way irrespective of its consequences for the society as a whole. The right enjoined a heavy duty: that the individual consecrate himself to truth and justice and to the service of the people. A conscience was not something that everyone could conjure up in a day dream.

His experience, he said, has taught him that even if the ideal was not attained by all, the very fact that a few strove towards it — and that they strove ceaselessly towards its undiluted form — would make a material difference to the state of affairs, that the striving itself would bring the ideal closer to realisation even as single drops of water would ultimately make their way through the hardest rock. Moreover, he said, history showed it to have been the case that what was dismissed as being utopian at one stage had become commonplace at the next.

Popular movements that aim at reconstructing a country and a society do not need supermen.



Throughout his life, and especially in his autobiography, Gandhiji took pains to show that he had hewn himself out of ordinary material, that anyone who made the requisite effort could do the same. The movements he led and the ones that are associated with his name show that not just individuals but entire masses are capable of taking their stand on principles and acting in a disciplined manner until their stand has been vindicated.

He used to point to the fact, for example, that thousands had been involved in the satyagrahas in South Africa, that all of them had been ordinary men and women, that the satyagrahas had lasted eight long years and had entailed

great hardship for each of them — and yet not one of them had deserted his post; not one of them had compromised his principles.

The greatest message that Gandhiji holds out for us is precisely to dispel the myths that a country owes its prostrate state to some mysterious factors, that the ways to set things right are equally

mysterious, that we must await supermen to uncover these ways and lead us to them. Gandhiji's teachings and his example shows us that the important thing — and the difficult one —

is not of discovering what is right, of discovering what needs to be done or of convincing people that such and thus is the correct standpoint, but to make them do what they already know to be right.

Even more important, the truly important thing — and the even more difficult one — is not just one of resolving to do so at some future occasion, of resolving to take up some of the cudgels in some great engagements but of taking the first step and taking it now.

Thus, the sine qua non for popular movements is not the single superman who will lead them but the band of ordinary individuals who will consecrate themselves to the cause of the country. And the sine qua non for each of them is not that they build up stamina for the ultimate engagement but that they take the first step.



Mahatma Gandhi

## Some thoughts on non-violence

'When a church which has not lived out a costly identification with the oppressed offers to mediate between hostile parties, it merely adds to the total impression that it wants to stay above the conflict and not take sides. The church says to the lion and the lamb, Here, let me negotiate a truce — to which the lion replies, Fine, after I finish my lunch.

The word reconciliation has also been misused. One person we spoke with commented: The two dirtiest words in black South Africa today are non-violence and reconciliation. Reconciliation is necessary, and it must be engaged in at all stages of the struggle. The human quality of the opponent must be continually affirmed. Some kind of trust which can be the basis of the new society to come must be established even in the midst of conflict.

But when church leaders preach reconciliation without having unequivocally committed themselves to struggle on the side of the oppressed for justice, they are caught straddling a pseudo-neutrality made of nothing but thin air.

Neutrality in a situation of oppression always supports the status quo. Reduction of conflict by means of a phony peace is not a christian goal. Justice is the goal, and that may require an acceleration of conflict as a necessary stage stage in forcing those in power to bring about genuine change.' — Walter Wink, *Jesus' Third Way*

# 1.3 Prophets of non-violence

## 1.3.2 Helder Camara

**We bless you Father.**

We bless you Father,  
for the thirst  
you put in us,  
for the boldness  
you inspire,  
for the fire  
alight in us,  
that is you in us,  
you the just.

Never mind  
that our thirst  
is mostly unquenched.  
(pity the satisfied).  
Never mind  
our bold plots  
are mostly unclimbed,  
wanted not realised.

Who better than you  
knows that success  
comes not from us.  
You ask us to do  
our utmost only,  
but willingly.



Bishop Helder Camara, diocese of Recife in Brazil

### First Abraham

God thinks of all men but calls some to special work. He drives these to take a leap in the dark, to set out. He tries them by fearful hardships. But he supports and encourages them. He gives them the fine and dangerous mission to act as his instruments. He entrusts them with the task of being present discreetly when decisive decisions are made.

He sends them out on the road to draw others to them, many others. He expects them to bear witness in the hour of trial.

Abraham was the first to be thus called by God. He did not delay for a moment. He set out. He faced hardships. He learned to his cost how to arouse his brothers in the name of God. To call. To encourage. To start moving.

### God's voice today

We are told that Abraham and other patriarchs heard the voice of God. Can we also hear the

Lord's call. Isn't it pretentious to say this? Dangerously presumptuous?

We live in a world where millions of our fellow men live in inhuman conditions, practically in slavery. If we are not deaf we hear the cries of the oppressed. Their cries are the voice of God.

We who live in rich countries where there are always pockets of underdevelopment and wretchedness, hear if we want to hear, the unvoiced demands of those who have no voice and no hope. The pleas of those who have no voice and no hope are the voice of God.

Anyone who has become aware of the injustices caused by the unfair division of wealth, must, if he has a heart, listen to the silent or violent protests of the poor. The protests of the poor are the voice of God.

Are we so deaf that we do not hear a loving God warning us that humanity is in danger of committing suicide? Are we so selfish that we do not hear the just God demanding that we do all we can to stop injustice suffocating the world and driving it to war?

Are we so alienated that we can worship God at our ease in luxurious temples which are often empty in spite of all their liturgical pomp, and fail to see, hear and serve God where he is present and where he requires our presence, among mankind, the poor, the oppressed, the victims of injustices in which we ourselves are often involved?

### The inevitable desert

We must have no illusions. We must not be naive. If we listen to the voice of God, we make our choice, get out of ourselves and fight non-violently for a better world. We must not expect to find it easy; we shall not walk on roses, people will not throng to hear us and applaud, and we shall not always be aware of divine protection. If

Footnote: These extracts are from *The Desert Is Fertile* by Helder Camara

we are to be pilgrims for justice and peace, we must expect the desert.

#### **The prayer of the family of Abraham**

Some believe in and rely on prayer, others think of it as mumbo jumbo. But we should not allow the word prayer to divide us. Whenever we express our dearest wishes, that is praying.

What prayer could the Abrahamic minorities say in common, over and above their differences?

Let us open our eyes. Let us begin at once to fight our selfishness and come out of ourselves, to dedicate ourselves once and for all, whatever the sacrifices, to the non-violent struggle for a juster and more human world.

Let us not put off the decision till tomorrow. Let us begin today, now, intelligently and firmly.

Let us look about us and recognise our brothers and sisters who are called like us to give their ease and join all those who hunger for the truth and who have sworn to give their lives to make peace through justice and love.

Let us not waste time discussing who shall be our leader. What is important is for us to unite and go forward, remembering that time is our enemy.

Let us give the best of ourselves to helping create moral pressure for freedom to bring about the necessary structural changes.

Let us gather information on the situation we

wish to change.

Let us spread this information by all reasonable means at our disposal. And let the information be truthful, able to stand up to criticism and disturb the consciences of all good men.

Let us through all this stand firm without falling into hatred, let us be understanding without conniving at evil.

Let us make our own the prayer of St Francis of Assisi and let us give our lives to putting it into practice:

Lord make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred let me sow love.

Where there is resentment let me bring forgiveness

Where there is discord let me bring harmony.

Where there is error let me bring truth.

Where there is doubt let me bring faith.

Where there is despair let me bring hope.

Where there is darkness let me bring light.

Where there is sadness let me bring joy.

Master, let me not seek

rather to be consoled than to console

to be understood than to understand

to be loved than to love

For in giving we receive

in forgetting ourselves we find ourselves

in forgiving that we are forgiven

in dying that we rise to eternal life.

**'I can boldly declare, and with certainty, that so long as there is even a handful of men true to their pledge (to suffer all penalties rather than submit to an unjust law), there can be only one end to the struggle — and that is victory' — Gandhi**

**'A Christian who for fear of suffering and death refuses to be at the heart of the struggle in order to forge a just and righteous society that foreshadows the kingdom of peace and love, has never understood the life-giving message of the Resurrection.' — Karl Gaspar**

**'No army can withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come.' — Victor Hugo**

**'Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison — the house in a slave state in which a free man can abide with honour.' — Thoreau**

**'Somehow we must be able to stand up before our most bitter opponents and say: We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will and we will still love you.' — Martin Luther King**



# 1.3 Prophets of non-violence

## 1.3.3 Martin Luther King



Martin Luther King speaks to the people

'I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits. I believe that what self-centered men have torn down, other-centered men can build up.'

'The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. The true neighbour will risk his position, his prestige, and even his life for the welfare of others. In dangerous valleys and hazardous pathways, he will lift some bruised and beaten brother to a higher and more noble life.'

### Racism

'Every parent at some time faces the problem of explaining the facts of life to his child. Just as inevitably, for the negro parent, the moment comes when he must explain to his offspring the facts of

segregation.

'My mother took me on her lap and began by telling me about slavery and how it had ended with the Civil War.

'She tried to explain the divided system of the South — the segregated schools, restaurants, theatres, housing; the white and coloured signs on drinking fountains, waiting rooms, lavatories — as a social condition rather than a natural order.

'Then she said the words that almost every negro hears before he can yet understand the injustice that makes them necessary: 'You are as good as anyone'.'

### Civil rights

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within him has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and

Footnote: These extracts are from *The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

something without has reminded him that it can be gained.

'Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the *zeitgeist*, and with his brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency towards the promised land of racial justice.'

'The negro freedom movement would have been historic and worthy even if it had only served the cause of civil rights.

'But its laurels are greater because it stimulated a broader social movement that elevated the moral level of the nation.

'In the struggle against the preponderant evils of the society, decent values were preserved.

'Moreover, a significant body of young people learned that in opposing the tyrannical forces that were crushing them, they added stature and meaning to their lives.

'The negro and white youth who in alliance fought bruising engagements with the status quo inspired each other with a sense of moral mission, and both gave the nation an example of self-sacrifice and dedication.'

#### **Faith and religion**

'Love is the most durable power in the world. This creative force, so beautifully exemplified in the life of our Christ, is the most potent instrument available in mankind's quest for peace and security.'



**Power of the People: The Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom on March 17, 1957**

'If you are cut down in a movement that is designed to save the soul of a nation, then no other death could be more redemptive.'

#### **Non-violence**

'Admittedly, nonviolence in the truest sense is not a strategy that one uses simply because it is expedient at the moment; nonviolence is

ultimately a way of life that men live by because of the sheer morality of its claim. But even granting this, the willingness to use nonviolence as a technique is a step forward.

For he who goes this far is more likely to adopt non-violence later as a way of life.'

'The nonviolent approach does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor. It first does something to the hearts and souls of those committed to it. It gives them new self-respect; it calls up resources of strength and courage that they did not know they had. Finally it reaches the opponent and so stirs his conscience that reconciliation becomes a reality'.

#### Peace

'I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of thermonuclear destruction.

'I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.

'I believe that even amid today's mortar bursts and whining bullets, there is still hope for a brighter tomorrow.

'I believe that wounded justice, lying prostrate on the blood flowing streets of our nations can be lifted from this dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men.

'I still believe that one day mankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed, and nonviolent redemptive goodwill will proclaim the rule of the land.

'And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid.

'I still believe that we shall overcome'



May 3, 1963: A civil rights demonstration is broken up by police and dogs

#### I have been to the mountain top

'.... I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead.

'But it doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountain top.

'And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life; longevity has its place. But I am not concerned about that now.

'I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you.

'But I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land. And I'm happy tonight, I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.'

#### I have a dream

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, Black men and White men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of that old Negro spiritual: 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!'





#### Justice and freedom

'When evil men plot, good men must plan. When evil men burn and bomb, good men must build and bind. When evil men shout ugly words of hatred, good men must commit themselves to the glories of love. Where evil men would seek to perpetuate an unjust status quo, good men must seek to bring into being a real order of justice.'

'The deep rumbling of discontent that we hear today is the thunder of disinherited masses, rising from dungeons of oppression to the bright hills of freedom., in one majestic chorus the rising masses singing, in the words of our freedom song, 'Ain't gonna let nobody turn us around.'

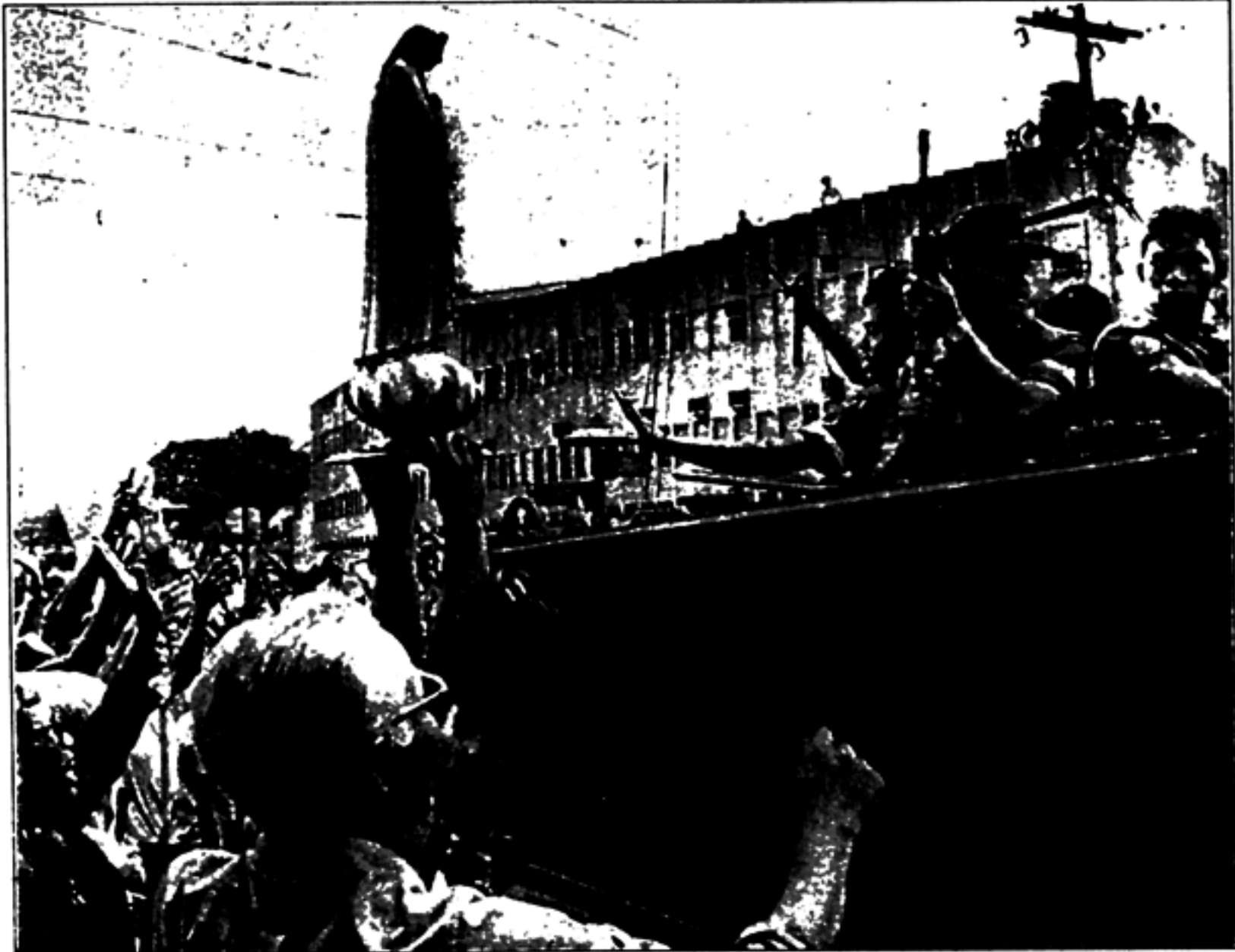
All over the world, like a fever, the freedom movement is spreading in the widest liberation in history. The great masses of people are determined to end the exploitation of their races and land. They are awake and moving toward their goal like a tidal wave.

