

LIBERAL OPINION

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Reply to Mr. Vorster

(Text of a speech delivered at a Liberal Party public meeting in Durban by ALAN PATON.)

ALL OF YOU know that Liberalism has been under severe attack these last few weeks, especially from our Minister of Justice Mr. Balthazar Vorster. He uttered an epigram which even his enemies agree, was worthy of a cleverer man. He was reported to have said: Communism kills, but Liberalism leads into ambush in order to kill. He probably was speaking in Afrikaans, and probably said: Communism kills, but Liberalism leads one into ambush in order that one might be killed. Apparently some Liberals do this wittingly — they are the bad fellows — and some do it unwittingly — they are the stupid fellows.

If ever a Party in the history of South Africa played on the fears of white people, it was the Nationalist Party. That is how it got into power. That's how it hopes to stay in power. Now that it is in power, it is playing on the fears of white people who are not Nationalists. They are smearing the Liberal Party, and Liberalism in general, in hopes of frightening white people into the all-white camp.

According to Mr. Waring, there are no Liberals in South Africa, only pseudo-Liberals. I may say that Mr. Waring's knowledge of Liberalism is

exactly nothing. Rugby was his strong point, and he's never had another one since. He says he fought in the last war when some of us were wet behind the ears, but for all he understood what he was fighting for, he might as well have been wet behind the ears too.

Let me tell Mr. Waring what he was fighting for in the last war. He was fighting to save the world from an unspeakable doctrine of race superiority, and an unspeakable doctrine of State divinity. Doesn't he know that he was fighting to defend us from that? And if he does know, why does he today belong to a Party that also has an unspeakable doctrine of race superiority, and gives to the State totalitarian powers over the lives and freedom of those who disagree with the Party, giving them no right to trial in the courts. And this is the man who is defending Christian civilisation. He hasn't a notion of what Christian civilisation is. Nor has his colleague, Mr. Trollip. Mr. Trollip says he is proud of the work he did on the Sabotage Act. Imagine a man being proud of making that contribution to Christian civilisation.

Anti-Communist phobia

Let me say that we in the Liberal Party have no intention of jumping on the anti-Communist bandwagon. Just because Mr. Vorster says we are practically Communists, we are not going to spend all our time proving we are not Communists. We have no intention of crawling round on our bellies just to show Mr. Vorster what we really are, because the moment you go down on your belly, you are no longer what you really are. We have no intention of making anti-Communism the sum and substance of our Liberalism. It is dangerous to any democratic creed when it succumbs to anti-Communist phobia. If only Afrikaner Nationalists had their eyes open and their minds open, they would know that Afrikaner Nationalism is in danger of becoming nothing more than anti-Communism. This anti-Communist phobia is being whipped up because Afrikaner Nationalism is in danger of dying down. There is a real danger that white Christianity will also become corrupted by anti-

Communist phobia, and that it won't matter much if you love God and your neighbour; what will really matter will be if you hate Russia and China.

In fact I would say no more about Communism but I am compelled to by the Communist Party itself. This month the Communist Party of South Africa launched a fierce attack on the Liberal Party in their nameless, faceless periodical that comes unwanted and unpaid for to certain chosen South Africans. This month the Communist Party accuses the Liberal Party of pathological hostility to Communism. Our hostility is not pathological. Our hostility is based on our hatred of dictatorship and our devotion to the rule of law; we believe that citizens have rights that no State should infringe. The Communist Party, does not, and it has a notable ally, Mr. Balthazar Vorster.

The Communist Party condemns us for condemning sabotage and violence. By what argument in heaven or earth should we not condemn sabotage and violence? We don't believe in it, and that's flat. We understand well why people do it. We understand well why people should want to vent their resentment and hatred against a government that denies them freedom in the land of their birth. But it isn't our way, and it can't be. There is one thing the Communist Party has never been able to understand, and that is that there are people who by temperament and conviction do not believe that violence can turn wrong to right, and that killing people can turn injustice to justice. Here the Communist Party has a lot in common with the Ossewabrandwag, which was prepared to overthrow by violence the elected Government of the day. And one of the most determined members of the O.B. was Mr. Balthazar Vorster. With that kind of philosophy we will have nothing to do.

The Communist Party makes several more charges against the Liberal Party, but I shall deal with only one of these. It charges that we are against revolution. If this means a revolution of our whole way of life, especially our economic life, we are not against it. If it means the burning of houses, the looting of shops, the shooting down

of workers, the killing of policemen doing their duty, the destruction of hospitals and clinics, the sowing of a million seeds of fear and hatred, we are against it. We believe it would bring no good to our country. It is impossible to see at this moment even what change it would bring about, except to deepen the fear and the hatred. The Communist Party is not asking us to be more courageous or more outspoken or more honest; it is simply asking us to be something which we are not, and which we shall never be. Now let me drop the subject. Let me rather turn to the other kind of totalitarianism we have over us today, the totalitarianism of Mr. Balthazar Vorster.

Nazi-like laws

Why does he equate Liberalism with Communism? Why does he equip himself with these totalitarian laws? Why does Mr. Waring come here and promise us even heavier punishments? (And why does he get clapped for it?) Why does a gentlemanly-looking man like Mr. Trollip boast of his part in making Nazi-like laws? Why is the respectable Progressive Party so smeared? For one reason, and one reason only. Because Mr. Vorster fears change. He fears any change in the present system, in a system which entrenches white supremacy and chases African people out of Charlestown and Dannhauser and Kumaloville,* which promises security to one section of our nation and threatens the other with insecurity. He fears any change in the present political institutions. He fears any move to throw Bantu Education on the dust heap and give people a modern technological education. He fears any move to scrap the Group Areas Act and the Urban Areas Act and the Prohibition of Interdicts Act. Mr. Vorster fears change; he fears not only the Communists, he fears also the Liberals and the Progressives and indeed all humanitarians. All of them become smeared with Communist tar, because Mr. Vorster knows that fear of Communism is the greatest fear of all. But fundamentally he fears change. And the change he fears most of all is the abolition of the colour bar. That is why he fears all these

organisations. The only one he does not fear is the United Party, because he knows that some of the leading members of the U.P. are the stoutest defenders of the colour bar, and can speak even more offensively about people of colour than Mr. Louw.

It is a terrible thing to fear change, for all life is change. But there is a more terrible fear than that, for any man or woman of honour, and that is to fear those who fear change, and to be silent because of them, and to contribute to the catastrophe that will overtake us if all change is for ever resisted.

Mr. Vorster wants a nation that will think one way, cheer one way, feel one way; it is the one-way street of death. It astonishes a student of Afrikaner history to think that this is what a proud Afrikanerdom has come to. It astonishes a student of British history to think that this is what a proud Anglicanerdom has come to.

Mr. Vorster thinks these laws and these actions will intimidate his opponents.

Does he think he is the only man who can't be intimidated?

Does he think he could stick it out, and we can't?

Does he think that when he could stick so courageously to wrong principles, that we can't stick courageously to right ones?

We say to Mr. Vorster from this meeting:

The Liberal Party stands for the abolition of all discriminatory laws.

The Liberal Party stands for the abolition of all discrimination in sport and entertainment.

The Liberal Party stands for a Parliament representative of all.

The Liberal Party stands for the abolition of the segregation of land, opportunity, and occupation.

The Liberal Party stands for freedom of speech, movement, religion, opportunity.

Last, but not least, the Liberal Party stands for the restoration of the RULE OF LAW, and the appointment of a Minister of Justice who does not put himself above the rule of law.

*"Black-spots" in Natal, where Africans at present enjoy freehold.