

THE BLACK SASH

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How to Lose Friends

PERHAPS the greatest single problem facing the present Government is the bad reputation which it has earned overseas. To say that the Nationalists have a bad Press abroad is to put it mildly. Politically, the Union is easily the most disliked part of the Commonwealth, not only in Britain, but in America and in Western Europe. There is no need to stress what India and Pakistan think of us, and as for Russia and the Iron Curtain countries no words are bad enough. Perhaps only in Little Rock, Arkansas, could we count on solid support. This was true even in the days of Dr. Malan; under Mr. Strijdom matters have become much worse. Sometimes our critics are merely abusive without showing much understanding of our problems. That can be endured. What is far more serious is that well-informed opinion represented by such newspapers as the "Manchester Guardian," "The Economist" and the "New York Times" is equally unanimous in condemning our policies.

This is a grave situation. It is not merely a question of "wanting to be liked." If it were only a matter of a few tourists frightened away, sluggishness in immigration and the shyness of overseas capitalist investors, we could probably face it out—although the problem of capital investment is already growing serious. But the political consequences of this isolation are disastrous and could, in certain circumstances, become highly dangerous. With African nationalism stirring throughout the continent, it does not require much imagination to realise

Hoe om Vriende Kwyt te Raak

SY onsmaaklike reputasie in die buiteland is miskien die grootste probleem waarmee die huidige regering te kampe het. Die buitelandse pers is beslis antagonisties teenoor die Nasionaliste, en op politieke gebied is Suid-Afrika die ongewildste deel van die Gemenebes. Hierdie mening geld nie alleen vir Brittanje nie, maar ook vir Amerika en Wes-Europa. Indië en Pakistan se houding teenoor ons is algemeen bekend, en ons praat nie eers van Rusland en die lande agter die Ystergordyn nie. Slegs in Little Rock, Arkansas, kan ons ondersteuning verwag. Selfs in dr. Malan se dae het hierdie toestand geheers; met mnr. Strijdom aan bewind is sake veel erger. Diegene wat ons aanval is soms bloot beledigend, sonder om te toon dat hul ons probleme enigsins begryp. Dit kan ons nogal verduur. Maar watter uitweg het ons wanneer ons beleide ewe skerp veroordeel word deur verantwoordelike koerante soos „The Manchester Guardian,” „The Economist” en „The New York Times”?

Hierdie toedrag van sake is onrusbarend. Daar is meer op die spel as die begeerte dat andere van ons moet hou. Die uitwerking op ons toeristebedryf, op immigrasie en op die toevoer van buitelandse kapitaal is nie noodlottig nie, hoewel lg. reeds vry ernstig is. Dit is die politieke gevolge van ons afsondering wat so ramspoedig is en wat vir ons moontlik in sulke gevaar kan stel. Deur die ganse Afrika ontwikkel nasionalisme onder die gekleurde rasse, en dit verg nie veel verbeeldingskrag om

that South Africa is in an increasingly precarious position alone at the tip of the Continent. No wonder the Government is worried. When the Press Commission, which is due to report soon, was taking evidence from journalists in all parts of the country, the point about which the Commissioners showed the most concern was the reporting of South African affairs in the overseas Press. The cause of their anxiety was clear. They were disturbed by the effect on overseas opinion of despatches leaving this country, although most of the damage, of course, is done by the actual speeches and legislation of ministers and not by newspaper comment on them. Often enough, comment is unnecessary.

To be fair to the Nationalists we must face the question whether, in the present climate of world opinion, any other South African government would do much better in winning friends overseas. Is it not true that our basic position, on which the vast majority of us are agreed, of a white minority imposing its will on a black majority is in itself obnoxious to overseas opinion, let alone to non-Europeans, throughout Africa and Asia? The answer must be "Yes." Our whole racial philosophy, whether it is right or wrong in present circumstances, is under fire, and whether we like it or not, we are all, Nationalists and Opposition alike, in the dock.

But that does not excuse Nationalist behaviour. Nationalist arrogance and harshness have made a difficult situation ten times worse. When a Nationalist minister refers to Indians as "Coolies," that echoes round the world and sticks in the minds of hundreds of thousands of people who would never be bothered to go into the intricate details of our Indian problem. When Dr. Verwoerd legislates against the "nuisance" of Native churchgoers in European areas he offends against decent feeling everywhere, and no amount of specious talk can rescue him from his invidious position.

We are not here blaming the Nationalist Government for being unpopular but for showing an almost brutal insensitivity. A position which would be difficult to defend in any case is made infinitely worse by an attitude of mind which positively compels revulsion. Look at it how you will, South

(Continued on opposite page)

te besef dat Suid-Afrika, stoksielalleen aan die punt van die kontinent, in 'n bedenklike toestand verkeer nie. Geen wonder dat die regering bekommerd is nie. Toe die Perskommissie wat binnekort verslag sal lewer, die getuienis van joernaliste in alle dele van die land afgeneem het, was dit die kwessie van berigte in die oorsese pers oor Suid-Afrikaanse aangeleenthede wat die kommissarisse mees sorgwekkend gevind het. Die oorsaak van hul benoudheid is voor die hand liggend. Hul was onrustig oor die uitwerking, op buitelandse opinies, van verslae afkomstig uit Suid-Afrika, hoewel die grootste skade natuurlik deur die toesprake en wetgewing van ministers aangerig word, en nie deur kommentaar daarop nie. Dikwels is kommentaar oorbodig.