You can hear them rumbling in every village, street, on the docks, in the houses, among the students, in the churches and at political meetings.

'These developments should not surprise any student of history. Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself. The Bible tells us the thrilling story of how Moses stood in Pharaoh's court centuries ago and cried: Let my people go.'

## 1.3 Prophets of non-violence

### 1.3.4 Non-violence in the Philippines



In 1986, President Marcos attempted to defraud the outcome of the elections and reproclaimed himself president. Two ministers in the military declared that Aquino had won. This picture, and the ones that follow, show how the church under Cardinal Sin called the people onto the streets to prevent the tanks under Marcos' command from attacking the camp where the two military ministers were based. It has become known as the EDSA revolution as this is the name of the highway. It should be noted that these events are one aspect in the Filipinos' long struggle for justice and freedom, which no doubt will continue until the aspirations of the peasants and workers have been achieved.

#### A brave example to the world

The dramatic collapse of Ferdinand E Marcos' regime in the face of an enormous non-violent insurrection has important lessons. The events in the Philippines showed that dictators need not be accepted passively, and that effective alternatives to violent revolts exist. The principle is to withdraw the sources of power.

The Catholic bishops spoke out against Marcos and counseled non-violent resistance. Opposition politicians planned a campaign of economic and political resistance. The general population

mounted huge demonstrations to show that it would not submit to election fraud and murder. Soldiers mutinied, and officials and diplomats defected. Thousands of people turned back tanks ordered to attack non-violent rebel troops at Camp Crame. — Gene Sharp, in the book *People Power*.

#### A Marian Revolution

This is an eyewitness account of a revolution. It is different from the usual such account in that it is not one, but several witnesses speaking.

It also speaks of a different sort of revolution.



one that is non-violent, fought not with arms but with what has since been called 'people power'.

Revolutions tend to be ugly, even when successful. This is an exception; it is a 'beautiful revolution'. Its 'combatants' include men, women and children who had more fun than fear during the events, and who like to think of what they went through as a religious experience. Their triumph confirms for them not the strength of an army nor a political grouping, but the power of prayer. They feel they have been part of a miracle.

The revolution took place in Manila on February 22-25, 1986. It came as a dramatic sequel to an electoral contest waged between President Ferdinand Marcos, in power for 20 years, and Mrs Corazon Aquino, widow of assassinated political leader Benigno Aquino Jr. Many had predicted that Aquino would get the votes, but that Marcos would claim power and the Filipinos would simply accept it — as they had in the past accepted corrupt elections.

It did not turn out that way at all. The Filipinos surprised themselves. For the first time in their modern history, they decided to oust a government — the most powerful one they had known since Philippine independence.

A sector of the military provided the mechanism that allowed men, women and children to go out into the streets in support of the rebellion, but once out there they took command of the field and protected the army from possible attack, instead of the army protecting them.

Ironically, it was not hate or anger that drove the masses into the street. They had come to hate the regime, yes; they were certainly outraged by the naked trampling of their votes, yes; but it was something better than hate that guided their steps in the end — it was Faith.

Faced with the naked fact of the regime's ruthlessness, they had in the beginning prayed for divine intervention in their history, offered countless Masses, and sought the special intercession of the Blessed Virgin, to whom they had dedicated the year before as a Marian Year. They offered more Masses as it became clear that the strongman had begun to dig in, in defiance of the popular will. And now in the middle of military revolt, they held onto their rosary beads as they faced troops and tanks. They made a Marian celebration of the revolution. It made no sense at all. And yet they won. — Francisco Tatad in *People Power*.

#### Jesus' Third Way

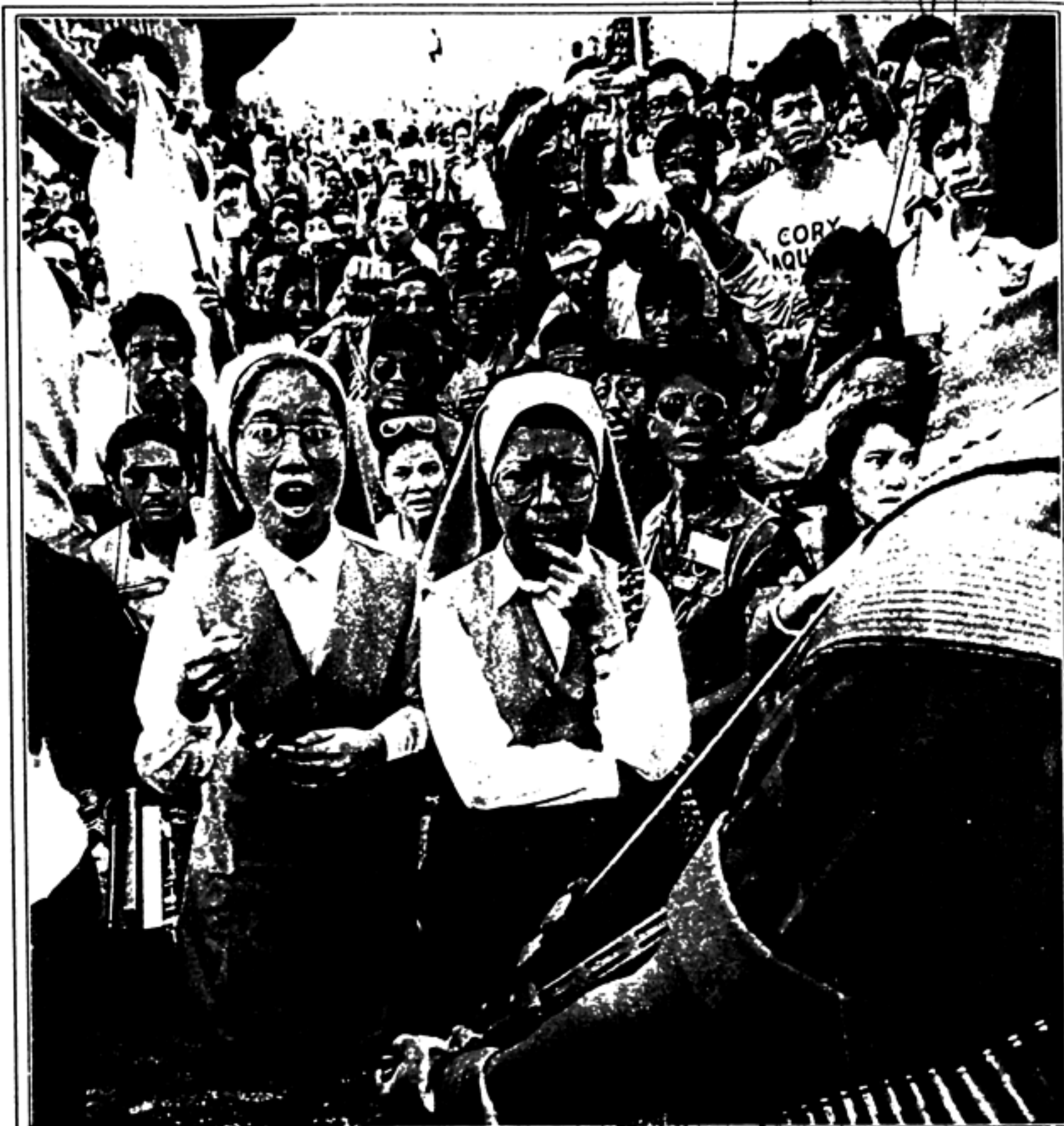
One key to the success of the non-violent victory in the Philippines was the degree of participation by the churches' top leadership in non-violence training. A year and a half before Marcos was toppled from power, a non-violent action movement was founded known as AKKAPKA (Action for Peace and Justice). Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr led seminars in non-violence training for six weeks, including one for 30 Catholic Bishops. Richard Deats, also from the

Fellowship of Reconciliation, then followed with three weeks of training workshops primarily for Protestants.

These foundational meetings were then followed by 40 non-violence seminars held in 30 provinces within the year. At strategy sessions, which regularly included Cory Aquino and Cardinal Sin, various scenarios for protecting against election fraud by means of non-violent resistance were discussed. When the crisis came, half a million poll watchers had been trained, and were prepared to give their lives to prevent the falsification of ballots.



People put their hands and bodies against the tanks.



**Nuns praying the rosary during the Filipino protests**

Later, when key military leaders defected to a 'rebel' army base, Cardinal Sin went to three orders of contemplative nuns and told them: 'We are now in battle. Prostrate yourselves, pray and fast. You are the powerhouse of God and central to the battle. Fast until death if necessary.'

Then, over the Catholic radio, Cardinal Sin called upon the people to place their unarmed bodies between the defectors and the government troops.

There were only a few in the beginning but

soon hundreds of thousands of people made a human wall around the base, tying yellow ribbons on the gun barrels of tanks and offering soldiers gifts of food, candies, and garlands of flowers. President Marcos ordered the tanks to attack. Their commanders refused to proceed when nuns and priests sat in front of their tracks. Pilots ordered to bomb the rebel base with its human cordon, refused and defected to a nearby United States military base. — Walter Wink in *Jesus' Third Way*.



Many people knelt in prayer and (below) put their hands and bodies in front of the tanks.



**Section Two**

**What has the  
church done  
in the past?**



## 2.1 Church action in the past

### Sheena Duncan

Perhaps the best remembered united church action was the refusal of the church leaders to obey the 'Church Clause' in 1957. Archbishop Clayton wrote to the Prime Minister on behalf of the church leaders declaring that they would be unable in conscience to obey. The clause prohibited people of other races from worshipping in churches in white areas. It became law but was never enforced.

Many individual church people have undertaken actions which sometimes have been well supported by the institutional church but sometimes has not. One remembers David Russell and others walking from Transkei to Cape Town to highlight the evils of migrant labour and later living on the rations issued to people who had been forcibly resettled. One thinks of all the conscientious objectors who have gone to prison or into detention barracks rather than serving in the SADF.

There have been those Ministers who returned their licences as marriage officers rather than abide by the requirements of Mixed Marriage Act. In fact there are very many individual actions to be remembered both within and outside the church but there has been a sad lack of united and official church action over the apartheid years.

The church has passed many resolutions but has most often failed to put them into effect. When the church has entered into civil disobedience it has tended to be in response to emergency situations and the actions have been of an important symbolic nature such as the march to John Vorster Square when the Revd John Thorne was detained and the very recent march in Cape Town when the February restrictions were imposed on organisations.

These symbolic actions are important but they are not planned with a fixed goal and an ongoing follow up. It is only in the last months that the church leaders have become serious and unanimous in the need to act in a focussed, planned and strategic way.

This is in contrast to the secular organisations which have in recent years undertaken very successful actions involving organisation, discipline, courage, strategic planning and considerable sacrifice. These actions have been boycotts, non-participation, work stayaways etc. - the withholding of co-operation in many different ways. The success of these strategies is evidenced by the fact that the emergency regulations seek to

prohibit non-violent campaigns of all kinds. They have not succeeded in doing so and the struggle for liberation is infinitely further advanced than it was twenty years ago when we began to shake off the depression, inertia and fear which followed the 1960 state of emergency and the bannings of the ANC and PAC. It is encouraging to remember that the temporary set back which followed the 1977 bannings of organisations was of short duration in comparison to the earlier one.

It is important to remember that there are no instant solutions and many years of hard work and commitment lie ahead.

In recent years, the scope of church action has increased. Some examples are:

1. The church has campaigned against removals. Church Ministers have sat in vigil at removal spots to prevent the authorities from moving settled communities.
2. Many church delegations have visited Namibia to see for themselves the horrors of war and have called, in unison with the people of Namibia for the withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia.
3. Race classification is the basis of all apartheid laws and of the whole constitutional system. All those resident in South Africa are classified according to race and this classification is done when a birth is registered or, failing that, when a person must apply for an Identity Document at the age of 16.

From within the Division of Justice and Reconciliation of the SACC a plan has been



SACC vice-president  
Sheena Duncan



Archbishop Clayton wrote to Dr Verwoerd saying the church would be unable to obey the 'church clause'



Father Trevor Huddleston campaigned against the Sophiatown removals.



Bishop David Russell marched from Transkei to Cape Town to protest against migrant labour



Dr Beyers Naude stood by the resolutions of the 1960 Cottesloe Consultation when the findings were attacked by the Prime Minister

devised for the church to set up an alternative system of birth registration for those parents who do not wish their babies to be racially classified. Registrations will only be undertaken for babies who are under six months. The detailed plans have been circulated to all member-churches of the Council. The Department of Home Affairs has been fully informed and a delegation has met with the Director General and his senior officials at which meeting our intention to go ahead was made clear to him in spite of the fact that it is against the law for parents not to register the births of their children and for the church to encourage them not to do so.

At the time of writing the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians have committed themselves to going ahead and to put this scheme into operation. It is hoped that other denominations will join in.

4. Initiated within the SACBC and worked on by an ecumenical group of church representatives is a plan for the churches to provide a way for conscientious objectors to military service in South Africa and Namibia to demonstrate their commitment to the people of Southern Africa by working within the structures of the church at the same pay as they would have received had they been recognised by the Board for Religious Objection.

For those who are prepared to face a long term of imprisonment for their refusal this service will be within SA with the full support of the church.

For those who do not feel able to face the terrible penalties but who do not want to disappear to Europe or America placements will be made within the churches in other countries in Southern Africa.

The planning is well advanced but responses are still awaited from the different denominations. A name for this project has not been finalised. It is at the moment known as the Alternative Service Project.

5. The Minister of Home Affairs wrote to the SACC in October 1987 demanding that we submit Ecunews to him in terms of the emergency regulations. The Council refused to obey the order and wrote to the Minister telling him this. He has said that we are to be prosecuted.

