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Any study of the state of affairs in South Africa today must lead many of us to the conviction that the problem which calls most urgently for attention is the one which arises directly out of the clash between African and Afrikaner nationalisms.

Afrikaner nationalism is very largely shared by allwhite South African in at least this important respect, namely, that they wish to secure and to hold inviolate for their children and their children's children a heritage which they have wrested out of history for themselves in the fact of many adversities of considerable magnitude and severity. This is a very natural desire; and it is one which at the moment is very firmly sustained and strongly entrenched by the power which Afrikaner nationalism has placed in the hands of our present Government.

On the other hand, African nationalism is manifesting itself in the growing ambition on the part of the Africans to have a direct say in the country's affairs and a fair share of its bounties that make for a more acceptable way of living. This is also a very natural desire; and it is one which is not only receiving support in the councils of the world, but also finding fulfilment in several African states almost at our very doors.

Here then we have these two seemingly irreconcilable desires to which the clashing nationalisms of the African and the Afrikaner have given rise; and the dilemma to which they have led us can end only in disaster unless we proceed immediately to bring all our resources of wisdom, goodwill and statesmanship to bear upon it.

I feel that it is no exaggeration to say that the man who can lead us out of this dilemma will earn, not only our everlasting gratitude, but also that of the whole world, because there could hardly be a problem of race or colour anywhere that could not be amenable to resolution along the lines of a formula that would resolve a problem as puzzling as ours. But is there a way out? I am sure that there is. I am equally sure, however, that we shall never find it unless we first of all shed our prejudices of race and colour and rid ourselves of the fears that these prejudices bring. This, of course, is going to be a very tough assignment.

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Race and colour prejudices are not confined to South African. I have come across them wherever I have travelled, and I am sure that they are to be found in every country where variations of race and colour exist. Furthermore, my observations lead me to believe that South Africans are not the world's biggest sinners in this regard. However, we are biggish enough sinners in all conscience. I can advance an explanation for our sinning, but in putting it forward I must insist that I do not intend it to serve as the slightest excuse for an attitude which in this world of our time is altogether inexcusable.

We have been the victims of a double tragedy in the story of our race relations. Until quite recently colour with us has unfortunately been the distinguishing mark, not only between race and race, but also between class and class. Our three hundred years of history, starting with the days of the coloured slaves and leading up through a colour-based feudal system to a series of wars against our indigenous black peoples, has deeply ingrained within us the habit of associating a white skin with pretige and power, and a coloured skin with serfdom and inferiority. Our situation has been further bedevilled by the fact that the three non-white groups - the Cape Coloured, the Asians, and the African - differ in many respects from each other and also from us. It is often said that our policies of discrimination have been based, not on consideration of "superiority" or "colour", but on essential, inherent differences which distinguish one people from another.

Now here I find myself on difficult ground; I am not good enough sociologist to know how great the natural differences between people must be before it becomes impossible for them to work together and to plan together so as to be able to enjoy together the blessing of a common country and to share the management of its affairs. Situations in which these differences are great (as they are, for example, between the Africans and each of the other groups) might call for a more searching analysis than those in which the differences are not so marked (as they are, for example, between the Cape Coloureds and the Whites). I shall accordingly confine my remarks in the first instance to the Cape Coloureds because I know their situation best of all. They and the Whites have worked and lived together for the last 300 years. Together they pioneered and developed the Cape, and together they made it one of the most delectable corners of the earth. They speak the same language worship the same God, follow the same customs, have the same sense of enjoyment and humour and of disappointment and sorrow. The greatest difference between them today is the one of colour - that accident of Fate which has for more than 300 years remained the mark of the Coloured man's subservience. The unfortunate Cape Coloured has not until quite recently had a change to prove his worth; the mere fact of his non-whiteness, this trick which Fate had played on him in deciding the colour of his skin, was decreed by us to be the badge of what we presumed to be his lesser standing and a permanent bar to the attainment of his human desires and his natural aspirations.

