

A24.8.13

2. Judge: Christian responses followed by reflection on scripture and church teachings

3. Act : (Name of Campaign?)

SEE: The Context we find ourselves in

Violence and war is escalating all over the world and, with the threat of nuclear-war the prospect of destruction on horrific scales has crept dangerously close to humanity. South Africa has been a divided country for many years now, but the polarisation taking place between black and white has of late become particularly hostile and bitter. We read everyday about security forces clashing with residents in the townships, or about bomb blasts, about children being detained, about heavy losses on both sides in the wars being waged all around us and about the many innocents who were killed caught between the line of fire. These horrifying stories tell us that there is no peace in our land. In such a context, those who are capable of building bridges, and of uniting our stripe-torn society are worth far more to South Africa than all the gold and diamonds buried in its rich soil. Today more than ever we need to be reminded by Jesus' words "Blessed are the Peacemakers". But if we are to indeed bring peace to our conflict-ridden land, we need to understand what it is that lies at the root of our problems.

On the one hand we have been told through the official media that the 'enemy' is waging a 'total onslaught' which threatens our very way of life. The majority of white people fear this is the truth and so defence has become their over-riding priority. From 1960 to 1985 the defence-budget increased from R4,4 Million to R4,4 billion which illustrates a 1000% increase in a period of 15years. On the other hand black people who have been the major victims of this military machine, would generally have little confidence or respect for the SADF or the National party's process of reform. Instead it is estimated that four of every five militants who leaves the country because of ongoing political unrest is joining the ANC and Umkhonto We Sizwe. Polls further reflect that there is widespread grassroots support for this movement from within South Africa.

NATIONAL SERVICE: A CHRISTIAN REFLECTION

INTRODUCTION: The aim of this booklet is to help Christians who are faced with national service to reflect upon this issue in the light of their faith. As christians we have the duty to discover what the will of God is for us in any situation, and we have furthermore the God-given right to act upon this, on the basis of an informed conscience. The difficulty often lies in honestly discerning what is the distinction between what is my will and what is God's will? Essentially nothing can replace the attitude of open faith with which we must come before God. We will request that you begin each meeting with a prayer which will serve to remind us of the presence of God in our midst. Once we are sincerely open to discovering God's will for us, what is further needed is a methodology which will effectively help us to go about discovering what it is that is God's will in the light of our present reality as well as of our faith.

Method of Enquiry: The method which we found most useful, was that devised by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn and which is used the world over by Catholic Action Movements as well as by the Basic Christian Communities. His innovation was to recognise that for the Christian there are three basic truths: the truth of life, the truth of faith and the truth of action. This involves three simple steps: 1) analysing what we see around us and explaining why this is the case, by identifying the root causes of the problems we see only partially at the surface.

2) judging this reality in the light of our faith based both upon the scriptures as well as church teachings
3) in the final step we work out practical actions which will help us to overcome the contradiction between life and faith between the world we experience and the world we believe in.

Through this see - judge - act method we have a way of discovering and implementing the will of God in our situation, of allowing the Spirit to work through us to transform the world. The contents of this booklet are set out according to the three steps of the see judge - act method.

Contents: 1. See: The context we find ourselves in

Once we accept the reality of civil war in our land, there are a few questions we will need clarified before we can begin to become part of the solution to these conflicts. Each of these questions is highly complex. Without claiming to answer them, we will raise a few of the issues involved in each and depend upon you, the participants, to develop more comprehensive from your resources.

1.- What are the causes behind this civil-war?

Apartheid is by most accounts the root cause of the conflicts. The fact that 87% of the land legally belongs to 20% of the population while the black majority has to make do with the remaining 13%. The fact that even after the recent reforms, 73% of the population are still excluded from any meaningful participation in the political decision-making processes. The ANC has protested against this system from 1912 to 1960 using exclusively peaceful means of resistance. After the Sharpville killings and its banning, however it formed Umkhonto We Sizwe since it argued it was at this point faced with only one of two alternatives, submitting or fighting on with methods which included armed resistance. The government of the other hand has argued that its military actions are necessary to preserve stability, without which peaceful constitutional change will not be possible.

2 - What form has this military conflict taken?