**Church leaders' resolution on Ecunews:**

Refusal to obey the order of the Minister of Home Affairs made in terms of the State of Emergency Regulations.

The meeting of Leaders of the Member Churches of the South African Council of Churches held in Johannesburg on 2nd and 3rd February 1988 affirmed the decision of the Executive Committee of the Council made on 13 - 14th October 1987 that the Council must in conscience decline to comply with the Minister's executive order that it must submit one copy of each issue of Ecunews to him in terms of regulation 7B(1) of the regulations promulgated by proclamation R-123 of 28th August 1987.

6. There are several positive actions within the different denominations. We need to look carefully at the Catholic Church's programmes over the last eight years or so and we need to study the Methodist plan of action Ubulungisa which is now being put into effect.

There may well be others which will be spoken of at the conference. There are certainly many programmes which address the situation directly such as the sanctuary and covenant projects and the many many parish level or regional level initiatives



The church leaders have shown their firm support for conscientious objectors. Here Phillip Wilkinson (third from right) from Port Elizabeth is seen with Bishop Coleman, Bishop Evans, Archbishop Hurley, Alex Boraine and Rev George Irvine



which we need to value and to draw into some overall co-ordinated picture.

7. The church has passed resolutions on sanctions thus opening up the debate on sanctions, which up until that time very little debate had taken place.

#### **1985 SACC Resolution on Disinvestment:**

Referred to: SACC Executive, Member Churches, Regional Councils, Affiliated Organisations and the International Community.

This National Conference of the South African Council of Churches, being deeply concerned at the violent conflict in which people of South Africa are now embroiled,

1. reiterates the statements which the Council has made in the past that foreign investment and loans have been used to support prevailing patterns of power and privilege in South Africa;

2. recognises that many church leaders and Christian people in South Africa are in favour of (selective) disinvestment and economic sanctions because they believe that the situation is now so serious that economic action must be taken to strengthen political and diplomatic pressures on South Africa to force the South African government to take seriously the need for fundamental change in South Africa.;

3. welcomes the concern and support of our fellow Christians in other countries who are working to assist us in finding non-violent ways in which fundamental change can be brought about in South Africa;

4. believes that the pressure in western countries for disinvestment and divestment has been most effective in moving white South Africans into a more serious consideration of the cause of the political conflict in this country;

5. confesses that in the churches there has been no proper debate and consideration of the disinvestment question because we have allowed ourselves to be restrained by the severity of laws designed to prevent open discussion of economic sanctions. This has meant that the only arguments being heard in South Africa are those in opposition to disinvestment.

This Conference therefore resolves:

a) to express our belief that disinvestment and similar economic pressures are now called for as a peaceful and effective means of putting pressure on the South African Government to bring about those fundamental changes this country needs;

b) to ask our partner churches in other countries to continue with their efforts to identify and promote effective economic pressures to influence

the situation in South Africa, towards achieving justice and peace in this country and minimizing the violence of the conflict;

#### **The South African situation and the question of economic pressure (SACBC, 1986)**

The question we have to face is : what is the alternative to violence? Is it moral persuasion? This has been tried for a very long time by quite a few churches and other bodies. It has not succeeded. It seems that something with greater impact is necessary and that could include such non-violent measures as boycotts, passive resistance and economic pressure - the pressure of divestment, disinvestment, sanctions. If we have to choose between these measures and the kind of violence we have been witnessing since September 1984 the answer is clear.

While still open to dialogue, we see no choice but to envisage forms of non-violent action such as passive resistance, boycott and economic pressure to move our country away from its present state of racial conflict and set it firmly on the road to justice and full participation of all its inhabitants in the structure of government. We reaffirm our total abhorrence of the system of apartheid which is directly opposed to the teaching of Christ and the God-given dignity of every human being and is the greatest single obstacle to peace in our land.

We make our own the words of our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II:

'Our repudiation of every form of racial discrimination is convinced and total: it is based on the awareness of the dignity common to every man, made in the image and likeness of the Creator and called to the status of Son of God'.

#### **Pastoral letter on economic pressure for justice (SACBC, 1986)**

We must emphasise from the start that it is the unprecedented seriousness of our present crisis, the enormity of the present suffering of the oppressed people of South Africa and the horrifying spectre of escalating violence that has led us to take this stand. Anyone who does not appreciate the untold daily sufferings of the people, the pain, the insecurity, the starvation and horrors of widespread unemployment that are associated with the present system, will also not appreciate the need for drastic and extraordinary measures to put an end to all this misery as quickly as possible. The system of apartheid has caused so much suffering and so much harm to human relations in our country for so long and is now being defended, despite some reforms, with such



repressive violence that people have had to resort to the strongest possible forms of pressure to change the system. It seems that the most effective of non-violent forms of pressure left is economic pressure.

#### The Lusaka statement

We urgently call upon the churches in countries which through economic and political cooperation with South Africa and Namibia, support the apartheid regime, to exert increased pressure upon their governments to implement sanctions, and upon banks, corporations and trading institutions to withdraw from doing business with South Africa and Namibia. We especially call upon the international community not to engage in newly devised deceptive forms of disinvestment which maintain the status quo, but instead to apply immediate and comprehensive sanctions to South Africa and Namibia.

#### The Starnberg Institute Report (Germany)

The analyses show:

- that the South African economy is highly vulnerable to targeted international sanctions;
- that by wielding effective sanctions a small group of only six countries (USA, UK, Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and Switzerland) have the power to chop through one of the apartheid regime's most vital supports - its integration into the world economy;
- that as far as these countries are concerned, effective sanctions would entail a fairly small package of measures with negligible overall negative effects on their own economies. Rigorous application of any one of the possible measures in the fields of international credit, foreign trade and the activities of foreign-owned companies in South Africa would serve to destabilise the apartheid regime.

For example, a refusal to rollover South African loans together with a ban on new money would swiftly push South Africa into international insolvency and provoke massive capital flight, leading to a fiscal crisis of the state, a cessation of investment and an exodus of businesspeople and experts - in all, to an irrecoverable weakening of the apartheid regime.

A look back at the experience of recent years, even decades, shows that a policy of pin-pricks - which has marked the cautious approach of the western industrial countries until recently and which continues to do so from the standpoint of the apartheid regime - makes very little contribution to hastening what world opinion sees

as the long overdue end of the apartheid regime. Sanctions of the type applied so far, poorly conceived and coordinated, half-heartedly imposed and inadequately carried through, not only achieve nothing but serve to indefinitely postpone the demise of apartheid and simply prolong the discrimination, oppression and exploitation of the majority of the population of South Africa itself and South Africa's intimidation of, military threats to, sabotage within and economic destabilisation of its Southern African neighbours.

The international management consultancy Business International Corporation, on which we have drawn extensively above, recently observed: The white minority regime is still supported by strong international political and economic links. But these are slowly and perceptibly weakening. The issue is, however, to break these 'international political and economic links not slowly and perceptibly but swiftly and completely in order to end the violent apartheid regime.

What have others said about sanctions?

Dr Beyers Naude, then general secretary of the SACC, urged that sanctions be imposed because 'most sections of South Africa's black community, backed by the churches, now see sanctions as the last viable, non-violent means of bringing about the end of apartheid and limiting further bloodshed and the threat of open civil war'. (The Star, 12/9/86)

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie, called for tougher sanctions after visiting South Africa for Bishop Tutu's enthronement in 1986. He said: 'the church has to support the movement to achieve equal rights for all by refusing to give economic support to the regime.' (Evening Post, 16/9/86).

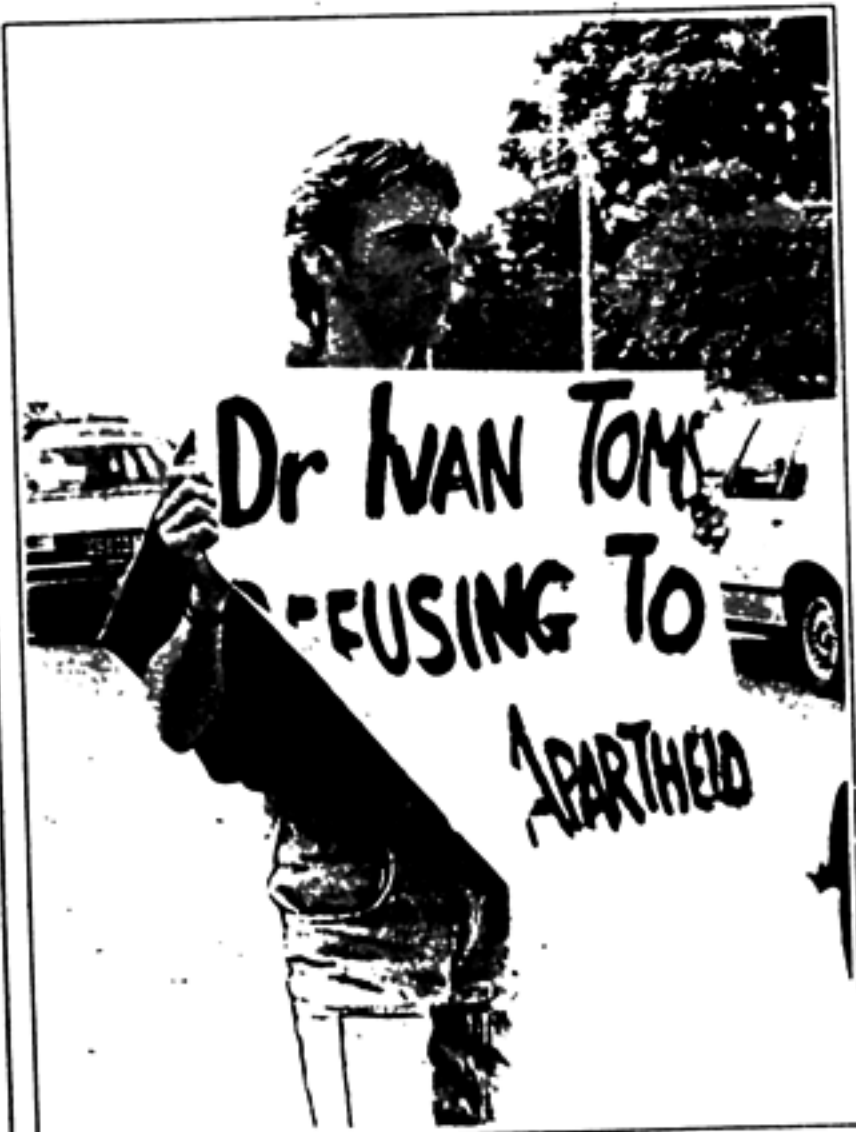
The World Methodist Council called for sanctions to 'make possible a less violent resolution to the South African tragedy'.

PW Botha himself admitted that it cost R22000-million to break the oil embargo between 1973 and 1984. This put a large strain on the economy.

'Just think what we could have done if we had that R22000-million today ... but we had to spend it because we could not bring our motor cars and diesel locomotives to a standstill as our economic life would have suffered. We paid a price, and we are still suffering today.' (Sanctions Handbook)



The church in action :Bishop Tutu speaks to the people of Mogopa, who were resisting their removal.



Wits students support Dr Ivan Toms, conscientious objector



Conscientious objector Richard Steele, who fasted for three weeks in 1985



The sanctions debate: Protestors in New York (left) and Toronto make their feelings known; and (below) the 1985 SACC national conference where the resolution on sanctions was taken.





Section Three

# **Church action in the present crisis**

## 3.1 Church resistance

### BSR Focus



The church leaders' march to Parliament on February 29 became headline news throughout the world. From left: Dr Khoza Mgoja (Methodist Church), Archbishop Stephen Naldoo (Catholic Church), Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Anglican Church), Dr Allan Boesak (Sendingkerk) and Rev Frank Chikane (SACC)

#### Bannings

On 24th February the Minister of Law and Order announced the restriction of 18 organisations under the State of Emergency regulations. For 17 of these organisations these restrictions stop short of an 'old-style' banning but have virtually the same effect in that they may not carry out the activities for which they were established.

To quote from the government gazette published on the same day: *I, Adriaan Johannes Vlok, Minister of Law and Order, hereby prohibit the organisations mentioned in the schedule hereto, as from the date of publication of this order and subject to regulation 6A(4) of the said regulations, from carrying on or performing any activities or acts whatsoever.* The exceptions provided for (in regulation 6A(4)) are that these organisations may continue to preserve their assets, keep their books and records up to date, comply with any legal obligations, take legal advice, carry out activities for which they have received special permission from the Minister of Law and Order.

The affected organisations range from a

political party, the Azanian People's Organisation; organisations established to care for detainees and their families such as the Detainees Support Committee and the Detainees Parents Support Committee; organisations such as the National Education Crisis Committee and the National Education Union of South Africa, consisting of students, parents and teachers who are campaigning for a resolution to the education crisis in our country; a number of civic and youth organisations based in the black townships and affiliated to the United Democratic Front; as well as the UDF itself an umbrella organisation of some 400 affiliates.

The Congress of South Africa Unions (COSATU) has also been restricted from doing anything outside narrowly defined 'shop floor' activities. They may not even publicly campaign for better working conditions and wages for workers. There is an ominous bill in the pipeline which will further restrict trade union activity, even on the 'shop floor'.

#### The churches' response

The response of church leaders was swift and

Footnote: BSR Focus is the newsletter of the Anglican Church's Board for Social Responsibility

*by Syd Luchetti*

decisive. The SACC convened an emergency meeting of church leaders on the following day. At this meeting a series of regional services was planned for the following Sunday. Also planned was a service of witness and protest to take place at St George's Cathedral on Monday 29th, February, from which the church leaders planned to walk to parliament as a group to deliver a petition to the State President.

What happened on that Monday became headline news throughout the world. However, there are some aspects of that particular event which have largely gone unnoticed.

Firstly the government was informed beforehand by the church leaders of their intentions. As the church leaders stated, this is in accordance with the principles of non-violent direct action

Secondly, the procession which included members of the assembled congregation was orderly and peaceful and there was no verbal abuse or provocation of any sort of the police.

The people formed up inside the cathedral, and within 50 yards, of the main entrance of the cathedral the leaders were stopped by a cordon of police. A police officer, Maj. Brazell, told them that the procession was illegal and that they should disperse. They refused and politely informed him that they intended to take a petition to the State President and would thereafter return to St George's. The leaders were then arrested.

The rest continued the procession. They were ordered to stop by Maj. Odendaal, who told them to wait 'for transport which was being arranged for them'. They waited where they were told to, but before any transport arrived a water cannon was brought on and they were sprayed with devastating force. Some were knocked off their feet, some pinned to the ground and others had great difficulty breathing. Still, they did not disperse. Eventually they too were arrested, about 150 in all, and taken in police vans -- the long awaited, arranged transport -- to Caledon Square.

After several hours all were released, after having been officially warned that charges were

being investigated.