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In the days of Ancient Rome the Grecian slave could buy his freedom or be granted manumission. The way was then open to him to become a Roman citizen and to enjoy the considerable benefits and privileges which Roman citizenship in those times had to offer. His old identity as a slave was completely lost; he could even latinise his name; and, although he might have borne a branding mark, there was no such tell-tale sign - much less any revealing shade of colour - to harnt, harass and handicap his children or his children's children; there was hardly an office in the state or a station in society to which he and they could not aspire. The Grecian slave, of course, was often a man of great culture, and this circumstance no doubt made it comparatively easy for his to be absorbed into and merged with the Roman community.

Let us, however, consider the somewhat different situation and gentler lot of the depressed classes in England after the Social Revolution of not many decades ago. Although it is true that a considerable measure of class consciousness still exist in England today, there is hardly a vestige left of the old barriers which stood in the way of the lowliest citizen who might have aspired to social and political greatness, and to simple acceptance as a man of eminence in any walk of life; and hardly a dist ingishing outward mark remains of the differences of the class which used to cause the raising of an unkind or inquisitive eyebrow as to whence he might have come. The cobbler's son could become a Count with never a sign on his escutcheon to indicate his humble origin unless he wished it so, and he certainly had not to endure the nightmare of colour which would constantly threaten to bring down scorn, contumely and discrimination on his head.

Compare these situations with that of our Cape Coloured citizen no matter how well-educated he might become, no matter how commendable the economic advances he might make, no matter how far he might go along the road of Western culture, no matter how thoroughly he might prove himself as a man of intelligence, initiative and ability, no matter how grand a fellow he might grow into in terms of a basic qualities of character - in short, no matter how outstanding his personal, individual merit might be, there are lines which he cannot cross, doors which he cannot open, granite walls which he can never scale because we Whites have consigned him to these frustrating and humiliating worlds- and solely because the colour of his skin is different from that of ours.

To this pass have we been brought by the first of our tragedies, the twist of Fate that has let us to confuse merit with class and culture with colour - this quirk of history which has betrayed us into bartering the virtues of humility, unselfishness and trust for the evils of pride, presumption, obstinacy and fear.

I am led to wonder whether the situation would have been different if our Cape Coloured folk had been white and had resembled us from the very beginning in all but culture and class.

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The second of our tragedies lies in the circumstance that our contacts with non-white people of culture and prestige have been far too few and have come far too late. Take my own case. The first occasion on which I met any Non-White who was not a farm-labourer, or a dock-worker or a semi-skilled artisan was when I went to Oxford at the age of 23 - where my College itself had up to that time (so I was told) never admitted a non-white member! There were, however, numbers of students from India, China, Siam, the West Indies and Africa, in resident at other Colleges, and among them I got to know an Indian who became President of the Oxford Union, another was an admirable companion both on and off the golf course and the cricket field, an American Negro who was a leader in Y.M.C.A. circles, an Anglo-Asian who made a delightful partner on the tennis court, and several other non-white students in academic and social circles with whom it was enjoyable and rewarding to exchange ideas.

Later on, in wider fields, I was privileged to meet non-white scientists, philosophers, economists, educationists, social workers and administrators from all over the world - a philosopher, for example, who was the head of a large university in India and at the same time the professor in Comparative Religion at the University of Oxford; a Negro who was the professor in Economics at Howard University in Washington D.C.; an industrialist who was the Mayor of Dar-es-Salaam and also the speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the government of Tanganyika; and African professor who was the vice-principal of the University College of Fort Hare; a Japanese doctor who was the superintendent of the hospital which housed the wounded of Hiroshima; a Cape Coloured poet who was awarded a coveted prize in the field of literature; a Chinese financier who was the manager of one of the leading banks in Hong Kong. All these men had proved their superlative worth, and were giving of their very best in the service of humanity. They conducted themselves with dignity; their manner and mien were flawless. And yet - should I be called upon here in Cape Town to show them hospitality worth of their station, I would find it impossible to take them to a place of entertainment of their choice or to dine at some restaurant to which they might wish to go, because we Whites have had the presumption to regulate our affairs in such a way as to cause them to be thus embarrassed and humiliated solely on account of the colour of their skins.

To this ridiculous and intolerable situation have we been reduced by the second of our tragedies, this misfortune that has led too few of us to realise too late that colour is not a measure of culture, nor class an indication of merit.

