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STATEMENT BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, BISHOP DESMOND TUTU; OCTOBER 21, 1980.

The Minister of Police is at it again. He is reported as warning certain Churches including the SACC about the dire consequences of certain actions they are alleged to be contemplating.

Mr. Le Grange is making his name as the great warner. A few weeks ago he warned certain newspapers which he described as 'negative' and 'venomous' that the Government would not tolerate their unreasonable attitude.

We find Mr. Le Grange frankly an insufferable bore. He is trying to depict the Churches and the SACC as unSouth African and unpatriotic.

We think this is particularly galling from someone who presumably belongs to a Church which during the 2nd World War often drove out uniformed South African soldiers from its services because many in this Church opposed the war effort.

In fact Mr. Le Grange belongs to a party which has the temerity to read us lessons in patriotism when many of its leading lights were interned during that same war for supporting the Nazis, a party one of whose first acts on gaining power was to release someone who had been convicted of high treason.

The Churches he attacks believe that their ultimate loyalty and obedience can be given only to God. They find the present dispensation in South Africa unjust and oppressive and apartheid totally evil and unChristian.

With a dear and fervent love for South Africa these Churches are striving through peaceful means to help bring about fundamental change in our beloved motherland, because they are aware that this change is inevitable and will come either through violence or through peaceful means.

They find many of the laws intolerable and unChristian and would like to see them changed - hence their repeated appeals to the authorities to repeal them.

But if these laws are not changed, then Christians can have no option but to obey God rather than man. That is a Christian and biblical position and nothing Mr. Le Grange or anybody else may say can alter that fact.

We pray earnestly that Christians will not be forced in obeying God and their consciences to disobey the laws of the land. If they are, then the World and history will know whom to blame.

There are those who do not mind talk about peaceful means of change as long as the methods being canvassed are likely to be ineffective. As soon as peaceful methods are discussed which have some chance of success then the tune changes.

We are working for a just society and we mean to be God's instruments of justice, peace and reconciliation and change.

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The SACC and its member churches have not understood the Prime Minister's invitation to go to the operation area as a precondition to a second meeting between the Churches and the Government. They have hoped that this invitation would not become a political football as Mr. Le Grange seems intent on making it.

The Churches are not discussing issues at the border, they are dealing with issues within our borders.

Mr. Le Grange does need a course in logic. Why should SWAPO be our enemies when they are concerned about Namibia which is not South Africa - after all SWAPO is likely to be the Government of Namibia if free elections are held.

But whether they do or not has little bearing on South African apartheid, influx control, pass laws, migratory labour system, forced population removals, immorality and mixed marriages acts, detention without trial and inferior black education. If blacks and whites are fighting together, then why, that is a marvellous thing.

If blacks are considered good enough to die for their country, why are they thought to be less than good enough to be its citizens to live in the country for which they are ready to die ?

We are concerned that so many are deluded into thinking that there is peace. There is no real peace in South Africa. There are boycotts, 77 schools have been closed, over 50,000 children are not at school, young teenagers being held in solitary confinement with no real outcry from the public and we want to warn that the situation is dangerously volatile.

It is tense - Soweto showed last week that unrest and violence are just below the surface.

Unrest is now endemic in South Africa and will remain so until real change happens which means political power sharing. We still have a chance to bring this about reasonably peacefully, but with each day that passes, the fuse gets shorter.

Those who predict certain things in South Africa are often accused of bringing to pass what they predict. We don't want to predict doom.

South Africa can have a rosy future, a shared future, but only if people like Mr Le Grange try to act and speak a little more responsibly.

We warned last year that those who take on the Churches end up as part of the flotsam and jetsam of history. Does he care to learn the lesson of Mr. Jimmy Kruger?