The third aspect of the march which has largely gone unreported by the commercial press, is that this was a historic occasion in the life of the church in South Africa. Never before has such a wide range of church leadership been represented in a protest such as this: everything from an archbishop of an African Independent Church to an archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church.

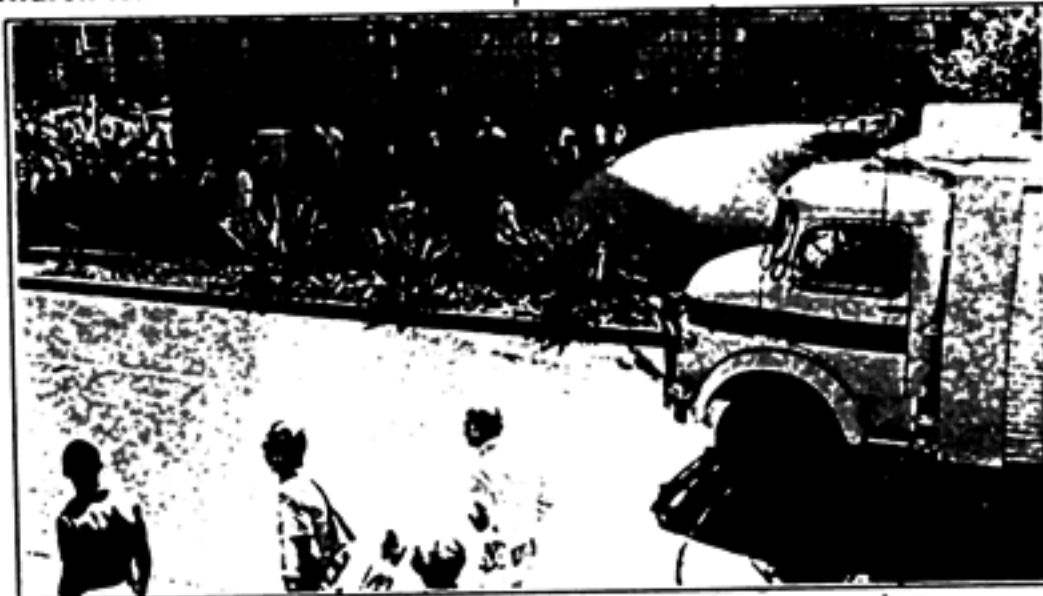
#### Non-violent direct action

The church leaders had clearly decided before the march to follow established principles of non-violent direct action (nyda.)

An established principle of non violent direct

action is that nothing is hidden. That is why the church leaders informed the government beforehand of their intentions.

Again, all those who attended the service were invited to join the church leaders in their



A water cannon was used to spray the procession

procession provided that they bound themselves to the strict principles of non-violent direct action.

These were spelt out to the gathered congregation. It included accepting full consequences of their action - the possibility of arrest (and prison) and even the water cannon was mentioned. It also included walking in an orderly procession, four abreast and arms linked as well as restraint from any kind of provocative words or action directed at the police.

When the church leaders politely told Major Brazell, the police officer in charge that they would not disperse until after they had delivered the petition another established principle of non-violent direct action was being acted out, viz., unyielding firmness (Luke 21:19). Again we saw this principle being put into practice by those who were left after the leaders had been taken away. They continued the procession and refused to disperse even when the water cannon was brought into operation against them. Eventually they too could only be removed by being arrested.

At a time when many of us, both black and white, are wondering what is the nature of the



discipleship that God is calling us to given the increasing repression and consequent fragmentation of oppressed communities and, in some cases, of those organisations (emanating largely from the community of the oppressed) which have been the vehicles of the struggle for freedom and democracy.

In this atmosphere of uncertainty many Christians are looking to the experience of the church in Latin America and the Phillipines. From Brazil and the Phillipines has come to us examples of significant gains made by concerted non-violent actions. Recent publications have given attention to its theological as well as political dimensions (Amongst these contributions are Walter Wink, Jesus' Third Way and Dominique Barbe, Grace and Power).

Non-violent strategies are of course not new to the political organisations of the oppressed in South Africa. The great guru of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi, began his political career in South Africa. Outstanding leaders of our country, such as Chief Albert Luthuli, and the ANC Youth Leaguers such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Oliver Tambo and others led hundreds of thousands of people into a number of co-ordinated non-violent campaigns during the ANC's 'Programme of Action' in the early 1950's. And more recently, the rent boycotts, work stayaways, and people's education spearheaded by the UDF, COSATU, and NECC have been so effective that the Apartheid regime has banned all their community-directed activities.

Is it not an indictment on the church that it is

not until very recently that this form of resistance has been given serious attention by the Church. Particularly because (white?) Christians have been so quick to proclaim non-violence as the gospel norm.

The recent procession to parliament is perhaps a sign of more concerted efforts to come; of disciplined, planned, co-ordinated non-violent strategies as well as of extensive training and committed leadership.

The essence of active non-violent resistance is, as Wink says 'not a perfectionist avoidance of violence' but a creative struggle to restore the humanity of all parties caught up in a conflict.

In conclusion it needs to be said that the debate around violence and non-violence as ethical debates are largely sterile. Even that great prophet of non-violence, Gandhi, once said: 'Where there is only a choice between violence and cowardice I would advise violence' (Wink, p36). We cannot sit in judgement over the responses of others, in other contexts if they resort to the use of violence to throw off the shackles of oppression. Furthermore, if a whole historical process of struggle is travelling towards a violent outcome, a nonviolent outcome cannot suddenly be improvised (Barbe, P.147)

But can we honestly say that the historical process in South Africa will inevitably lead to an escalation of the present level of violence. Is there not still time for the churches to embark on disciplined non-violent strategies by providing intensive training for hundreds of disciplined 'volunteers'?

'Happy are those who reject the evil advice of tyrants, who do not follow the example of sell-outs and are not resigned to live as slaves.

Instead they find joy to be in God's commission for the liberation of the oppressed, and they work day and night without rest.

Those in God's service for the liberation of the oppressed are guided and protected by Him.

But those who are instruments in the hands of the oppressors are on their way to their doom.' — Paraphrase by Zephania Kameeta. From *Why O Lord?, Psalms and sermons from Namibia*

'God never appears to you in person, but always in action.' — Gandhi

## 3.2 Church leaders' statement

February 25, 1988

STATEMENT BY THE LEADERS OF SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCHES, MEETING AT JOHANNESBURG ON FEBRUARY 25, 1988.

We, the undersigned leaders of South African churches, held an emergency meeting in Khotso House, Johannesburg, today to discuss the crisis in our country which was created yesterday by the South African government when it banned the operations of 17 of our people's organisations, prohibited many activities of the Congress of South African Trade Unions and restricted 18 of our leaders.

### 1. Implications of the restrictions.

We believe the restrictions represent a desperate attempt by weak people to hold onto power in the face of an ever-increasing determination by the oppressed of our country to bring about justice, democracy and peace. The government's drastic and brutal action removes nearly all effective means open to our people of working for true change by peaceful means, and if there is violent reaction to its action, this government must take the responsibility.

The ban on the activities of the 17 organisations is a blow directed at the heart of the Church's mission in South Africa.

Firstly, the activities which have been prohibited are central to the proclamation of the Gospel in our country.

We must make it quite clear that, no matter what the consequences, we will continue as a matter of course to campaign for the release of prisoners, to call for clemency for those under sentence of death, to call for the unbanning of our political organisations, to call for negotiations involving the true leaders of our country to bring about a transfer of power from a minority to all the people of our country, to commemorate those who



'The ban on the activities of the 17 organisations is a blow directed at the heart of the church's mission in South Africa'

have died in what the state calls 'riots', and call upon the international community to apply pressure to force the government to the negotiating table. Our mandate to carry out these activities comes from God and no man and no government will stop us. If the state wants to act against the Church of God in this country for proclaiming the Gospel, then so be it.

Thirdly, at least one prominent church leader known to us has been banned and house arrested in terms of yesterday's regulations. Dr. Simon Gqubule, principal of the Methodist Church's John Wesley College, has been restricted to the Maritzburg district and house arrested from 6pm to 5am. We know Dr Gqubule to be a man dedicated to justice and peace in our country and we condemn the restriction on him - as we

condemn the restrictions placed on all our other leader's - in the strongest terms we can muster.

We find it particularly horrifying that the government has restricted two leaders - in the persons of Mrs Albertina Sisulu and Mr Archie Gumede - who were until yesterday tireless workers in the cause of peace in two of the most desperate crisis areas in our land. Mrs Sisulu has been struggling to bring about peace between opposing groups in KTC, Cape Town. It is widely acknowledged that Mr Gumede has been a key advocate of peace in the fighting in Maritzburg.

We believe the time has come to state the truth clearly as we see it: from the government's banning of these two leaders, from its harassment of peacemakers in KTC, from its detention of leaders in Maritzburg and from its failure to arrest people against whom there is clear evidence of murder and assault, we must conclude that the authorities are deliberately obstructing peace in our country and encouraging violence among our people.



**Young altar boys are at one with their leaders in expressing their feelings towards the clampdown at a service held in Regina Mundi, Soweto**

Their purpose is to use surrogate forces to smash effective opposition to their heretical policy of apartheid, and would ensure as far as possible that it is the blood of black people, and not of white people, that is spilled in pursuance of their aim.

## **2. A call to action**

In responding to the current crisis, we feel we must address primarily the oppressed people in our

land, for it is they who will decide in the final analysis when apartheid is going to be abolished.

We urge the oppressed to intensify the struggle for justice and peace in accordance with the Gospel and we encourage them not to lose hope, for victory against evil in this world is guaranteed by our Lord, for our part, we commit ourselves to exploring every possible avenue for continuing to carry out the activities which have been banned insofar as we believe they are



mandated by the Gospel.

To the White voters of South Africa, we must say - without too much hope of being heard - that you are being deceived by the government. Your fellow South Africans want nothing more than to live in a just and peaceful country. Your position is becoming untenable and we believe that you must dissociate yourselves from this government.

Apartheid is a heresy, you can't reform a heresy, and if you are to assure your future, you must now pull out of 'white politics' and join the real struggle for democracy.

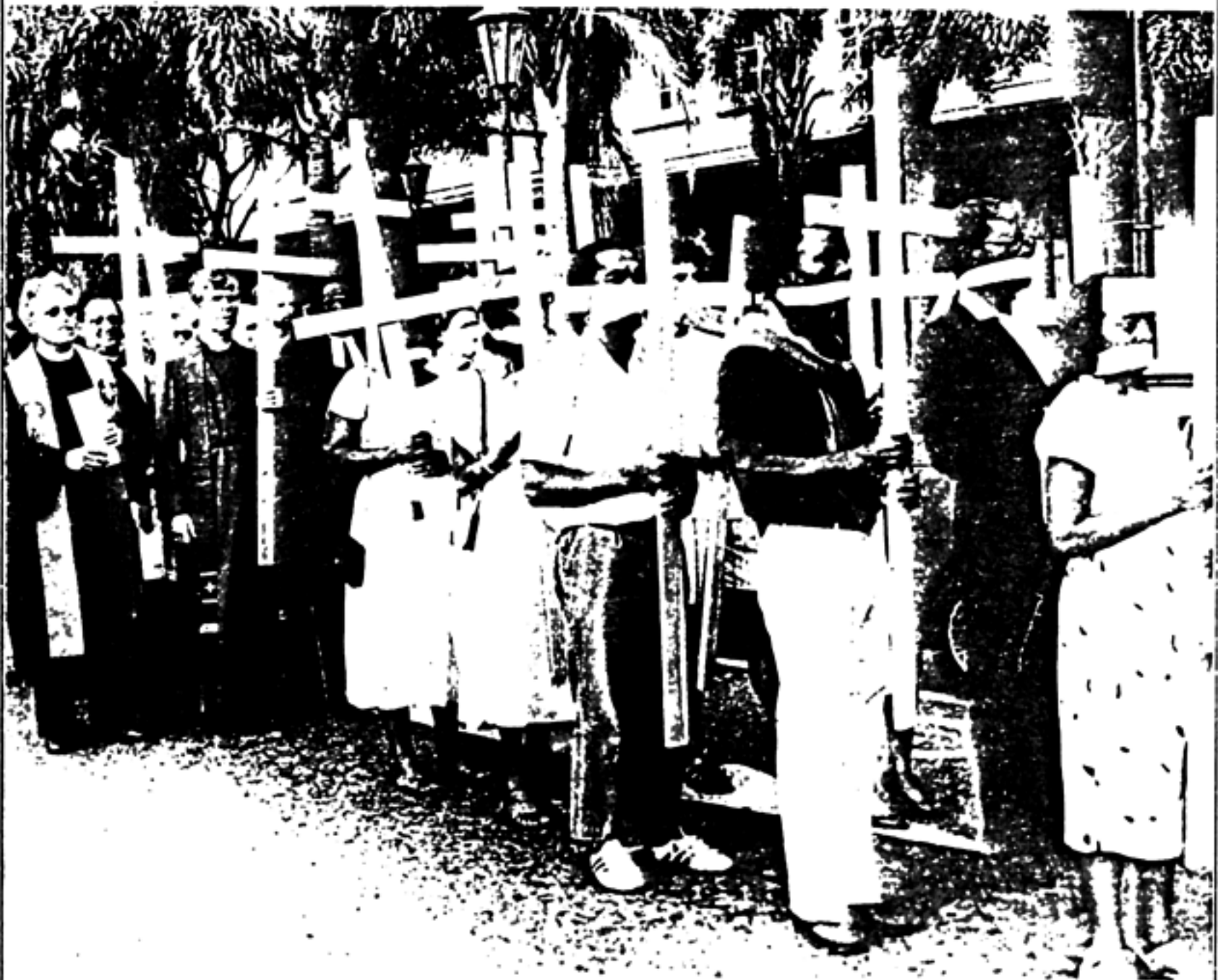
We now hope the international community -

and especially South Africa's major trading partners - will wake up to the fact that this illegitimate government is threatening their interests as well as the lives and security of black and white South Africans.

It has shown quite clearly that it has nothing to offer but instability and bloodshed.

It must be isolated to force it off the awful path it has chosen.

In addition, we call on our churches to arrange major services of witness and protest against the restrictions in every area of the country at 3pm on Sunday, February 28.



A Good Friday procession, symbolising the gagging of organisations, marches through the Durban streets.

## 3.3 Petition handed to the government

February 29, 1988



Church leaders carry the petition which was handed to the government

Dear Mr State President and Members of Parliament

We, as leaders of a number of South African churches, have come to Parliament today to witness and pray in a time of crisis outside the buildings in which you make important decisions affecting the lives of millions of South Africans who belong to our churches. In terms of the principles of non-violent direct action, we informed the Government of our intentions before coming here. Once we have completed our act of worship outside where you work, we intend returning to St George's Cathedral.

