

THE GRAVE OF THE MIND

IN February 1948, the same year the purged Nationalist Party first took possession of the country, a group of prominent Afrikaners calling themselves the Institute for Christian National Education proposed a new educational policy for South Africa that amounted ultimately to a ruthless and perpetual policing of the mind. That the influential Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies should have sponsored the policy statement of the Institute gave sufficient cause for general alarm. But that men like Dr. T. E. Dönges, M.P., Dr. E. G. Jansen, M.P., and Professor J. G. Meiring should have been actual Directors of the Institute, disturbed the one consolation the text itself may have provided, that the whole was a product of the lunatic fringe of Afrikaner Nationalism. A short burst of absolute horror followed the publication of the statement. The horror has subsided now, as one horror does in South Africa, to make room for another. Most of us who in 1948 raised startled heads high for a moment in protest have now forgotten even the name of the doctrine and our fright along with it. But then Dr. E. G. Jansen is now His Excellency the Governor-General of South Africa, Dr. T. E. Dönges is Minister of the Interior, and Professor J. G. Meiring, Superintendent-General of Education in the Cape.

It was said in the first brave flush of opposition that Christian National Education was not Christian, not National and not Education. Since it defined Christianity as "*the creeds of the three Afrikaner Churches*" (Article 1), and since it is still open to question whether the thin, stooping Calvinism of the Afrikaner Churches perfectly represents the teachings of Christ, we were right in regarding the definition as a pledge of sectarian tyranny. Since also National was defined as "*imbued with the love of one's own, especially one's own language, history and culture*", and since South Africa is a nation of many peoples, languages, histories and cultures, and there is nothing less National in it than concentration upon group instead of society, the emphasizing and sanctifying of differences, we saw in the word that bleak promise of racial domination which was to become in the end, as we know, the insanity of "apartheid".

Least of all could Christian National Education have been considered Education.

"All white children should be educated according to the view of life of their parents. This means that Afrikaans-speaking children should have a Christian-National education, for the Christian and National spirit of the Afrikaner nation must be preserved and developed."

Article 1.

"The spirit of all teaching must be Christian-national, in no subject may anti-Christian or non-Christian or anti-nationalist or non-nationalist propaganda be made."

Article 6(i).

"History should be seen as the fulfilment of God's plan for humanity . . . God has enjoined on each nation its individual task in the fulfilment of His purpose. Young people can only undertake the national task fruitfully if they acquire a true vision of the origin of the nation and of the direction of the national heritage. Next to the mother tongue the history of the Fatherland is the best channel for cultivating the love of one's own which is nationalism."

Article 6(vi).

"It is the Afrikaners' sacred duty to see that the coloureds are brought up Christian-national. Only when he is christianized can the coloured be truly happy; and he will then be proof against foreign ideologies which give him an illusion of happiness but leave him in the long run unsatisfied and unhappy.

He must also be nationalist. The welfare and happiness of the coloured lies in his understanding that he belongs to a separate racial group (hence apartheid is necessary in education) and in his being proud of it."

Article 14.

This, we all cried out, was not education, the development of independent thinking, of individual personality. It was mass indoctrination, a ruthless assassination of personality that would make from South Africa at last the grave of the mind.

With such a spade were the foundations of the Afrikaner Reich to be laid. It seemed absurd and impossible, the whole black programme. Thousands of Afrikaner children were to be disfigured into believing in their divine mission to rule over the Fatherland while hundreds of thousands of Coloured and African children were to be taught that they were born, and were always unprotestingly to remain, the servants of the chosen servants of God.

We may be forgiven for having forgotten the doctrine of Christian National Education so soon, for having had our one quick spurt of panic and then having tucked the statement away in a far fold of the mind. We forgot, but the Nationalist Party did not forget. In 1948 its Provincial Congresses in the Cape and the Transvaal called upon the Government to make C.N.E. the educational policy of the country. And every move the Government has made since first it barged its way into power in 1948 has been another firm step down the road to the Christian National State.

"We want no mixing of languages, no mixing of cultures, no mixing of religions and no mixing of races." So wrote J. C. van Rooy, Chairman of the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies, in his Preface to the Institute policy statement. And some months after the publication of the statement the herding into racial camps began. Separate facilities, never equal, for separate races. Separate doors and separate counters in public buildings, separate seats in public buses, separate benches in public parks.

Separate laws and laws to separate—residentially, industrially, politically, intellectually, sexually. Separation of White and Black, of Black and Coloured, of White and Coloured, of Black and Black and of White and White. And all separation firmly rooted in the schools.

“There should be at least two kinds of Primary and Secondary schools; one for the children of Afrikaans-speaking parents, with only Afrikaans as medium, and the other for children of English-speaking parents, with only English as medium. In each there should be the right relationship between home, school, church and state.” Article 8(i).