It was only recently in the mid-70's that the SADF began deploying troops as back-up to the SAP in Northern Namibia. Today the SADF is openly deploying troops (numbers of which have lost their lives) in a conventional war along side UNITA and against the Angolan government. In the interim period, the State Security Council, stated "the governments of these countries (Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, Lesotho and Swaziland) must again be informed of the South African government's grave concern at the increased terrorist activities from their territory and that they be urged to realise that if this menace is allowed to continue, all the people's of Southern Africa will pay a heavy price". The SADF has further responded to a non-racial, national democratic movement of resistance (star 21/12/85) which

has emerged from within SA by turning its troops on both urban and rural black residential areas. It has justified this on the basis that this is all part of the ANC - SACP revolutionary strategy for overthrowing the government. The ANC has in turn increased the number of insurgent attacks in South Africa in recent years.

3 - The Costs of the civil war?

Increasing number of black and white South Africans have been killed or injured in the spiralling violence while many more remain emotionally scorched for life. The victims on both sides are people, people who are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. The community of people to which we all commonly belong has been severely damaged as a result, and God who we dare to call Our Father or Mother weeps at the sight of his children locked in mortal combat.

This is the frighteningly violent context within which we are called to be peacemakers.

It is because of the deadly serious nature of the conflicts, that many Christian Church leaders in Southern Africa have found it necessary to come together to explore ways of solving the crisis. Part of this involves focussing on what form of service, would be most in keeping with being a witness to Jesus, today.

Questions for discussion

- 1 - What do you think are the cause of the escalating civil war in our country? List them all.
- 2 - Do you think these cause justify the scale and extent to which militarisation has become part of our lives?
- 3 - Do you believe this war is a just one? Is it a war for which you would be prepared to take the lives of other South Africans and perhaps sacrifice your own?
- 4 - Are there any better ways of solving this conflict which you would be prepared to participate in (and perhaps make sacrifices for)?

CHRISTIAN RESPONSES

Being an effective witness of Jesus is not an easy task. The Churches in S.A. are continually reflecting on his message, the gospels and the S.A. society to try and discern

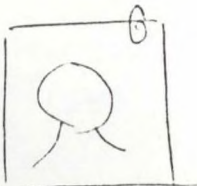
what they are being called on to do to help solve the crisis. Numerous pastoral guidelines and statements have been made to help Christians in their deliberations about how to respond in the S.A. situation.

In this difficult and challenging time we find ourselves in, perhaps one of the most difficult situations confronting young white men is the question of compulsory military service questions about whether or not to participate have become increasing painful in the face of the polarisation of S.A. society. In this situation the Churchs have a responsibility to all those hundreds of servicemen who are faced with a crisis of conscience because they believe service may not be in accordance with their faith.

What are the current options available to servicemen.

1. To serve in the SADF.
This involves an initial 2 years period of service followed by an additional 2 years camps spread over 12 years.
2. To apply to the Board for Religious Objection.
This option is only available to religious pacifists. There are 3 categories of objection praided for.
 - A. To serve as a uniformed non-combatant (i.e. without carrying a weapon) for the normal period of service.
 - B. To serve as a non-uniformed, non-combatant in a maintenance capacity for 1 1/2 times each call-up.
 - C. To serve an alternative non-military service in a government or municipal department for a continuous period of 1 1/2 times the service you owe to the SADF.
3. To leave S.A. and go into exile
4. To attempt to evade service through deferments dodging,
5. To refuse to serve and face a possible 6 years in jail.

What have Christians said about the various options



JOE: 18 years old serviceman in service... "Both the UDF and the ANC have called upon their membership to make S.A. ungovernable. This couple with the threat of communism, and the activities

of 'revolutionary' blacks leaves me with no alternative but to enter into the SADF to protect S.A. my family and Christianity".

PETER: 23 year old serviceman in service
"I don't agree with the SADF or the role it is playing inside S.A. and in our neighbouring countries. Its really just an extension of the government. But what can we do when there isn't really an alternative. I decided to go unwillingly I'm to remain as Christian as possible in my actions and not to kill anyone - like if we ordered to shoot I'll just fire above people's needs"

DAVE: 18 year old serviceman doing 6 years alternative service.
"I don't believe in war of any kind. Political problems can never be solved by war. It is because of this and Christ's call for us to be peacemakers that I decide to apply for alternative military service".

PAUL: 30 year old serviceman in exile
There is no ways I can in conscience serve in the SADF. Participation does not act in the interests of the nation as a whole, it contributes only to the cause of the dominant white minority. I am not a religious pacifist so feel my only option is to leave S.A. I will return once it is liberated.