We are deeply distressed at, and protest to you in the strongest of terms at, the restrictions which were placed last week on the activities of seventeen of our people's organisations, on the Congress of South African Trade Unions and on 18 of our leaders.

We believe that the Government, in its actions over recent years but especially by last week's action, has chosen a path for the future which will lead to violence, bloodshed and instability. By imposing such drastic restrictions on organisations which have campaigned peacefully for the end of apartheid, you have removed nearly all effective

means open to our people to work for true change by non-violent means. Only yesterday one of our number pleaded publicly with our people not to react to your measures by resorting to violence, but if some of our people turn to violence you must take the responsibility.

We are particularly horrified at the restrictions you have placed on people and organisations who have been in the forefront of the struggle to bring peace to the strife-torn areas of Pietermaritzburg and KTC in Cape Town. Mr Archie Gumede, Mr Willie Hofmeyr and Mrs Albertina Sisulu are just a few of many people who are now banned from working for peace. Your actions indicate to us that those of you in government have decided that only violence will keep you in power; that you have chosen the 'military option' for our country. It appears to us that you are encouraging the growth of black surrogate forces to split the black community and to smash effective opposition to apartheid, moreover that you are trying to ensure as far as possible that it is the blood of black people, and not of white people, that is spilled in your struggle to hold onto power.

We regard your restrictions not only as an attack on democratic activity in South Africa but

as a blow directed at the heart of the Church's mission in South Africa. The activities which have been prohibited are central to the proclamation of the Gospel in our country and we must make it clear that, no matter what the consequences, we will explore every possible avenue for continuing the activities which you have prohibited other bodies from undertaking. We will not be stopped from campaigning for the release of prisoners, from calling for clemency for those under sentence of death, from calling for the unbanning of political organisations, from calling for the release of political leaders to negotiate the transfer of power to all the people of our country, from commemorating significant events in the life of our nation, from commemorating those who have died in what you call 'riots' or from calling on the international community to apply pressure to force you to the negotiating table.

Last week many of us issued a statement in which we addressed primarily the oppressed people of our land, for we believe it is they who will decide in the final analysis when apartheid is going to be abolished. We urged them to intensify the struggle for justice and peace and we encouraged them not to lose hope, for victory against evil in this world is guaranteed by our Lord.

Our message applies also to you. Your position is becoming untenable. *has become*

Your fellow South Africans want nothing more than to live in a just and peaceful country and we urge you -- without too much hope of being heard -- to turn from the path you have chosen. If those of you in government persist with your current policies, then we urge those of you out of government to withdraw from white politics and to join the real struggle for democracy.

We urge you to take the following immediate action:

- \* Lift last week's restrictions, and end the State of Emergency.
- \* Unban political organisations, release and remove restrictions on our political leaders, allow exiles to return and free all detainees.
- \* Enter negotiations for a dispensation in which all of us can live together in peace, freedom and



Some of the signatories:  
Archbishop Ngada (top left),  
Reverend Scholtz (top right),  
Rev Mogoba (bottom left) and  
Archbishop Ntongana

justice.

We have not undertaken this action lightly. We have no desire to be martyrs. However, the Gospel leaves us no choice but to seek ways of witnessing effectively and clearly to the values of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and you give us virtually no other effective and peaceful means of doing so.

God Bless you.

Signed: Archbishop TW Ntongana (Apostolic Methodist Church of SA); Archbishop NH Ngada (United Independent Believers in Christ); The Rev Ron L Steel (Chairman, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa); The Rev James Gribble (Chairman, Good Hope

District, Methodist Church of Southern Africa); The Rev Peter Storey (past President, SACC and Methodist Church); Bishop Lawrence Henry (Catholic Church, Cape Town); Pastor M D Assur (General Secretary, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa); Bishop Olaf Theo Xulu (President of African Independent Churches); Pastor T M Chere (N. Tvl Council of Churches); Bishop Charles Albertyn (Anglican Church, Cape Town); Bishop George Swartz (Dean of the Anglican Province of Southern Africa and Bishop of Kimberly and Kuruman); The Rev Frank Chikane (General Secretary, SACC); Dr Allan Boesak (Moderator of the Ned Geref Sendingkerk); Bishop H B Senatle (African Methodist, Episcopal Church); The Rev Dr Khoza Mgojo (President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa); The Rev John P Scholtz (past President MCSA); Moulana Faried Essack (Call of Islam, Muslim Judicial Council); The Rev Canon Geoff Quinlan (Suffragan Bishop-elect, Anglican Church, Cape Town); The Ven Edward MacKenzie (Suffragan Bishop-elect, Anglican Church, Cape Town); The Rev Samson A Khumalo (Presbyterian Church of Africa, General-Secretary); Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Metropolitan, Anglican Church); The Rev Paul Makhubu (General Secretary, CAIC); The Revd Edward King (Anglican Dean of Cape Town); The Revd Mmutlanyane Stanley Mogaba (General Secretary, MCSA); Archbishop Stephen Naidoo (Catholic Archbishop of Cape Town).



## 3.4 Pastoral letter to all South Africans

March 13, 1988

Dear People of God

On Wednesday, 24th February 1988 the Minister of Law and Order A J Vlok prohibited 17 of our peoples organisations 'from carrying on or performing any activities or acts whatsoever'. Further, the Congress of South African Trade Unions was subject to stringent restrictions that will affect their programme to better the situation of workers in this country. Minister Vlok also restricted 18 leaders of our people.

A week later the Bill to curb foreign funding for your organisations was tabled in parliament to add to our own pain.

Many of your brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, your children are languishing in jail under the State of Emergency regulations and one or other security regulations. Some of them are dead.

You might be asking a question as to how long this pain, suffering, misery and death will last. Why has God forsaken us, you might ask?

We want as Church Leaders to reassure you that:

1. We belong to Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. No matter what others may do, we are His, and He is our hope in dark and troubled times.

He alone is the one to whom we look for strength in our weakness and courage in our frailty.

We are silenced, but we do not give up, we are surrounded by force and violence on every side, but we know that in Him we are stronger.

We are people who know that God loves us and that no matter what they do, He loves those who oppress us as well and calls them to repentance or otherwise judgement. That is our strength.

While they are consumed by fear or indifference, we have the weapon of love.

We care for them as much as we care for ourselves

2. As those in power seek to silence and control any who disagree and oppose them, so we say to them.

You did not so learn Christ. Christ comes to bring freedom where you would imprison.

He comes to bring joy, where you bring tears.

He comes to help us to new life, where you would deny life.

3. We say therefore to those in power, Turn to Christ and exercise His love and compassion

Stop trying to silence us - for our voices will cry from the grave.

Stop trying to tell us what is right for us - and let us work it out together

Stop evicting us - and let us talk about the problems

Stop trying to bully us and let us together build the society where God is in the centre.

We say, do not be afraid - perfect love casts out fear.

We say to those in power:

Turn to Christ. Exercise the love of God, free the detained, lift the restrictions, lift the bannings and let us talk from a position of love for the building up of a free, democratic and loving South Africa.

To the White voters we say that your government is deceiving you. Your fellow South Africans want nothing more than to live in a just and peaceful country.

We would like to remind you that apartheid is a heresy and thus your participation directly or indirectly in it is making your position untenable before God and your fellow brother and sisters.

4. We urge you, the oppressed, to intensify the struggle for justice and peace in accordance with the Gospel and we encourage you not to lose hope, for victory against evil in this world is guaranteed by our Lord.

May God help you as you struggle to be Christian in this violent society.

Issued by the following church leaders in the Witwatersrand:

Bishop Orsmond (Catholic Bishops Conference); Rev F Chikane (South African Council of Churches); Bishop Buchanan (Church of the Province of SA); Rev P Storey (Methodist Church of SA); Fr S Mkhathshwa (Catholic Bishops Conference); Bishop Nkoane (Church of the Province of SA); Bishop M Buthelezi (ELCSA); Rev R Steele (Congregational Church of SA); Bishop Xulu (AME); Bishop Ntongana (CAIC); Archbishop Ngada (CAIC); Bishop P Mvemve (Catholic Bishops Conference).



**Bishop Duncan Buchanan**



**Bishop Manas Buthelezi**



**Bishop Simeon Nkoane**



**Bishop Reginald Orsmond**



**Bishop Patrick Mvemve**



**Father Smangalisso Mkhathshwa**

# 3.5 Letter from PW Botha to Archbishop Tutu

March 16, 1988

Dear Archbishop Tutu

I hereby wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 1st March 1988 with the attached petition dated 29th February 1988.

Before I comment on your petition, I wish to ask whether it is your considered opinion that the so-called march on Parliament was really necessary, and worthy of the cause and message of Christ and the churches represented by those who were involved, knowing that the actions were illegal?

You know that you and others who were with you on that day, have on more than one occasion been well received at Tuynhuys and the Union Buildings - sometimes in a blaze of publicity but sometimes also unknown to others in order to maintain a measure of confidentiality that is apparently necessary at times to protect some of those who have discussions with the Government.

The truth of the assertion in your petition that you have "virtually no other effective and peaceful means" of "witnessing effectively", therefore stands under serious doubt.

Furthermore, in your petition you referred to trade unions; and you are no doubt aware of the fact that only last week I extended an invitation to various important trade unions in our country, to have talks with me and members of the Government in Tuynhuys.

Some of the very people you referred to, were among those who did not turn up for the meeting, some even without having the courtesy of replying to the invitation.

I am sure you will agree that the whole basis of your action is therefore seriously in question, and that it was to a large degree planned as a calculated public relations exercise.

But it goes much further than that, as you know so well. To illustrate the point, I wish to quote from a recent broadcast by the ANC's propaganda radio, Radio Freedom:

"The church must now be developed into a

fierce battleground against the regime .. We must organise our forces for a physical confrontation with the forces of the apartheid regime"

The question inevitably arises whether it is possible to come to any other conclusion than that actions such as the march to Parliament may be

seen as part of the campaign referred to in the ANC propaganda broadcast? But there is also a wider element involved, as illustrated by *Sechaba* of September 1985 where it was stated that:

"Members of the ANC fully understand why both the ANC and SACP are two hands in the same body, why they are two pillars of our revolution."

You are no doubt aware that the expressed intention of the planned revolution by the ANC/SACP alliance is to ultimately transform South Africa into an atheistic marxist state, where freedom of faith and worship will surely be among the first



Mr PW Botha

casualties.

If you disagree with this, you should state so clearly and publicly, because it also directly relates to your petition, and in particular the statement that: "victory against *evil* in this world is guaranteed by our Lord"

What is clearly at issue here, is your understanding of *evil*: is atheistic marxism the evil, or does your view of evil include the struggle on behalf of Christianity, the Christian faith, and freedom of faith and worship, against the forces of godlessness and marxism?

In the petition you used phrases such as the following: "*people's organisations*", "*democratic activity*", the "*struggle for justice and peace*", and "*the real struggle for democracy*"

In this regard I wish to quote again from the already mentioned broadcast by Radio Freedom:

"In the name of *justice* we must take up the *fight*: we must participate in such means of *struggle*; the *democratic* movement must be given a voice in all churches; church services must be



services that further the *democratic* call; the church must be for liberation.'

You owe all Christians an explanation of your exact standpoint, for we are all adults, and the time for bluffing and games is long past. The question must be posed whether you are acting on behalf of the kingdom of God, or the kingdom promised by the ANC and the SACP? If it is the latter, say so, but do not then hide behind the structures and the cloth of the Christian church, because Christianity and marxism are irreconcilable opposites.

In your petition you urged the Government to take a number of immediate steps. In reply to that, I urge those who support this petition to reply to the following questions:

- \* does the phrase: "the transfer of power to all the people of our country" as used in your petition have the same meaning as the same phrase used by the ANC and the SACP, that is for the ultimate creation of a marxist regime in South Africa?

- \* are you and those who co-signed the petition in favour of the establishment of a marxist dictatorship in South Africa under the rule of the ANC and the SACP, and to the detriment of the

Church?

- \* do you believe it to be in line with your interpretation of the church's "prophetic mission" and so-called "liberation theology" to which you subscribe, to further the cause of the ANC and the SACP, and thus marxism and atheism?

In conclusion I wish to ask you whether it is not true that the Christian church knows no other power than love and faith, and no other message than the true message of Christ; and if it brings its spiritual power into secular power-play, and the message of Christ into disrepute, then it becomes a secular instead of a sacred spiritual subject, thereby relinquishing its claim to be church?

If you accept this statement as true, you should establish whether you were acting in the name of God and the church, or whether it was in your individual capacities as members of society embracing secularism, thereby doing a disservice to the very church which you claim to have represented.

Yours sincerely  
PW Botha  
State President



# 3.5 Letter from Rev Chikane to PW Botha

March 18, 1988

Dear Mr Botha

I write to you in my capacity as General Secretary of the SACC and on behalf of the church leaders of the SACC.

The attack you made on Archbishop Tutu, with regard to the petition presented to you dated the 29th February with his covering letter dated 1st March and the peaceful march of the church leaders on the 29th February in Cape Town is of great concern to us.

Archbishop Tutu was one of a large group of church leaders and the clergy who marched. A petition was drawn up and signed by 25 church leaders.

We therefore are concerned that you have singled out the Archbishop for your allegations and wish to reiterate that the march of witness and protest and the petition presented to you are actions that were taken by many, and endorsed by an even greater number of church people here and abroad.

The reason for these actions, both of which were peaceful, were to witness and protest.

a) to witness to the vast majority of the people in this country, who are in our parishes, that we the church leaders, cannot accept the ungodly acts of oppression of this government.

Thus, a public act, in the form of a march, was a public witness to our constituency. Talks behind closed doors with government leaders have not achieved anything. Church leaders have often come away humiliated and the people they represent are not able to witness these discussions.

The lack of success of such meetings has led many church leaders to believe that such attempts at change are hopeless, especially where those in power are determined at all costs to maintain white domination and apartheid.

b) The protest was aimed at the government in a non-violent peaceful manner. Our protest was

against the evils of apartheid which we observe and experience in South Africa as part of the "evil in the world". Thus we proclaim to our people, in the context of a day to day oppression and dehumanisation of apartheid, now intensified through the effective bannings of organisations and individuals, that "victory against evil in this world is guaranteed by our Lord".

We are bound to proclaim the gospel in the context of our experience of injustice and oppression in South Africa under the apartheid government. I would like to let you know that the majority of members of our churches have never experienced oppression and brutal suppression of their political expression by Marxists, the ANC or the SACP, but under your government.

We stand and will always be against totalitarianism of any kind, irrespective of who is involved and whatever ideological position they hold. You asked Archbishop Tutu whether his view of evil includes the struggle on behalf of christianity, the christian faith, and freedom of faith and worship, against the forces of godlessness and marxism.