To date, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State have both passed Language Ordinances abolishing parallel-medium schooling—a system which has encouraged the mixing of children across the language line during breaks and extra-mural activities—and establishing instead compulsory single-medium education up to Standard VIII (two years before matriculation). The separation of English- and Afrikaans-speaking school children in both provinces is now complete. And the separation allows of no exception. The child is to be taught in the language which the authorities judge that he knows best, not in the language his parents may desire for him. The School Principal investigates and decides, and the parents have the right to appeal to the Director of Education. But the Director’s decision is final and there may be no further appeal from it. The compound walls must be made so high that no one can climb over them.

Only in the Cape Province, which was once, so long ago, the home of liberalism, have the authorities allowed themselves to be bent a little by the pressure of public opinion. Here also single-medium schooling has been made compulsory up to Standard VIII, but the parent can change the language-medium of his child after Primary school if he can obtain a written statement by the Principal, countersigned by an Inspector of the Education Department, stating that his child is capable of benefiting from instruction in another language. The final decision, however, still lies in the pocket of Departmental officials, so that the escape clause depends for access entirely upon the tolerance of its guards.

Civilized democratic society will accept the 1949 pronouncement of the General Assembly of the South African Presbyterian Church that “The parent is the primary custodian of the child . . . and should have the right to choose between the different schools available”. But Christian National Education upholds the paramount right of the State.

“The parents *in community* (not as individuals) must establish, maintain and control schools which will foster their own view of life, they must appoint the teachers and keep a watch on the teaching.” Article 8(iii).

What their own view of life is to be if they are Afrikaners the Orange Free State Language Ordinance of 1954 leaves in little doubt.

"It shall be the general policy of the Administrator to recognize, reveal and cultivate the Christian principle in education, and to maintain the national outlook, in order to develop in pupils a Christian philosophy of the world and life, to inculcate a healthy sentiment of undivided love for and loyalty to the common Fatherland and to cultivate an esteem for the traditions, language and culture of all sections of the people."

Ordinance 16.

One can only return with a shudder to the pamphlet issued by the Institute.

"Our Afrikaans schools must not merely be mother tongue schools; they must be places where our children will be *saturated* with the Christian and National spiritual cultural stuff of our nation."

Preface.

The White schools had been dealt with for the meantime. It remained only to deal as well with the Black ones.

Article 15 of the C.N.E. pamphlet deals with the Education of Africans.

"Native education should be based on the principles of trusteeship, non-equality and segregation; its aim should be to inculcate the white man's view of life, especially that of the Boer nation, which is the senior trustee."

In 1949 a special Government Commission on Bantu Education was constituted, to accomplish, amongst other things—

"The formulation of the principles and aims of education for *Natives as an independent race*, in which their past and present, their inherent racial qualities, their *distinctive characteristics and aptitudes* and their needs under ever-changing social conditions are taken into consideration."

In a moment of astonishing lucidity, the Commission reported that—

"No evidence of a decisive nature was adduced to show that as a group the Bantu could not benefit from education or that their intelligence and aptitudes were of so special and peculiar a nature as to demand on these grounds a special type of Education."

But the Report was not to be caught with its slip showing again.

English and Afrikaans must be taught "in such a way that the Bantu child will be able to find his way in European communities, to follow oral or written *instructions*; and to carry on a simple conversation with Europeans about his *work* and other subjects of common interest."

Paragraph 924.

"Your Commission recommends that handwork in the first four years of school should aim at the establishment of the habit of doing manual work."

Paragraph 932(c).

No wonder then the Report emphasized so strongly agricultural training for girls as well as boys, suggested needlework as an appropriate subject for boys, and paid less attention to University Education than to Gardening. Boer Trusteeship and the principles of non-equality and segregation were to become in practice what they were in Christian National principle—education for service in kitchen, garden and on farm.

What of the millions of Africans living in the cities, many of them born there and knowing no other home?

"Your Commission feels that special steps should be taken in the Reserves to facilitate and encourage the evolution of a progressive, modern and self-respecting Bantu order of life. Cosmopolitan areas in industrial centres where people of many languages and customs are herded together provide particularly difficult conditions for the orderly and progressive development of Bantu culture."

Bantu schools "of a Western type" already existing were objected to as being out of harmony with existing Bantu social institutions. (Paragraph 759.) And out of harmony they most assuredly are. But rather with the Government's policy of turning back to the tribe millions of Africans absorbed by an industrial economy and heavy with its habits and demands. The planned expulsion of numberless women and children from the cities, the forced calamitous break-up of so many homes and families, the establishment at camps like Langa of barracks for thousands of adult African males, these are the pock-marks underneath the paint of "the evolution of a progressive, modern and self-respecting Bantu order of life".