Om teenoor die Nasionaliste regverdig te wees moet ons nou probeer besluit of enige ander regering 'n meer gunstige indruk oorsee sou skep. Die oorgrote meerderheid van ons is dit tog eens dat die blanke minderheid oor die nie-blanke meerderheid moet regeer, en is dit dan nie hierdie begrip op sigself wat in die buiteland as geheel ongewild is, om nie eers te praat van die nie-blanke lande in Asië en Afrika nie? Ja, dit is wel die geval. Ons ganse kleurfilosofie, heeltemal afgesien daarvan of dit onder omstandighede verskoonbaar is aldan nie, word hewig aangeval. Ons almal, Opposisie sowel as Nasionaliste, is die beskuldigdes.

Hierdie feit regverdig egter geensins die gedrag van die Nasionaliste nie. Hul verwaandheid en onmenslikheid het 'n netelige posisie in 'n onmoontlike posisie omgeskep. Wanneer 'n minister na Indiërs as „koelies” verwys, weergalm dit oor die hele wêreld en maak dit 'n skerp indruk op mense wat anderssinds gladnie eers belang sou gestel het nie. Wanneer dr. Verwoerd wetgewing indien om die „las” van naturelle-kerkgangers in blanke gebied teen te werk, word die belediging deur alle regdenkendes afgekeur, en sy pogings om dit goed te praat is nutteloos.

Ons veroordeel nie die regering omdat dit ongewild is nie. Wat ons wel afkeur is sy beesagtige ongevoeligheid. 'n Toestand wat in elk geval moeilik te regverdig is, word nog veel erger as gevolg van 'n uitkyk wat ordentlike mense met afkeer vervul. Suid-Afrika se rasse-

(Vervolg op volgende bladsy)

FROM OUR POSTBAG

To the Editor, **The Black Sash.**

YOU called for comments on the "This is your Party" series!

My own view is that so many parties cannot continue to function indefinitely in South Africa—nor could they, I believe, so continue in any country: human thought having a tendency, after a time, to flow in certain well-defined channels.

I would not be surprised if, in the future, the Nationalist Party absorbs the Right Wing of the United Party (or the Right Wing of the United Party absorbs the Nationalist Party) taking up the South African Bond and the Wassenaar-type offshoots as well. A more moderate, sensible Nationalism would then result. A vastly-strengthened Liberal Party would absorb the Labour Party, the Federal Party, and anything else left over, and these two giants—reformed National and Liberal—would eventually confront each other across the face of the old inscrutable Africa, who would decide the issue herself in the fullness of time.

Gilbert and Sullivan summed it all up very succinctly many years ago.

"Every boy and every girl
That's born into this world alive,
Is either a little Liberal
Or else a little Conservative."

When Black Civilization reaches its zenith, as ultimately it must after the passing of decades, we will find this exact situation repeating itself, and the final emergence of the two basic parties, the Liberal and the Conservative.

Moves too far to either Left or Right will always produce the temporary offshoots or tributaries of Communism and Fascism, but the tendency is to return after a while to the broader streams of human thought. These flow concurrently towards some vast confluence that will be the final brotherhood of Man.

M.P.W.

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To the Editor, **The Black Sash.**

Driving along the hot dusty road to Kaap Muiden recently, a friend and I met a stranded car. A man and young lad of about 12 were trying to mend something inside the bonnet. Pulling up I asked: "Good morning, can we help?" The reply was: „Het jy miskien 'n lang spyker?" No salutation, no please!—I felt immediately I had addressed the poor fellow in the wrong language. After a fruitless effort on the part of our driver to assist him, we offered to take his son to Kaap Muiden, get the spare part and bring it back. On the way we carried on the usual conversation grown-ups do with young lads of 12—how old are you, where do you go to school, etc., etc. All this in Afrikaans. Nearing Kaap Muiden the lad said in good English: "Here is Kaap Muiden, not so far away." "Oh," I replied, "You

talk English very nicely." To which he replied: "Oh, yes, and I would like to talk it MUCH more." Make of it what you will. I was left with an overwhelming sorrow that adults could be so stupid, and youth so thwarted.

F.M.B. (Johannesburg).

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To the Editor, **The Black Sash.**

My colleagues and I have the most profound respect and admiration for the noble altruism and dedicated zeal of your members, and their patient, dignified bearing. We admire their courage and perseverance, and hope and believe that their efforts will not be in vain.

For my own part, I would like to say "thank you" to you for sending me regularly your journal. In the nature of things I have not the time to read every word of every issue—although one weekend I read through at one sitting the whole of your first seven issues—but I always feel spiritually refreshed after looking through your pages. Courage, freedom and justice shine through each one.

With every good wish to you and your colleagues in their brave endeavours, I am, Madam,

Yours sincerely,

P. R. STUBBINGE, Editor,

"Land and Liberty," London.

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Africa is in a tragic racial dilemma, but why make this worse by an almost unbelievable display of spiritual pride? The world might go a long way towards showing us sympathy and understanding if our position were carefully explained, with decent humility, but the world will not tolerate people like our Nationalist Government who act and speak as if they had divine guidance in a policy of oppression.

(Vervolg van bladsy 2)

probleem is alreeds 'n netelige vraagstuk; waarom nog boonop hierdie haas ongelooflike hoogmoed? Die buitewêreld kan ons probleme dalk nog insien as ons dit met betaamlike nederigheid nader, maar die buitewêreld verdra nie mense soos ons Nasionale regering nie wat handel asof hul goddelike leiding ontvang het vir hul afstootlike beleid van onderdrukking.