In our understanding and experience of the struggle for the Christian faith and freedom of faith and worship in this land, we have to struggle against the forces of godlessness and apartheid for it is the apartheid government that interrupts church services and seeks to control funeral services, all of which are part of the duties and life of the church.

You ask in your letter whether it is not true that the christian church knows no other power than life and faith, and not other message than the true message of Christ. We say our message is exactly that: We proclaim the message of God's love for the oppressed in this land and our message to them is the message of God:



Reverend Chikane

"Have nothing to do with the fruitful deeds of darkness but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible." (Eph.5:11-13)

We understand our activities to be based on the gospel and that our mandate is from God. Our prophetic mission is that of God's i.e. to preach the good news of freedom to the poor and oppressed.

It was this tradition which the prophets of Israel took up when they protested against the abuse of power by the kings. Jesus also identified himself with the poor and the downtrodden.

We feel that this unprecedented attack on the clergy may be paving the way for a state

clampdown on the church and its witness to the truth. The church throughout the ages has borne the brunt of such attacks while governments have come and gone.

We therefore pledge ourselves to the gospel of Christ against the forces of evil of this country and we commit ourselves to working for the ensuing in of a new order of peace and justice for all irrespective of the consequences. To quote the church leaders' statement: "If the state wants to acts against the church of God in this country for proclaiming the gospel, then so be it."

Yours sincerely

Frank Chikane

General Secretary

South African Council of Churches



# 3.7 Anglican Bishops' statement

March 22, 1988



**'Archbishop Desmond is our father in God, who belongs to us as we belong to him. When you touch our father in God, you touch the children of God. We shall not allow you to isolate him'**

Statement issued by Bishops of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa, gathered at Kempton Park on March 22, 1988:

We, the bishops of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa, today held a special meeting to discuss the implications of the recent attacks that have been made on church leaders, including our Metropolitan and Archbishop, the Most Reverend Desmond Tutu.

We shared with Archbishop Desmond his recent experiences, we celebrated Eucharist with him during the day and, after he left the meeting, we decided upon the following statement.

We believe it is extraordinary that in a country whose rulers claim a democratic heritage, the current tensions between State and Church should have their roots in the simple and harmless act of trying to present a petition to Parliament and the head of State.

The 25 church leaders from an unprecedented range of denominations who processed from St George's Cathedral on February 29 were trying to convey the deep hurt felt by millions of Christians at the South African government's action in restricting the activities of 18 organisations and leaders.

We associate ourselves with those 25 leaders. The government, in imposing the restrictions, will drive our beloved country closer to civil war, rendering powerless as it did leaders who are committed to peaceful change.

The government's intolerance of normal democratic processes, reflected in its breaking up of the procession on February 29, has now emerged in the State President's treatment of our Metropolitan and in his warning to Archbishop Desmond that he is "looking for trouble", to use the State President's words.

We must state as clearly and responsibly as we can that when the government picks out individual church leaders for attack, as it has in Archbishop Desmond's case, it attacks all Christian leaders and it attacks the Church.

Archbishop Desmond is our father in God, who belongs to us as we belong to him. When you touch our father in God, you touch the children of God. We shall not allow the government to isolate him.

We recognise that Christian leaders hold differing opinions on some issues, but we defend absolutely the right of all to witness to the Gospel in their differing situations without being subjected to threats, whether actual or implied.

We are deeply distressed at, and take grave offence at, the cavalier way in which the State President treated our Metropolitan and we offer Archbishop Desmond our loyalty and support.

In particular we question the right of the State President to arrogate to himself, as we believe he has done, the right to define what is spiritual or to decide what is valid Christians witness.

We find it untenable that he should tell Archbishop Desmond or any other Christian that the Church should not "bring its spiritual power into secular power-play".

The church has a spiritual responsibility not only to individual Christians but to the lives of nations and we shall endeavour to meet that responsibility. The whole of people's lives and of the lives of nations is subject to God's judgment.

We will not be deflected from our task of testing everything in society against the Word of God and the teaching of the Church and we will continue to denounce evil, including the evil of apartheid, wherever we see it.

The State President would have it that South Africans must choose between a moderate, so-called Christians reform of apartheid and a revolutionary, marxist and atheistic destruction of society.

We reject his definition of the choice and reaffirm our commitment to a just, democratic and sharing society.

We call on our people not to allow the government and its propaganda to isolate you from your bishops, including the Archbishop. The Gospel is at stake here and not simply the personal reputation of an individual.

The time has come for us to stand together as Christians and as Anglicans and to say with one voice, that we will not be deterred by threats and accusations from obeying God who in the last resort has a higher claim to our allegiance than any Kings, princes or presidents.

We call on Christians to pray earnestly for our Archbishop, that he may know the strength, power and discernment of God's love in full measure; and to pray also for our State President that he, and those in authority with him, may turn from their present course which can lead only to disaster for the country we love.



Bishop Duncan Buchanan carries a garland of flowers to be given to the people of Soweto on June 16 1986.

## 3.8 Letter from PW Botha to Reverend Chikane

March 24, 1988

Dear Rev Chikane

I hereby acknowledge receipt of your letter of 18th March 1988, which I read with a certain measure of alarm and concern.

I am surprised at your reaction concerning my letter to Archbishop Tutu, which was a reply to the petition as well as to a letter he sent to me when he forwarded the petition to me. In your letter you referred to an attack I was supposed to have made "on Archbishop Tutu, with regard to the petition, the covering letter, and the march of the church leaders", while you also asserted that I "singled out the Archbishop".

I have seldom seen such a flagrant mis-representation of a situation, and I seriously question your motives in this regard.

Firstly, the only reason why I wrote to Archbishop Tutu was because he wrote to me, because he was asked to do so by those who marched with him. It is as simple as that. I trust that your replying on his behalf does not signify a motion of no-confidence in the Archbishop's handling of the matter, but I did note the fact that the SACC apparently no longer believes that the Archbishop can act and speak on its behalf.

Secondly, I did not single out the Archbishop by receiving him in Tuynhuys - I handed the letter to him at a meeting which took place at his specific request. He asked for the meeting.

Thirdly, if you read my letter properly, you will also find that I did not single out the Archbishop in that either. On the contrary, I specifically addressed "you and the others who were with you on that day", "those who support this petition; "those who co-signed the petition" "your individual capacities as members". Your allegation is therefore devoid of all truth.

In view of this, and of the general drift of your

letter, I wish to address you frankly.

I grew up in an environment where the Lord was served, where the love of God, His Church and His Word was transferred to me, and which I cherish in my heart to this very day. That is why I strive to conduct my personal life, and my service as State President according to the principles of the Christian faith.

This Government has in the light of the message of the Bible, gone out of its way to serve the people of this country, to broaden democracy, to remove hurtful and discriminatory legislation and social practices, and to provide for the needs of all on a scale that is found nowhere else on this continent.

The quality of life in South Africa compares favourably with the best in Africa. How do you explain the fact that hundreds of thousands of citizens from neighbouring countries flee across our borders to seek food, work, health services and safety in our country which you so miserably misrepresent?

I have gone out of my way to invite leaders of Black communities, and also religious leaders, to co-operate with me in pursuing a just, peaceful and prosperous future for all in South Africa and our region. Many of them already do so.

It is therefore disturbing that you and others, who claim to represent the Church of Christ and the Word of God, act in the irresponsible way that you do.

You do not hesitate to spread malicious untruths about South Africa here and abroad. You should be fully aware of the numerous misleading statements concerning local support for sanctions and for the ANC, alleged atrocities by the security forces, the treatment of youths, and the fabrication of false testimony for especially the overseas



**'The government has, in the light of the message of the bible, gone out of its way to serve the people of this country, to broaden democracy, to remove hurtful and discriminatory legislation and social practices, and to provide for the needs of all on a scale that is found nowhere else on this continent'**



media.

You love and praise the ANC/SACP with its Marxist and atheistic ideology, landmines, bombs and necklaces perpetrating the most horrendous atrocities imaginable; and you embrace and participate in their call for violence, hatred, sanctions, insurrection and revolution.

In this regard you may recall Archbishop Tutu's statement during a lecture in St Paul's Cathedral in 1984 when he said:

"If the Russians were to come to South Africa today, then most blacks who reject communism as atheistic and materialistic would welcome them as saviours."

You may also recall the Archbishop saying that the aims of the SACC and the ANC are similar, and added in Atlanta, Georgia, in January 1986 that:

"We hope one day to hear the leaders of the western world say we side with the ANC which sought to change an unjust system peacefully, and were sent into the arms of the struggle because the West abandoned us."

The SACC, in its support of the Kairos Document, apparently regards communism as a myth, and its acceptance of the Harare Declaration and the Lusaka Statement, expressed support for sanctions, disinvestment and boycotts against South Africa, and support for the Marxist terrorist movements.

It is alarming that God, and the Church of God which I also love and serve, can be abused and insulted in this manner; that individual members of the clergy who claim to be messengers of God, are in reality messengers of enmity and hatred while parading in the cloth, and hiding behind the structures of the Church; and instead of pursuing reformation, they are engaged in the deformation of religion, through the proclamation of false so-called "liberation theology".

At the same time responsible church leaders who proclaim the true gospel of Christ, lament the fact that they are at times intimidated into a conspiracy of silence by those who have chosen the radical path.

The SACC claims to represent the Christians of South Africa. Yet you are aware that only about one percent of your income derives from this country - not even enough to pay your own salary and expenses, while all your activities are financed from abroad.

Christians of South Africa are therefore justified to ask: just who do you really represent? I trust that you will admit that there are millions of Christians organised in a multitude of

denominations in South Africa who are not members of the SACC, and who reject the road on which the SACC has embarked.

I have noted a frenzy of rumour and expectation regarding possible action by the Government against certain members of the clergy. I see no reason for this, unless they take part in subversive and revolutionary activities. But judging on this reaction in certain circles, it does seem as if some people want it to happen, or have reason to believe that it should happen. I request you urgently not to abuse the freedom of religion and worship, and the goodwill of the people and the Government of South Africa for the pursuance of secular and revolutionary objectives. In the name of God and in the spirit of true Christianity I call upon you to be messengers of the true Christian religion, and not of Marxism and atheism.

Religious freedom is the cornerstone of proper human rights. It is a well known fact that South Africa is a country which cherishes and safeguards freedom of religion. Even in the armed forces more than one hundred different denominations are actively engaged in the preaching of the Gospel.

In this regard it is ironic that you yourself challenged churches in South Africa to provide ministry to the terrorist movements, while at the same time withdrawing chaplains from the SADF!

I am amazed that you as theologian can compare me and the Government with immoral and godless people referred to in Ephesians 5:11-13, while ignoring Ephesians 4:31;

'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger and clamour and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice'; and also Ephesians 5:9: 'For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.'

In this spirit I call upon the co-operation of all churches and church leaders towards creating peace and goodwill among the peoples of our land, for the benefit of the Church of Christ.

In conclusion I want to put a question to the SACC. We are both confessing that we are followers of Christ in spite of all our human weaknesses. Christ, as far we know, openly took part in the spreading of the Gospel during the last three years of his life on earth. Can you quote one single instance from the Word of God in which it appears that Christ advocated violence against the State; or led a demonstration against the State; or broke a law of the State?

Yours sincerely,  
P W Botha  
State President

## 3.9 Theologians' statement

April 7, 1988

President Botha is reported as saying that no theologian he consulted could provide Biblical support for the recent protest actions of church leaders in South Africa. As theologians teaching in a variety of theological Faculties and Departments, we write to express our conviction that the State President is wrong in his attacks upon Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dr Allan Bocsak and the Rev. Frank Chikane. The church has a clear Biblical basis for its protest and is in accord with the mainstream of Christian tradition in resisting injustice.

The present conflict between Church and State reflects the growing conflict between oppressors and oppressed in South Africa, and has been in the making for a long time. The basic problem is that the policy of apartheid, however disguised, is racist and unjust, and can only be implemented by force and coercion. Such a policy clearly contradicts the gospel of the Kingdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ. That is the overwhelming consensus of Christian opinion within virtually all major churches throughout the world and, indeed, within South Africa itself. To proclaim the gospel in word as well as in action, for both are required of the church, must inevitably mean confronting what is unjust, dehumanising, and destructive of human community and Christian values.

The true prophets of Israel, like Jesus himself in 'cleansing the Temple', often found it necessary to engage in symbolic actions in public when their words went unheeded and their cries on behalf of the poor were disregarded by those in authority. In the same way, over the years many church leaders have pleaded, both in private and in public, with those in authority to heed the cries of the victims of our society. The church, after all, has a biblical obligation to identify with the poor and the oppressed and to resist unjust government. This has brought little response and, sometimes, only rebuke and rejection; hence the need to put words into action.

Such public actions against the misuse of power and the disregard of human rights have occurred throughout church history, and they have been supported by major Christian theologians of the past and present, and, significantly within our context, by John Calvin himself. The words of Peter that we should 'obey God rather than

men' (Acts 4:12) when human laws contradict God's commandments, is fundamental to the Christian confession that Jesus is Lord. Moreover, even Romans 13, the passage most quoted as teaching Christian obedience to political authority, does not exclude opposition to the state when it acts against the common good.

Church leaders who fail in their duty to oppose what is evil are false prophets. Like those in the Old Testament they deny their calling. False prophets are generally known by the fact that their words and actions find favour with those in power. They tell those in authority what they want to hear. They declare that there is 'peace, peace' when in fact there is no peace. (Jeremiah 6:14). the exercise of true prophetic leadership is therefore always costly because the message proclaimed and acted out is a challenge, to injustice and a word of judgement in the name of the sovereign God to whom all authority is accountable. But it is a word of judgement which, if needed, can bring about that change of heart in our land without which there is little hope. We support the prophetic leadership of such church leaders both because they stand firmly within the Christian faith, and because they have the interests of our country at heart. We reject the attacks that have been made upon them as unchristian and detrimental to the struggle for a just solution to our country's present plight.

Signatories: Prof C Adonis (UWC); Rev L Bhengu (Fedsem); Rev I Bhiman (ICT); Mr L Blom (Unisa); Dr W Boesak (UWC) Prof DJ Bosch (Unisa); Dr D Chidester (UCT); Prof D Cloete (UWC); Dr J R Cochrane (Natal); Rev BS Connor OP (St Joseph's Scholasticate); Rev T C Cunningham (Rhodes); Prof J W de Gruchy (UCT); Dr J A Draper (Natal); Prof J J F Durand (UWC); Dr F Edwards (Rhodes); Prof B Gaybba (Unisa) Dr TSN Gqubule (Fedsem); Rev G Hawkes (Rhodes); Dr JH Hofmeyr (UCT); Dr L Hulley (Unisa); Dr L D Jafta (Fedsem); Dr JNJ Kritzinger (Unisa); Prof A Konig (Unisa); Rev CF Langefeld (St Joseph's Scholasticate); Dr H Lederle (Unisa); Prof S Maimela (Unisa); Rev DC Marco (UWC); Dr W Mazamisa (UCT); Dr B Mazibuko (Unisa); Rev B Mngomezulu (Fedsem); Dr J Mosala (UCT); Dr A Nolan OP (ICT); Prof K Numberger (Unisa); Prof PJ Robinson (UWC); Prof W Saayman (Unisa); Dr W Sebothoma (Unisa); Prof GM Setuloane (UCT); Dr N Smith (Unisa); Prof DJ Smit (UWC); Prof J Suggit (Rhodes); Prof C Villa-Vicencio (UCT); Dr C Wanamaker (UCT) Rev J Wing (Fedsem); Prof GH Wittenberg (Natal); Rev ME Worsnip (Fedsem).