Since even the bleached Christian National State cannot do without labour, it will be imported from the areas where Bantu Culture is in brightest flower. Wives and children will be taught the virtue of unprotesting slavery in the Reserves as part of their peculiar cultural heritage, and adult males, though husbands and fathers most of them, will be so suffused with a sense of duty to their Trustees that they will leave their families for years on end to live in sterile squalor at the service of the State. With millions starving in the eroded Reserves, the "progressive, modern and self-respecting Bantu order of life" will never be progressive, modern or self-respecting enough to allow African males to live contentedly with their families in their homes in the Reserves.

The measure of a tyranny is the degree to which it tolerates opposition. The Institute for Christian National Education is unequivocal in its distaste for criticism and firm in its decision to smother it.

"The spirit of all teaching must be Christian-nationalist; in no subject may anti-Christian or non-Christian or anti-nationalist or non-nationalist propaganda be made." Article 6(i).

"The Church must exercise the necessary discipline over the doctrine and lives of the teachers. The vigilance must be exercised through the parents." Article 8(iv).

And so, in the policing of the mind, there are the truncheons of the law. With the absolute authority given him by the Bantu Education Act, the Minister of Native Affairs has become the patrolling Black Maria of African Education. He is empowered

to close any school, private, mission or Government, at his discretion, and appoint, promote, transfer or discharge any teacher on the staff of a Government school, either directly or through a petty official of his Department, without reason or redress. Since 31 March 1955 every African school has had to be registered with the Minister whether applying for grants-in-aid or not. Such registration may be refused if

"The Minister, acting on the advice and recommendation of the Native Affairs Commission . . . is of the opinion that its establishment or continued existence is not in the interests of the Bantu people . . . or is likely to be detrimental to the physical, mental, or moral welfare of the pupils or students attending . . . such school."

Clause 9(ii).

"Any person who, after the date fixed under sub-section (i), admits any Bantu child or person to, or establishes, conducts or maintains any Bantu or native school which is not registered in terms of this Act, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding £50, or in default of payment, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 6 months."

Clause 9(iii).

Amongst others, the School of Christ the King in Sophiatown has already been refused registration on the grounds that it was "a protest school", and from 1 January 1957 Adams College, for over one hundred years one of the finest schools for Africans in the country, will have to close down because the Minister has refused to register it as a Private School. It is a concentration camp of the mind that the Government is busy building for South Africa. All schools will soon be Government schools and

"The Minister may from time to time make regulations—

- (c) prescribing a code of discipline for teachers in Government Bantu schools, the punishments which may be imposed for, and the procedure to be followed in connection with, any contravention or a failure to comply with the provisions of such code, and the circumstances in which the services of any such teacher may be terminated."

Clause 15(i).

It seems so monstrous as to be utterly unreal. The Bantu Education Act and the edicts of the Minister of Native Affairs since its passing have flourished the principles of Christian National Education in the white face of a country frightened into shutting its eyes. No article in the original pamphlet has been neglected, not even that grotesque and shameless one that "*Native education should not be financed at the expense of white.*" Since what is spent on a White child is thirty times what is spent on an African one, so that at present only 25% of African children ever get to school at all and of those 50% are in the sub-standards, and since the Bantu Education Commission speaks of "incentive to economy" and no "high financial demands", we are left in no further doubt what the Christian National future of African education is to be. With the Minister of Native Affairs threatening to levy further taxes on African men and introduce taxation

for African women, the meaning of the article in the pamphlet takes on a measure of horror that only the millions of Africans starving in the Reserves and the crooked shanty-towns can fully appreciate. A nation of slaves needs little education and what little is needed to make it efficient and satisfied can be paid for by drilling another hole in its belt. In Nazi Germany, we may remember, the victims of Hitler were made to dig their own graves.

With the Bantu Education Act and the Provincial Language Ordinances, Christian National Education is already part of our society, a malignant growth on the stricken mind of South Africa. And now this creeping death is to attack the Universities. For what in the context of present Government policy does the threatened enforcement of segregation upon the liberal "mixed" Universities ultimately mean? Only the annihilation of Higher Education in this country—the spawning of monster Government academies in which Geography will not hobble beyond the Limpopo, in which History will deal with the Apocalypse and the mission of the Afrikaner elect to govern South Africa, in which lecturers will be appointed for their blind loyalty to the Government and students relentlessly disfigured into bigots and slaves.

Let us remind ourselves of what the Institute for Christian National Education had to say of Higher Education in Article 11—

(ii) The secular sciences should be taught according to the Christian and National view of life . . . Science should be expounded in a positively Christian light, and contrasted with non-Christian science. Universities should never give unintegrated instruction, merely choosing here and choosing there; there should be no attempt to reconcile or abolish the fundamental oppositions; for Creator and created, man and beast, individual and community, authority and freedom remain in principle insoluble in each other. Especially in the Universities do we need the right personnel; for professors and lecturers make the institution and determine its guiding spirit. It is all-important therefore that the teaching staff should be convinced Christian-National scientists.