DANIE: A 28 year old serviceman who is evading call-up.
I cannot enter the SADF apartheid in S.A. I am not a religious pacifist so I have 3 options: to leave S.A. to go to jail or to evade the call-up I do not want to leave the country as I believe I have a responsibility to staying here and a role to play in liberating the peoples of this country from oppresion. I believe I can best do this by remaining in the country and committing myself to the struggle for peace and justice. At the present moment, while I admire those who take the option and jail, I do not feel ready to serve 6 years in prison. The only alternative for me is then to evade the call-up.

ANDRE: A 20 year old serviceman on the run.
"I have decided to refuse to serve in the SADF. I do not believe there is even a status as non-combatant in the S.A. situation. As Magnus Malang himself stated it takes 6 to 7 non-combatant- and to keep one combatant in the field. My options are evasion or jail".

PHILIP: A 22 year old serviceman on the run.
 "I have in my heart an absolute conviction that what I am doing is right I will not sacrifice my life or lend my body to the defence of apartheid. Apartheid is a crime against humanity and many of those leading its armed forces are its foremost criminals. I can foresee the day when those responsible for calling me up are themselves on trial for their crimes.
 As I stand before you, I stand for peace and I stand for Justice. I stand here in the spirit of the S.A. we have yet to build".

IVAN: A 32 year old serviceman who went to jail.
 "I am one of the many unhappy conscripts who have to make a very difficult choice. I've decided to go to jail rather than to serve. I hope my stand will contribute to put pressure on the government to introduce constructive alternative national service for all conscripts. I am committed to S.A. and believe that the truly patriotic action for me is to go to prison rather than deny my faith and my faith and beliefs. S.A. is in a state of civil war and we have to take sides. I believe that the side of justice and truth is the side of the poor and disenfranchised in our country. I stand on that side".

These are some responses to the current options available. What the Churches have said about compulsory military service in S.A.

Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) Resolution: CPSA Provincial Synod Resolutions:

"In this matter of conscientious objection we defend the right of conscience; the right of every individual to follow their own conscience the right therefore to conscientious objection on the grounds of universal pacifism and on the grounds that the person seriously believes the war to be unjust".
 (1977)

"That this Synod wishes to make clear that allegiance to Christ demands of every Christian that before he takes up arms for any purpose, or enters the military, he should face our Lord and ask himself whether this is truly what he should do...given our understanding of the Christian faith and its implications for our life in South Africa, we feel bound to express our serious doubts about the legitimacy of a military system when it is increasingly seen as the protector of a profoundly immoral and unjust social order....." (1982)

* To defend white South African society by force of arms is to defend the policy of apartheid. To defend apartheid is to defend an unjust cause. It is not permissible for Christians to fight an unjust war.

Archbishop Hurley 1974

METHODIST CHURCH OF S.A. RESOLUTIONS CONFERENCE - 1986

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

The Conference, while appreciating the work of the Naude Committee of the SADF and the positive aspects of the Defence Amendment Act of 1983, finds the new provisions of Conscientious Objectors, taken as whole, to be inadequate and calls for: The recognition of ethical, moral and philosophical objections to warfare;

The recognition of the Just War objector, whether or not his position involves a religious basis or political assessment; The composition of the Examining Board for objectors in a less partial form;

An adequate discussion with the Churches to review these and other aspects of the act.

PCSA RESOLUTION September 1986

The Assembly calls on the Government to:

1. provide that all conscripts who object to service in the SADF on genuine ground of conscience, whether religiously motivated or not, may do alternative service;
2. reduce the service of alternative service, since it is to be performed in one continuous period at a low rate of pay, from one and half times the maximum period of service that can be required of the conscript to a period equal to that maximum period; and to reduce at least to a similar extent the period of imprisonment that can be imposed on an recognised objector;
3. permit alternative service in religious and welfare organisations;
4. in any case reject the recently proposed definition of "religious conviction" which will further narrow and restrict freedom of conscience for those who object to military service. The Assembly finds this religious exclusivism particularly objectionable..
5. The Assembly authorises the Church and Nation Committee to appoint two people to represent the PCSA on the Committee of the End Conscription Campaign.
(include also peace churches and Dutch Reformed Church resolutions)

Scriptural texts to help us in our reflection

1 Mat. 5:9 Rom 13:8
Ps 103:6
Rom 12:14

Questions

In answering these questions refer back to the words of individual serviceman, the churches and the gospels to help you discern and reflect on the issues

1. What do you think is God's will in the South African situation? Why?
2. How do you think Jesus would responded to a call-up from the SADF?
3. Why do you think he would respond in this way?
4. What would be the implications of his response for white and black South Africans?
5. How do you think Jesus is calling on you to respond? Why?
6. What are the implications of this response for black/white South Africans?