*to God rather than men*



**Four of the theologians who signed the statement outlining biblical references to the need for opposing injustices: Reverend Joe Wing (top left); Professor Charles Villa-Vicencio (top right); Reverend Albert Nolan (bottom left); and Reverend Alec Bhiman**



## 3.10 Statement by SA Council of Catholic Laity



Catholic bishops protest against the state's attack on the New Nation

### The laity support their leaders

The South African government has made it vividly clear that it will not stop until all popular organisations which continue to dissent and resist are crushed into silence.

Most of the Church leaders in South Africa have however, chosen to follow Jesus' example of compassion for the poor and oppressed. This has placed them squarely upon the side of all those South Africans who are struggling to bring about justice, democracy and peace in our country.

This has inevitably placed the churches on a

collision course with the state. In the last week the State has closed down the Catholic Bishops newspaper the New Nation, and raided Bishop Adam's house. Less than a month ago Archbishop Naidoo was arrested as part of the delegation of church leaders who protested outside Parliament against the clampdown on organisations.

The church leaders believe that the mandate for these actions comes from God and so no man or government has the right to stop them. The State President has however taken it upon himself to determine what is spiritual and valid Christian

witness and what is not.

One wonders how a government which continues to uphold apartheid, a heresy in the Christian tradition, is in any position to pronounce which actions are Christian and which are not. Beyond this he has however publically attacked our spiritual leaders in an attempt to isolate them from the body of the church.

Within this context we the Executive Committee of the South African Council of Catholic Laity believe it is our Christian duty to make known our respect and loyal support for our Bishops witness to justice.

This support furthermore extends to all the religious leaders in our country, who have chosen to work for justice as an integral and constitutive dimension of proclaiming the Gospel.

Our church leaders are not however, as the State President supposes, on their own instead they are united in this mission by the majority of Christians in South Africa who refuse to surrender their God-given right to participate equally in the government of their country.

Jesus himself began his ministry with the words 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has chosen me to bring the good news to the poor, to liberate captives, to give sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free' Pope John XIII reinforces this sentiment in his encyclical *Pacem in terris* (Peace on earth) over 25 years ago. 'Any government which refuses to recognise human rights or acts in violation of them, would not only fail in its duty - its decrees would be wholly lacking in binding force.'

There is actually little new in the type of witness being called for by our church leaders

from the faithful.

What is most sad though is that so many church members are ignorant of this, and that at times only a few priests are preaching about the social teachings of the church. Hence many Christians have been on the receiving end of an individualistic spirituality which narrowly focusses upon saving one's soul.

Although the Second Vatican Council attempted to move the Catholic Church beyond this cul-de-sac, there are still many sincere and good Catholics who remain confused by the church's concern that the spirit of God not be excluded from the political sphere of life.

We urge all Catholics and Christians not to lose hope, but in keeping with message of Easter to renew their commitment and dedication to a just and peaceful South Africa.

We are challenged by Jesus, especially during this Holy Week, to take up the weight of the cross, in the confidence that good will triumph over evil.

We ask all Catholics to remember and pray for those who are suffering during their Good Friday services: especially those on death row particularly the Sharpeville 6; those in detention; those who have been prevented from proclaiming the truth in the verdict; because it has endangered 'state security'; and especially for courage for our church leaders who God has given us to guide us through these troubled times.

This cross of suffering under whose might we are bent during this our Good Friday, will certainly be resurrected into the non-racial democratic South Africa of tomorrow.

# 3.11 Letter from Archbishop Tutu to PW Botha

April 8, 1988

Dear Mr State President

Thank you for your letter dated 16 March 1988. I must confess I am surprised that a letter marked 'Personal' should have been distributed to Members of Parliament and to the media without the concurrence of its recipient. I thought that there were conventions governing such things.

Since you are a fairminded person, I am sure you will ensure that my reply will receive the same publicity accorded your letter to me. Certainly I am sure you will ask SABC-TV to give it equally prominent coverage.

I am distressed that during the interview with you, which I had requested for the sole purpose of appealing to you to exercise your prerogative to commute the death sentence of the so called 'Sharpeville Six' and which you then used as an occasion for haranguing me about the Church leaders and our petition, you appeared to sit loosely to facts.

You had already been reported in an interview with the Washington Times as alleging that our petition was drawn up after the march. I tried to correct this erroneous view. But you then proceeded to accuse me of having preached under a flag depicting the hammer and sickle. I denied this accusation. You did not withdraw your extraordinary accusations, but claimed that you had photographs to prove your charge. I challenged you to produce this photographic evidence which I knew was non-existent because I have never been so photographed as you had alleged. I refer to this matter because of the questions in your letter about atheistic Marxism.

I want to state quite categorically that I stand by all that I have done and said in the past concerning the application of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the situation of injustice and oppression and exploitation which are of the very essence of apartheid, a policy which your government has carried out with ruthless efficiency. My position in this matter is not one of which I am ashamed or for which I would ever want to apologise. I know that I stand in the mainline

Christian tradition. I want you to know that I have never listened to Radio Freedom nor do I have the opportunity to read 'Sechaba'. My theological position derives from the Bible and from the teaching of the Church. The Bible and the Church predate Marxism and the ANC by several centuries.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu

May I give you a few illustrations? The Bible teaches that what invests each person with infinite value is not this or that arbitrarily chosen biological attribute, but the fact that each person is created in the image of God (Gen 1:26). Apartheid, the policy of your government, claims that what makes a person qualify for privilege and political power is that biological irrelevance, the colour of a person's skin and his ethnic antecedents. Apartheid says those are what make a person matter. That is clearly at variance with the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Hence the Church's criticism that your

apartheid policies are not only unjust and oppressive. They are positively unbiblical, unchristian, immoral and evil.

Apartheid has said that ultimately people are intended for separation. You have carried out policies enshrined in the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act, segregated education, health, etc. The Bible teaches quite unequivocally that people are created for fellowship, for togetherness, not for alienation, apartness, enmity and division (Gen 2:18; Gen 11:1-9; 1 Cor 12:12-13; Ro 12:3-5; Gal 3:28; Acts 17:26).

The experience of the United States and the findings of its highest court were that it is in fact impossible to carry out a policy of 'separate but equal'. The policies of apartheid do not even pretend to seek to embody 'separate but equal'. Quite unabashedly they are intended to be separate and unequal. Just note the grossly unfair distribution of land between black and white or the unequal government expenditure on black and white education. I could multiply the examples. Apartheid, the policy



of your government, is thus shown yet again to be unbiblical, unchristian, immoral and evil in its very nature.

I could show that apartheid teaches the fundamental irreconcilability of people because they belong to different races. This is at variance with the central teaching of the Christian faith about the reconciling work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself' declares St Paul (2 Cor 5:9), summing up teaching contained in other parts of the New Testament, (John 12:32; Eph 1:10; Eph 2:14; etc). I could show that in dealing with human beings as if they were less than those who are created in the image of God and by inflicting untold and unnecessary suffering on them, as through your vicious policies of forced population removals, you have contravened basic ethical tenets. I could provide further evidence that your apartheid policies are unbiblical, unchristian, immoral and evil. It is for these and other reasons that our church and other churches have declared apartheid a heresy. I am quite ready to debate this issue with a theologian from your church whom you might care to nominate.

I have not deviated from the teaching of our church on this matter at any point. I enclose copies of the statements issued by my fellow bishops and others showing that they believe I stand in the teaching and tradition of our church. I want to submit respectfully that it is more likely that they would be better judges of the orthodoxy of my position than the State President and his advisors, theological and otherwise.

What we are doing is no innovation when we bring the Word of God as we understand it to bear on the situation in which we are involved. The prophets of old when they declared 'Thus saith the Lord ...' to the rulers and the powerful of their day were our forerunners. They spoke about the need for religion to show its authenticity by how it affected the everyday life of the people and especially by how the rich, the powerful, the privileged and the rulers dealt with the less privileged, the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, the widow, the orphan and the alien.

Isaiah said God rejected all religious observances however punctilious and elaborate. He urged worshippers to

'Put away the evil of your deeds, away out of my sight. Cease to do evil and learn to do right, pursue justice and champion the oppressed; give the orphan his rights, plead the widow's cause.' (Isaiah 1:16-17) Elsewhere he claimed that God was not pleased with their religious fasts. God declared through the prophet

'Is not this what I require of you as a fast: to loose the fetters of injustice, to untie the knots of the yoke, to snap every yoke and set free those who have

been crushed?'

Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, taking the homeless poor into your house, clothing the naked when you meet them and never evading a duty to your kinsfolk?' (Isaiah 58:6-7)

Elijah confronted the king about his injustice to Naboth, a nonentity as far as the king was concerned but who was championed by God (1 Kings 21); Nathan was not afraid to convict David of his sinfulness (2 Sam 12). This kind of involvement of religion with politics and the habit of religious leaders to speak into the socio-political and economic situation can be attested to as standard practice in the Bible which provides our mandate and paradigm.

Our marching orders come from Christ Himself and not from any human being. Our mandate is provided by the Bible and the teaching of the Church, not by any political group or ideology, Marxist or otherwise.

Our Lord Himself adopted as a description of His programme that which was outlined by Isaiah:

'The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the humble, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and release to those in prison; to proclaim a year of the Lord's favour and a day of the vengeance of our God.' (Isaiah 61:1-2) found in His first sermon as recorded by St Luke (Luke 4:16-21). He stood in the prophetic tradition when He taught what criteria would be used to judge the nations -- it would not be through observance of narrowly defined religious duties but by whether they had fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and imprisoned, etc. (Matt 25:31-46).

It was impossible to love God whom one had not seen if one hated the brother that one had seen, testified another part of the New Testament (1 John 4:20-21).

The followers of Jesus are constrained by the imperatives of His Gospel to be concerned for those He has called the least of His brethren. The NGK recognised this when it was in the forefront of the struggle for justice for the poor whites as evidenced by the words of Dr C D Brink in a paper delivered at the Volkskongres in 1947.

'The aim of the church is to bring about social justice. Justice must be done to the poor and the oppressed, and if the present system does not serve this purpose, the public conscience must be roused to demand another. If the church does not exert itself for justice in society, and together with the help she can offer also be prepared to serve as champion for the cause of the poor, others will do it. The poor have their right today: I do not ask for your charity, but I ask to be given an opportunity to live a life of

human dignity.'

We are law-abiding. Good laws make human society possible. When laws are unjust then Christian tradition teaches that they do not oblige obedience. Our Lord broke not just man's law but what was considered more serious, He broke God's law in order to meet human need — as when He broke the law of the Sabbath observance (John 5:8-14). He paid due regard to the secular ruler in the person of Pontius Pilate but subsequently engaged in a defiance of that secular authority when He refused to answer his questions (Mark 15:3-5).

It is a hallowed tradition of direct non-violent action such as we engaged in when we tried to process to Parliament. We were mindful too of what the apostles said to the Jewish Sanhedrin, that obedience to God takes precedence of obedience to human beings (Acts 4:19, 5:28).

We accept wholeheartedly St Paul's teaching in Romans 13 — that we should submit ourselves to earthly rulers. Their authority however is not absolute. They themselves also stand under God's judgement as His servants. They are meant to instil fear only in those who do wrong holding no terror for those who do right (Rom 13:3-4). The ruler is God's servant to do the subjects good (Rom 13:4). The ruler rules for the benefit of the ruled. That comes not out of a political manifesto but from the Holy Scriptures. The corollary is that you must not submit yourself to a ruler who subverts your good. That is why we admire those who oppose unjust regimes, e.g. totalitarian communist governments. The Bible teaches that governments can become beasts in the symbolic language of the book of Revelation (Rev 13). Not too many governments nor their apologists who use Romans 13 with glee are quite so enthusiastic about its full implications nor of Revelation 13.

I am sure you could not have been serious when you quoted a passage allegedly from Radio Freedom in which you underline certain words such as *church*, *liberation struggle*, *justice* and because our petition uses similar words you want to suggest that there must be a sinister connection between us and the ANC. If a communist were to say, 'Water makes you wet', would you say, 'No, water does not make you wet', for fear that people would accuse you of being a communist? I would have thought our discussion was at a slightly higher level.

I told you in my interview that I support the ANC in its objectives to establish a non-racial, democratic South Africa; but I do not support its methods. That is a statement I have made in the Supreme Court in Pretoria and on other occasions. My views have never been clandestine. You appointed the Eloff Commission to investigate the SACC when I was still

its General Secretary. Your Security Police investigated my personal life and looked into my bank accounts and tried to discredit me in their evidence before the Commission. They were unable to find anything of which to accuse me. Not even Craig Williamson could produce evidence that I held different views to those I had expressed in public. You know I went to Lusaka twice last year. I tried to persuade the ANC to suspend the armed struggle, that is a matter of public record.

I am committed to work for a non-racial, just and democratic South Africa. I reject atheistic Marxism as I reject apartheid which I find equally abhorrent and evil. Transfer of power to the people of South Africa means exactly that. The latest apartheid Constitution cannot by any stretch of imagination be described as democratic when it excludes 73% of the people of South Africa from any meaningful participation in the political decision making process. I long for and have dedicated myself to work for a South Africa where all South Africans are South Africans, citizens in an undivided South Africa not one that is balkanised into unviable bantustan homelands. When you are a citizen you share through the exercise of your vote in the political decision making process either directly or through duly elected representatives. Since 1976 I have appealed to the government to heed our *cri de coeur*. I have said nobody in their right senses expected these real changes to happen overnight. You yourself can bear me out that when an SACC leaders' delegation met you and your Cabinet colleagues in 1980, I again said that if you did something dramatic then I would be among the first to say to our people, 'Hold it. Give them a chance, now they are talking real change'. Then I said, 'Declare your commitment to a common citizenship for all South Africans in an undivided South Africa; abolish the pass laws; stop immediately all forced population removals and establish a uniform education policy.' That was eight years ago. How much time has been wasted and how many lives have been lost trying to beautify apartheid through cosmetic improvements when the pillars of a vicious system still remain firmly in place.

