

Patil/1914/22



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LONG VIEW

Our Rulers' latest blunder -

The latest blunder of our rulers is quite fantastic. They leave the outside world in no doubt as to what they are up to. ^{My} ~~They~~ Erasmus ~~has~~ now decided that prospective lawyers need screening. He obviously doesn't think that lawyers - ~~except~~ Nationalists - should take any interest in politics. And no doubt he is angry because there are lawyers who in his view impede the processes of justice by their persistence in trying to find out the truth in every situation. This sounds an ugly thing to say, because it is generally admitted that this is exactly what a lawyer should be doing. Nevertheless in a society which has been corrupted by the colour bar, authority not only is tempted to become impatient with, but also to become hostile towards, lawyers who intervene on behalf of the humble and dispossessed. It requires even greater courage to intervene on behalf of those who are not so humble, Africans or other non-white people who believe they have rights, and who stand up for them, quietly or resolutely or truculently, it makes no great matter which.

Imagine what courage it requires, after a riot has taken place in which white policemen have been killed by black ~~rioters~~ ^{rioters}, for a lawyer to come and demand who assaulted a certain black woman who was considered to have evidence valuable to the police, and to

demand who overturned the furniture and smashed one of her cupboards to pieces.

Imagine what courage it requires, in one of the remote white farming areas, where a white farmer has been brutally murdered for a lawyer to come and demand what has become of a suspect who has been taken to the police-station for questioning, and unfortunately, in the few hours that he was detained there, has collapsed and died.

Yet such acts are the duty of any lawyer, and by performing them fearlessly, they add lustre to their profession, and strengthen the respect of society for the law. This is however not unequivocally so in a colour bar society; for it is clear that Mr. Erasmus, for example, considers that such lawyers bring discredit both on their profession and the law. The reason for this is quite simple; it is not the sanctity of law that is the supreme value for Mr. Erasmus, it is the sanctity of white supremacy.

Nevertheless Mr. Erasmus has to consider the attitude of the outside world, which for him means the Western World. Therefore he and his colleagues are quick to hint that such diligent lawyers are Communists, and are interested, not so much in justice and humanity, as in the overthrow of Western democracy and the triumph of Russian Communism. Such propaganda is losing its potency; it may still deceive a few fools in England and America, but it leaves the rest of the world cold.

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If the newspapers had asked me - which they did not - to comment on the latest stupidity of Mr. Erasmus, I should have said

that I did not regret it in the least. It is actions such as these that are keeping world opinion active and observant, and that is what we want. We do not want to languish unforgotten. We want Apartheid (for this latest stupidity is only Apartheid in another guise) to remain in full view of the world. And how lucky we are, for we need do little ourselves. The Nationalists will do most of the work.

Will this latest folly shake the white non-Nationalists alive? Frankly I do not know. Many of them will criticise it, but if the outside world criticises it, they will rush to its defence. If they understood their own interests, they would stop this nauseating defence of their masters. For one thing is certain, that if white non-Nationalists continue to accommodate themselves to one Nationalist excess after the other, they will play no part whatsoever in the creation of the new South Africa that draws nearer every day,

Let Sir de Villiers and Mr. Mitchell take note. Let them consider carefully their opposition to this latest threat of Mr. Erasmus. For if they decide to defend only some rights of some lawyers, as in the past they have defended only some rights of some people, they will lose what little moral authority they have left.