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## NATIONALISM AND THE THEATRE

The appetite of extreme Nationalism is never satisfied. Its fears are never stilled, Its hates are never lessened. One might suppose that it would direct its hate against a few specific enemies, such as Communism, but it does not.

In this country extreme Afrikaner Nationalism never stops making enemies. It thinks nothing of attacking an ex-Chief Justice. It turns on its own ministers of religion, and then accuses them of dividing the church. It deppizes its best writers, except the poets, whose work it does not understand.

Its enemies, besides Communism, are legion. Some of them are Liberalism, the Black Sash, the Institute of Race Relations, ex-judges who enter politics (on the wrong side), NUSAS, the English-language universities, the United Nations, any African politician who does not support the Government, Russia, China, the British Labour Party, the English-language press. It will be fascinating to see if our brilliant legal team at the Hague will be able to conceal this universal phobia, for to reveal it would be to place a powerful weapon in the hands of our accusers.

Afrikaner-Nationalism has two striking characteristics. It is cool and calculating in its apartheid strategy, which it conducts with skill so long as it is cool. But it is also emotionally vulnerable in the extreme, and is capable of destroying some strategic gain with irrational anger. When it has just convinced some part of the world of the beauty of separate development, it shocks it by banning

mixed audiences. When it has won over that obtuse man, Sir Stanley Rous, of the International Federation of Football Associations, it slaps him in the face by banning mixed crowds. Its officials publicly turn away coloured people from concerts at places from which they have never before been excluded. And all this, mind you, when our lawyers are at the Hague trying to convince the Court that separate development is the finest compound of love, justice, and beauty that any government has ever devised. It is hard to conceive of a greater stupidity, but extreme Nationalism just cannot help being stupid.

It should not surprise us when some of the enemies of extreme Nationalism show themselves to be inimical. It should not in the least surprise us when overseas playwrights decide that they do not want their plays produced under such conditions. Extreme Nationalism and its enemies sometimes come to blows, and then people who would rather not be involved get hurt.

Overseas playwrights have certainly dealt South African theatre a heavy blow. I have been asked whether I would not use what influence I have to get them to reconsider their ban. It is argued that it is not the producers, actors, and theatregoers who want segregated audiences, but the Government. It is argued that the producers and actors are only obeying orders.

Under no circumstances would I ask overseas playwrights to recon<sup>sid</sup>er. I myself do not wish any play of mine to be presented before segregated audiences. I have had to forego the pleasure of having an actor like David Horner read my short stories from the

stage, but I would choose to forego that pleasure rather than have people excluded from the audiences on grounds of race and colour.

South African producers and actors must learn a hard lesson. So long as we have apartheid, just so long must we pay a price for it, and one of the prices is cultural isolation. Our cultural isolation is growing, just like our sports isolation and our political isolation. The more white South Africans who learn that lesson the better. The only white South Africans who won't care are the extreme Nationalists, for to them culture and isolation are one and the same thing.

Better no theatre at all than colour-bar theatre.