I would say if you were to lift the State of Emergency, unban all our political organisations, release all detainees and political prisoners and permit exiles to return and then say you would be ready to sit down with the authentic representatives and leaders of every section of our society to negotiate the dismantling of apartheid and drawing up of a new Constitution, I would say to our people, 'Please give him a chance. He is talking real change.' Your apartheid policies are leading our beautiful land to disaster. We love South Africa passionately. Our black fathers fought against the Nazis for it, many

Afrikaners being pro Nazi at the time refused to support the war effort, and many who wore the uniform of the Union Defence Force used to be turned away from NGK church services.

We long for the day when black and white will live amicably and harmoniously together in the new South Africa.

Kindly confirm whether you include me in the paragraph in your letter to the Reverend Frank Chikane which reads:

'You love and praise the ANC/SACP with its Marxist and atheistic ideology, landmines, bombs and necklaces perpetrating the most horrendous atrocities imaginable; and you embrace and participate in their call for violence, hatred, sanctions, insurrection and revolution ...' because as supporting evidence you then quote what I said in St Paul's Cathedral, London.

I want to state the obvious — that I am a Christian religious leader — by definition that surely means I reject communism and Marxism as atheistic and materialistic. I try to work for the extension of the Kingdom of God which will ultimately have rulers such as the ones described in Isaiah 11:1-9 and in

Psalm 72:1-4 and 12-14:

'O God, endow the king with thy own justice, and give thy righteousness to a king's son, that he may judge thy people rightly and deal out justice to the poor and suffering. May the hills and mountains afford the people peace and prosperity in righteousness. He shall give judgement for the suffering and help those of the people that are needy; he shall crush the oppressor.'

'For he shall rescue the needy from their rich oppressors, the distressed who have no protector. May he have pity on the needy and the poor, deliver the poor from death; may he redeem them from oppression and violence and may their blood be precious in his eyes.'

I work for God's Kingdom. For whose Kingdom with your apartheid policy do you work? I pray for you, as I do for your Ministerial colleagues, every day by name.

God bless you.  
Yours sincerely  
Desmond.





**Section Four**  
**What is the  
way forward?**

## 4.1 Developing a programme of non-violent effective action

Our central mission as church is to hasten the coming of the kingdom of God on earth, in all spheres of life.

In South Africa, apartheid rule is a most fundamental stumbling-block preventing God's vision from becoming a reality.

The building of a non-racial and democratic

South Africa is in this sense an important dimension in the process of establishing God's kingdom here in our part of the earth. To achieve this, the basic question we need to find answers to is: What can we do to get those who are in power to abandon apartheid and go to the negotiating table?

## 4.2 What can be learnt from past experiences?

In the past, various strategies have been adopted by the churches to help achieve our shared goal.

We have issued numerous statements condemning apartheid over the years.

More recently, many church leaders attempted to intervene as mediators by talking to both the South African government as well as the liberation movements.

We had believed that it was the liberation movements in exile who did not want to negotiate since they were apparently not interested in peaceful change.

But after visiting both sides it became crystal clear that it is the minority government which does not want to negotiate.

The major target of the apartheid forces, the African National Congress, has made it clear now that the only condition needed is a commitment by the South African government to abandon apartheid and allow free and equal negotiations.

No oppressive regime has historically abandoned power freely.

Furthermore, we realise from our own experience that our desperate pleas for a change of heart have fallen on deaf ears. Subsequently the only responsible way out of this crisis is to find effective ways of pressurising the government to go to the negotiating table.

In the past we have placed a lot of emphasis for isolating apartheid on the doorstep of the international community.

While these are important dimensions for our prophetic witness, it is evident that on their own these attempts are simply inadequate.

Through united action as a broad ecumenical movement of believers, our head and body will be bound together in a way which will make it extremely difficult for the state to divide us.

Through engaging in effective non-violent actions we can make a valuable contribution to not only ending the apartheid system but, furthermore, of ensuring that the new era which is ushered in, is one in which the kingdom of God can begin to be experienced far more fully, here in South Africa.

## 4.3 Areas of non-violent effective action

From the outset we must recognise that we would be guilty of extreme naivete if we thought we were working within a vacuum. Our contribution as church must be developed in consultation with the broader democratic movement for change. We have much to learn from the accumulated experiences of struggle and from the successes and failures of the past.

Furthermore, the recent restrictions imposed upon many of these organisations places an added responsibility and urgency upon our contribution.

There are a number of possible areas where we could promote non-violent effective action:

### 1. Through our traditional ministries as church

#### 1.1 Prayer campaign

A prayer campaign for an end to unjust rule.



The old remember the young in prayer...a service for the six Sharpeville residents on Death Row

#### 1.2 Transforming the liturgies

Transforming the liturgies in our services such that the life and faith of the community is effectively integrated (eg. as has been done in funeral services).



A priest helps a fellow priest who is overcome by tears.



Funerals in South Africa have been transformed by the political situation





**A father carries his son as a symbol of Hector Peterson — the first person to be killed on June 16, 1976**



**Doves are offered up as a sign of peace at a church service**



**A chain representing oppression and flowers representing hope are offered up to God**

**1.3 Pastoral care**  
**Pastoral care for the victims of apartheid**  
(detainees, prisoners, sanctuary etc).



**Mothers of detainees light candles at a service in Durban's Central Methodist Church**



**Relatives of Father Smangalisso Mkhatsywa carry candles at a mass for him in his parish, held while he was detained under the emergency regulations**

## 2. Through telling the truth



Archbishop Romero gives his weekly sermon on events in El Salvador



Is St Augustine telling the truth when he says: 'A government without justice is little more than a group of bandits'?



'The truth shall set you free' — Dr Allan Boesak speaks to children in Middelburg

The increasing restrictions and final closure of sections of the media has meant that the truth has been taken hostage and in its place an artificial and distorted picture of the South African reality has been forcefully presented.

Recognising that the church is the custodian of the truth, we need to develop more effective ways of telling the truth.

Archbishop Romero of El Salvador was particularly effective in utilising the traditional Sunday sermon from the pulpit, to tell the truth

about what had happened the previous week — especially in relation to the actions of the security forces.

## 3. Through a non-collaboration campaign

Because the state has had to rely heavily upon repression, it is inevitable that it in time has begun to be seen as the people's enemy. In this context it is imperative that the churches begin re-evaluating the traditional ties they



have had with the state, with the purpose of cutting all those ties which give credibility to an unjust state.

3.1 Marriage officers

3.2 Racial birth registers

3.3 Military chaplaincy and military service

3.4 All apartheid structures (bantustans, tri-cameral parliament etc).

3.5 State ceremonies/civic events

3.6 etc

#### 4. Through intervention strategies

This will be necessary in specific emergencies — as was the case in the education crisis.

#### 5. Through symbolic acts of protest

We need to mobilise more than just the clergy of our churches into these actions. Through this creative witness, Christians throughout the land may be empowered to confront the government to abandon apartheid and negotiate a just settlement.



Seminarians from St John Vianney in solemn procession after delivering an open letter to the State President at the Union Buildings



A group of women march to a police station in Soweto, coming to the aid of little children.

## 4.4 How do we take this forward?



**The church is moving forward to the kingdom of God, where justice and peace shall reign.**

This list of non-violent effective actions is by no means complete and each community is expected to add some of their own creative contributions.

To ensure that our actions are indeed effective, we will need to organise a thorough campaign programme which prevents our initiative from becoming a series of isolated actions without any follow-up process.

Note that one of the central aims of this initiative is that we mobilise our church membership behind such actions.

If this is to be effectively achieved it is necessary that those who are leading this initiative develop a clear vision of where we are going, as well as what kind of training will be required for effective non-violent actions such as those that have been listed.

With this in mind, we strongly encourage the local communities of Christians who will be represented through various churches, to meet prior to the conference and clarify these and other questions you feel are important for achieving these aims.

Section Five  
**Appendix:  
Facts and  
Figures**



All figures are from Info 87 (Human Awareness Programme) unless otherwise indicated.

### 5.1 Population

There are approximately 35-million people in South Africa as its boundaries were constituted in 1910.

More than half these people are women.

In South Africa outside the independent homelands in June 1987 there were at least 29,025 million people, according to the Central Statistical Services. Of these:

- 20,132-million are African.
  - 4,911-million are classified as white.
  - 3,069-million are classified as coloured.
  - 913 000 are classified as Indian.
- (Weekly Mail 27/11/87)

There are more than 10,5-million young people in this country aged 19 and below. Of this number, just over 1,5-million are white. At the end of 1988, 2,49-million children between the ages of 15 and 19 will enter the market place, go into the army or continue with higher education.

(Inside South Africa, March 88)

### 5.2 Religion

- 72% of South Africa's population is Christian.
- 36% of all black Christians, and 20% of all black people in South Africa, belong to the African Independent Churches.
- The largest multi-racial church is the Catholic Church, with 9,2% of all South Africans as members.
- In a survey, 31,4% of whites said they believed religious movements should take a stand against racial discrimination. Nearly 70% of Africans, 67% of coloureds and 62% of Indians supported the belief.

### 5.3 Economy

#### 5.3.1 The 1987/88 Budget

Education: R9,1-bn, compared to R8,46-bn in 1986/87. This is 19,6% of the entire budget, and includes an increase of about 40% on African education.

Development planning: R6,51-bn compared to R5,32-bn the previous year.

Foreign Affairs: R2,18-bn compared to R1,36-bn the previous year.

Trade and industry: R1,03-bn compared to R0,59-bn the previous year.

Defence: R6,68-bn compared to R5,12-bn the previous year.

Police: R1,53-bn compared to R1,07-bn the previous year — an increase of 42,8% 'because of the need to control unrest', among other things.

#### 5.3.2 What the government costs us

- The direct cost of apartheid during 1986 was R3,9-bn (as reflected in the budget).
- R1 in every R6 spent by the government goes on pay and perks.
- R0,12 in every R1 is spent on apartheid structures.
- There is one civil servant to every 27 citizens in SA. In Britain it is 1:94 000.
- Government salaries, administration and allowances now cost R40,5-million — 500% more than in 1981.
- In SA there are 307 MPs. There are 4 ministers of health, 5 ministers of education, 4 ministers of agriculture, and 6 ministers dealing with housing. The non-independent homelands have another 46 ministers and 481 members of their legislative assemblies. With the 'independent' homelands there are 5 presidents, 5 ministers of foreign affairs, 5 finance ministers and 5 ministers of defence. The total number of ministers of state is 153.
- In the 1987/88 financial year, salary and domestic allowances for MPs will equal 16-million. *5-3, 333 R each*

The cost of apartheid to the economy was about R78-billion in 1985, according to an estimate by Professor Michael Savage, of the University of Cape Town. He said apartheid cost R8-bn in lost economic growth, R66-bn in lost growth opportunities, and R3,9-bn in the direct costs of implementing government race policies. Savage said it was estimated that the gross national product per capita would be 50% higher if apartheid did not exist.

### 5.4 Education

$$\frac{387}{2746} = 14\%$$

- In 1985/86, R2 746 was spent on each white child's education, and R387 on each African child's education.
- In the 1986 matriculation exams, white pupils achieved a 92,1% pass rate, Indian pupils 85,9%, coloured pupils 67,6% and African pupils 51,99%. Of the white pupils, 43,2% achieved university entrance, 33,3% of the Indian pupils, 15,3% of the coloured pupils and 13,07% of the African pupils.
- In 1985 the pupil/teacher ratio in African schools outside the homeland was 41,2 to 1. For coloured schools it was 25,4 to 1, for Indian schools 22,5 to 1, and for white schools 18,7 to 1.

- According to a 1986 report, the teacher shortage in African schools is currently about 100 000. Among white teachers there is an oversupply, with some teachers being retrenched. About 8 400 African teachers graduate annually. Among African teachers, 94,6% are underqualified or have no qualifications at all. Some 3% of white teachers are underqualified. Underqualified African teachers earn less than R500 a month.

- In 1985 there was a shortage of 193 575 places in African schools controlled by the Department of Education and Training. In 1986, there were 153 657 empty places in white schools.

- If racial equality in education expenditure is achieved the year 2000, the overall education budget will have to rise to R28,1-bn in that year, and the proportion of Gross National Product spent on education will have to rise from the 1986 level of 4,5% to 18,1%.

- In the 1987/88 budget, R9-billion was set aside for education, the largest expenditure item on the budget. The amount for African education was R1,5-bn, while R3,3-bn was earmarked for white education.

#### 5.5 Health

- 100 out of every 1 000 children born in rural areas die before their first birthday. In urban areas the figure is 50 out of every 1 000. For urban whites, the figure is less than 20 out of every 1 000. A child dies of hunger every 15 minutes in this country. In a study done by Operation Hunger, it was shown that the rate of stunting, or other evidence of chronic malnutrition, is much higher in South Africa's rural areas than in Botswana, Swaziland, Zambia or Zimbabwe.

- A recent survey by the University of Oxford found the following rates of stunting in South Africa's rural areas: Transvaal 48,5%, Eastern Cape 57,8% and Northern Cape 80,4%. In Botswana, the rate is 40%, Swaziland 30,3%, Zambia 34,8% and Zimbabwe 13,9%.

- During 1983/84, a white Johannesburg hospital spent R185 per day per patient, a coloured hospital spent R64 per day per patient, and a black homeland hospital in Gazankulu had R12,50 to

spend per day per patient.

- During 1984/85, Soweto's Baragwanath Hospital had an average bed occupancy of 113%.

- There is one hospital bed for every 100 white people, compared to one bed for every 225 people for other races.

#### 5.6 Transport

- Some 70% of African commuters travel more than three hours a day between work and home.

#### 5.7 Militarisation

- The 1986/87 budget showed an increase of 30% in defence spending. The defence budget for 1985/86 was R5123-m, and R6683-m for 1986/87.

- During 1986, 453 SADF members committed suicide or tried to commit suicide. There were 24 successful suicides. Of the 453, 362 were National Servicemen. Three times as many servicemen attempted suicide as died in military operations and training exercises.

- A total of 1 596 conscripts failed to report for duty in 1984. In January 1985 the figure increased to 7 589 and since then the government has refused to release figures.

#### 5.8 Sport

- The government spent R9,9-m on white schoolchildren in 1983, an average of R10,14 per child. In contrast, it spent R14 700 on African schoolchildren — an average of 39 cents per child.

- White local authorities can afford to finance 93,1% of their expenditure on sport, black local authorities on 12%.

- Although National Panasonic laid out R1-million on the first 'rebel' Australian cricket tour to this country, they received R900 000 back as a tax rebate — so the government, i.e. the taxpayers, effectively paid 90% of the bill. The second 'rebel' tour was sponsored by the state-owned Yellow Pages company.

- During 1984, 2 212 SA sportspeople travelled abroad. During 1986, only 858 did. Visits to SA went from 2 481 to 1 324 in 1986.

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