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TALK POLITICS!

When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.

—Edmund Burke

THAT is all very well, but the trouble is that the bad men are always better at combining. In a democracy such as ours in South Africa there is a great tendency to take it for granted that the government is as democratic as we are. This is certainly not true at the moment. It is doubtful whether it is likely to be true within our lifetime. The pressures against a democratic government today or in the foreseeable future are enormous. The drift from democracy is likely to increase, whatever government is in power, but if we want to retain democracy at all, we will have to fight for it.

This means that every single person who is interested in retaining a democratic form of government will have to wake up and realise that it can only be caught now by the tail of its skirt, as it disappears round the corner.

But then comes the question: what can you or I do at any given moment to prevent the country from slipping into a police state? How is this going to be stopped by sitting over cups of coffee after committee meetings? Well, there are several answers to that one. The first answer is that a great deal can be done by talking over coffee cups, as long as they are in the right houses and on the right stoeps. There

PRAAT POLITIEK

Wanneer slegte mense verenig moet die goeies saamstaan; anders sal hulle een vir een val, onbejammerde slagoffers in 'n veragtelike stryd.

—Edmund Burke.

DIT is alles goed en wel, maar die moeilikheid is dat die slegtes altyd beter saamstaan as die goeies. In 'n demokrasie soos ons s'n in Suid-Afrika is daar 'n sterk neiging om dit as vanselfsprekend te beskou dat die regering net so demokraties is as onsself. Dit is sekerlik nie op die oomblik die geval nie. Dit is twyfelagtig of dit binne ons leeftyd die geval sal wees. Daar is geweldige magte wat 'n demokratiese regering vandag beveg, en in die voorsienbare toekoms sal bly beveg. Ondemokratiese neigings sal waarskynlik toeneem, watter regering ookal aan bewind is, maar as ons nog 'n mate van demokrasie wil behou sal ons daarvoor moet veg.

Dit beteken dat iedereen wat die behoud van ons huidige regeringsvorm op die hart dra, moet wakker word en besef dat demokrasie aan verdwyn is en slegs met die grootste moeite in ere herstel kan word.

Nou kom ons egter voor hierdie vraag te staan: wat kan u of ek doen om te voorkom dat ons land geleidelik 'n polisiestaat word? Kan dit vermy word deur koffie te drink na komiteevergaderings? Nouja, daar is verskeie antwoorde op daardie vraag. Die eerste antwoord is dat veel verrig kan word deur koffie te drink, mits dit in die regte huise en op die

IN A TYRANNY, THE SMALLEST ACT OF RESISTANCE GIVES OTHERS COURAGE.

is no point in talking politics to the converted, but if you introduce the subject after dinner *when everybody else is complacent the result* can be electric and lasting. Talking politics, especially on occasions when it is unpopular, is one of the surest ways of getting people to think politics. In 1940 Mussolini ordered the removal of all the marble-topped tables from the cafes in Rome. He said that people sat around and talked politics, and this annoyed him. Needless to say his order was not obeyed, but the fact is interesting if only to show how scared he was of people merely talking.

The second answer is that an enormous amount can be done by a demonstration or a gesture. The Freedom Radio is a case in point. All law-abiding citizens must deprecate this gesture of defiance, but the fact remains that certain people have found it necessary to make it. The people behind this illegal activity did not wait for what is vaguely known as "a lead." They went right out and did something. We are not advocating similar activities, but we merely mention the Freedom Radio as an example of what can be done by a handful of people who are sufficiently moved to feel that they cannot wait.

One of the bugbears of democracy is conformity. Democracy relies on the theory that one should count heads instead of breaking them. That is perfectly true, but this theory carries with it the danger that one thinks that counting heads is all that is needed. It is also necessary to beat something into the heads that are going to be counted. And one cannot sit back and expect somebody else to do the work.

One of the creations of our time is an amorphous monster known as "They." "They" will look after it; "They" would never dream of allowing such a thing to happen; "They" will stop it before it goes too far; "They" will tell us when "They" want us to do something about it.

The fact is, there isn't any "They." "They" are you.

regte stoepe geskied. Dit help nie om politiek met bekeerdes te bespreek nie, maar as mens die onderwerp na aandete begin bespreek wanneer almal selfvoldaan voel kan die uitwerking dinamies en blywend wees. Om politiek te bespreek, veral by geleenthede wanneer dit onpopulêr is, verseker dat mense oor politiek sal begin dink. In 1940 het Mussolini beveel dat al die marmerbedekte tafels uit die kafees van Roma verwyder moet word. Hy het gesê dat mense aan daardie tafels politiek bespreek het, en dit het vir hom gehinder. Sy bevel is natuurlik nie gehoorsaam nie, maar die geval is interessant, want dit bewys dat die blote feit dat mense gesels het, vir hom bang gemaak het.

Die tweede antwoord is dat 'n betoging of gebaar veel kan bereik. Die Vryheidsradio is 'n voorbeeld. Alle ordeliewende burgers keur hierdie uittartende gebaar af, maar die feit bly staan dat sekere persone dit nodig geag het om die gebaar te maak. Die persone wat aan hierdie onwettige bedrywigheid deelneem, het nie gewag om te sien of andere leiding sou neem nie. Hulle het self opgetree. Ons bepleit nie soortgelyke bedrywighede nie; ons haal eenvoudig die Vryheidsradio aan as 'n voorbeeld van wat 'n handvol mense kan bereik wanneer hulle reken dat sake so ernstig is dat daadwerklike optrede dringend vereis word.

Demokrasie berus op die teorie dat mens hoofde moet tel eerder as om hulle te breek. Dit is waar, maar die teorie bring die gevaar mee dat die tel van hoofde op sigself as voldoende beskou sal word. Dit is egter ook nodig dat iets in die hoofde geprop moet word voordat hulle getel word. En ons kan nie verwag dat andere hierdie werk moet doen nie.

Een van die skeppings van ons tyd is 'n vormlose monster wat bekend staan as „Hulle". „Hulle" sal daarvoor sorg; „Hulle" sal nooit toelaat dat so iets gebeur nie; „Hulle" sal dit stopsit voordat dit te ver vorder; „Hulle" sal vir ons daarvan in kennis stel wanneer „Hulle" wil hê dat ons iets daar omtrent moet doen.

In werklikheid bestaan „Hulle" glad nie. „Hulle" is u.

APOLOGY

The Editor regrets that by an unfortunate chance the photographs of Mrs. Till and Mrs. Ohlsson in the August issue were transposed. We apologise sincerely for any confusion caused thereby.