(iii) Higher education should be so controlled that the Christian-national view of life may come into its own.

We have been warned already. The "conscience clause"—that teachers do not need to possess any particular religion in order to be accepted as teachers in Government schools and universities—is fundamental to educational practice all over the civilized world. But in 1949, Mr. C. R. Swart, Minister of Justice still and then Minister of Education as well, told a Free State audience that as far as he was concerned, the "conscience clause" might very well be scrapped. And in 1950, Parliament passed the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education Bill. Instead of the usual "conscience clause", the constitution of the new University was made to read:

"In appointing teaching, research and administrative staff the Council shall ensure that the Christian-historical character of the University shall be maintained, provided that no *denominational* test shall be applied to any person as a condition of his becoming" a graduate or staff member of the University.

In protesting, fruitlessly, against the change, forty-five Professors and Lecturers at the University of Cape Town wrote that the amended conscience clauses

"clearly envisage the exclusion of individuals from the staff of the new university on religious grounds. We consider that such a limitation cannot be justified in an institution supported by taxation of all sections of the public. We regard this . . . as a precedent which, if it is once established, may become a source of danger to academic liberty in all South African universities."

This year Mr. J. C. F. Littlewood was forced to resign as Lecturer in English from the staff of the University of Stellenbosch because his method of teaching English to Afrikaans-speaking students was "not conducive to the best interests of the University". The method complained of was the use in Comprehension tests of "provocative" passages containing religious and political opinions most likely to stimulate fluent discussion and critical scrutiny—a technique employed in civilized countries to awaken interest through controversy.

Mr. Littlewood was told that "very important people" were seriously concerned about his "activities", and the Rector warned him that he had in his possession a dossier on Mr. Littlewood who had been "under observation" for some time. This has happened at Stellenbosch, not Potchefstroom where Christian National Education has its nest and constant observation of staff is to be expected. Is a University teacher to employ only those techniques of which "very important people" approve, although the "very important people" may know nothing at all of how to teach the subject involved? The whole Littlewood case smacks of mental wire tapping of the most sinister sort.

The late Dr. T. B. Davie, Principal of the University of Cape Town, said in a lecture in 1955 on "Education and Race Relations in South Africa"—

"the 'universality' of the university is in general regarded as one of its basic requirements. Its doors should at all times be open to everyone who can benefit by or contribute to its teaching. Its desire for freedom from interference is primarily directed to what is taught, but is inextricably bound up also with who shall teach and who shall be taught."

Once the Government has imprisoned the Universities by establishing its power to dictate to them who shall be taught, it will employ its authority to dictate to them also who shall teach and ultimately, what shall be taught.

Segregation is a moral leprosy, it flaunts injustice under the guise of being scrupulously just. Even if we were convinced that equal University facilities were to be provided for the non-

White students abandoned by the mixed universities, we would utterly oppose it, because in the words of the Supreme Court of the United States of America "separate facilities are inherently unequal". As it is, there is not the slightest doubt that equal facilities will not be provided. Indeed the sort of Higher Education that the Bantu Education Act promises is inherently unequal in content and intention. If the African is to be educated for manual work under a system which, in the dark phrase of the Minister of Native Affairs must "stand with both feet in the Reserve", it is unlikely that he will enjoy anything approximating to a University education once removed from the "mixed" Universities.

But inextricably linked to this issue is the right and the duty of a University freely to admit all students regardless of race, colour or creed, to assist them in the pursuit of truth and knowledge, to train them for service to the community as a whole. It is this right and this duty which the Government seeks to assassinate—all in the cause of the tyranny over mind and body that it plans.

The Universities cannot and must not accept this. If the Government stops the financial grant on which they depend for most of their running expenses, they must call on the country and the world in the name of Education to keep them firm in their struggle to survive as Universities. If, as is more likely, the Government introduces segregation into the "mixed" Universities by law, it is better, far better that they should close than that they should give themselves up whole to the Government for their disfigurement. It would be a monstrous betrayal of all the Universities stand for if they were to provide the cells for their own imprisonment. To say that a bad education is better than no education at all is false to the roots. It speaks, as Father Huddleston wrote, in the voice of Vichy. If the Universities must suffer mutilation, let them suffer it as victims, not condone it as accomplices. For otherwise they will be as guilty in the end as the original perpetrators.

But so far as it is the concern of the Universities, so far is it the concern of the whole country. There comes a time in the agony of a people when out of their despair they must gather up courage enough to say—no more, not at any price. Our fight to keep the Universities free is a fight as much for our children as for ourselves. To allow the State to lay in South Africa clusters of academies which will deform the minds of future generations into the belief that they were born masters or a belief that they were born slaves is to build for ourselves and for those coming after us a country bordered by barbed wire and lit only by searchlights.