The response of the Churches to compulsory military service in S.A.

The churches in S.A. are continuously reflecting on the teaching of Jesus in an attempt to discover what the just and Christ-like response to the S.A. situation should be.

In their reflections on the system of military service in S.A. the churches along with several other secular groups have recognised and spoken out on the limitation of the Defence Law.

The existing law fails to accommodate objectors who are not religious pacifists. Many servicemen who are not pacifists are also unwilling to serve in the SADF, on the grounds that they will be defending apartheid either on the borders or in the townships and that this is not in accordance with their beliefs.

Also the provisions for community service are too narrow and we believe that other alternatives in church or welfare organisations should be allowed e.g. nursing, teaching, youth work, development work etc.

In 1983 the churches conveyed their criticisms of the Defence Law to the government when they gave evidence to the Geldennuys Commission. This is just an example of the churches numerous attempts to have their calls re compulsory military service heard. All these attempts have fallen on deaf ears.

As churches we now believe we need to be actively involved in helping resolve the crisis in S.A. A key element to this is to explore constructive ways in which national servicemen can serve the people of S.A. and to pressurize the government to accept them. It is in this context that we, the churches, have launched the (ASP) which will give servicemen a chance to show their committment to being peacemakers in S.A. The programme is also a sign of our support and solidarity with all those who are facing a crisis of conscience and who support our call for alternatives.

What is the (ASP)

A programme that is an active demonstration of our committment to justice and peace in our society.

Volunteers will be required to work for a period of 2/3 years in community service. The various churches have identified those areas and projects that need person power as well as those secular, welfare and community projects that need help.

The list of possible placements is very varied and would include things like:

- a. Being a house parent at a childrens' home
- b. Working in a school that needs teachers
- c. Working in one of the 100's of understaffed hospitals
- d. Helping on co-operatives or agricultural projects.

Placements are available almost anywhere in Southern Africa i.e. inside SA, the so called homelands, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique.

All the necessary arrangements for the volunteer to be received and work in ways that serve the interests of the community in the area will be made.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAMME

The programme will be administered by a placement team. This group will be responsible for interviewing and counselling national servicemen who volunteer. Placements will be made in consultation with the volunteer, the placement team and members of the project where an opening is available.

The volunteer will be responsible to the Church or organisation concerned, which will direct his work and lay down his conditions of employment according to their normal practice.

After placement the Church will be totally responsible for the volunteer and will continue to offer him support in all ways spiritual, personal and legal.

Who can volunteer?

Any national servicemen (regardless of his religious or moral belief) who wants to demonstrate his commitment to the call for constructive alternatives and a just peace. Volunteers can join the programme either before, during, after or when called up.

(Volunteers will be paid the same rates as those paid by the Department of Manpower to community service servicemen).

Note

This programme has not been accepted by the Government. It must be noted that participation in the programme does not absolve you from your military service duties. However what it does do is provide a community in which you can discuss the problems you face and how best to resolve them.

How do you volunteer?

1. If you want to volunteer for one programme and add your contribution to the call for alternative constructive forms of national service please write to the following address giving your name, age and area of work you are interested in.
2. If you feel you would like to explore the issues more and be involved in a discussion with other nationalservicemen or if you would like to set up a discussion group yourself please contact

How can you show your support?

If you feel that you personally cannot volunteer for the programme or if you are not eligible for call-up but still support our call for alternative and constructive forms of national service you can show your support by:

- A. Sending the following message to
The Minister of Defence
Box 47
Cape Town
8000

"I call on your government to change the law so that all national servicemen and not just those who are universal religious pacifists are given the option of doing constructive alternative national service. This service should be the same length as military service and be available in Church, Welfare and Community organisations."

- B. Send a donation to the:
Volunteer Support Fund

These funds are used to assist and support volunteers.

- C. Send us a postcard together with you name and address stating your support for the call for constructive alternative national service.

Addresses

- D. Groupings should feel free to explore other ways of showing their support or contributing to the programme. These can be communicated to us at the address above.

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