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All that I have said so far has been prompted by my personal knowledge of our Cape Coloured folk, but I am sure that much of it could be said with equal force about the relationship between ourselves and our other two non-white groups - the Asians and the Africans. Due consideration will, no doubt, have to be given to the differences of culture and custom, of religion, and of the way of living between us and them, and the task of reconciling these differences will call for careful and sympathetic study in the field of social therapeutics, based on a generous measure

of co-operation, good will and understanding. I believe that in any such work of reconciliation it will be wise to remember that, although every man is not necessarily in every respect on a level with every other, yet every man shall have the liberty to be what God intended him to be - a happy, contented, useful and respected member of the community, whatever be his background, race, belief or colour.

This may be an appropriate place for me to state once again the conviction which I expressed at the start, namely, that our attempts at reconciliation will be altogether vain unless we first of all rid ourselves of our old-age, deep-rooted prejudices of race and colour - and this is going to be a very tough assignment! But at what stage does an assignment come to appear so tough that one is forced to throw up one's hands in surrender? Our answer to this must surely be an immediate, resounding and emphatic "Never". Now let us look at the forces that will finally decide the struggle. The most important of these will be education - education at all its levels and through all its agencies; the schools, the universities, the churches, the radio and the press. I must confess that the more closely I survey this field the more room do I find for despondency.

The task of reformation should naturally start in the schools; but the great majority of schoolchildren are being brought up in the thinking that it associated with Afrikaner nationalism, and Afrikaner nationalism has attained its present political and economic power by playing upon the very prejudice we wish the schools to help us to eradicate! The universities will find it by no means easy to graft growths of any significant promise on to these deeply-rooted stems delivered to them by the schools; and comparatively few of the schools' output reach the universities in any case. The churches could exert a powerful influence and perform a wonderful work in promoting tolerance, caring and reconciliation among all our peoples; but we remember with a sense of shock what happened to the member of our country's largest church who had the courage to speak their minds on prejudice and discrimination at Cottesloe. The radio? This is in the hands of that sinister secret society, the Broederbond, the all-powerful instrument that lies behind every move to foster, promote and consolidate Afrikaner nationalism. We shall therefore look in vain for any glimmer of hope or sign of help from this quarter. There remains the press. The newspapers could be grand allies in this battle. They could even provide the spearhead. But we find them chasing the vanities of sensation and tearing at each other's political throats where we would wish them to be busy fulfilling this fine educational function which they could so admirably perform. In any case, the newspapers that reach the circles in which prejudices of race and colour most widely and most strongly flourish are those that thrive on the gospel of white supremacy and preach the policy of discrimination that their readers love to hear.

If all these forces in this most important field, the field of education, are so solidly ranged against us, where then can we look for help? I can see two sources of encouragement and hope: the first is the large measure of the abiding spirit of good will that is still to be found among all groups of people throughout the land, and the second is the rising tide of deep conviction among them that the manner in which our present policies in the field of race and colour are being conceived, designed and implemented is indefensible however tenable in theory these policies themselves might be. I am convinced that these two forces for good are of considerable volume and strength but it is difficult to see how they can be effectively marshalled and mobilised for action in the little time that we still have at our disposal. But something must be done.

Six years ago a group of citizens, called "The Covenanters", felt that the time had come for a reappraisal of our policies and attitudes in several aspects of our national life, and put forward the suggestion that the best way to put our house in order would be by way of calling a National Convention. There are many citizens who feel the same way now, but they are faced with the same difficulties as faced the Covenanters then. A National Convention has come to be associated primarily with constitutional matters, and it can be called only by the government in power. On both these counts it would not be the appropriate thing to seek. In the first place, the agenda and discussions would go far beyond matters concerning the constitution; and, in the second, it is obvious that the Government could not be prevailed upon to call it. After all, the Government has recently won three or four by-elections with increased majorities and would therefore have every reason to feel strengthened in its conviction that its policies and procedures were beyond cavil and question. The alternative therefore, is for a "witenagemot", a coming-together of wise, earnest and responsible men "of all hues and views", to be arranged by some non-governmental agency. It does not matter much what agency this is, provided it has the standing to ensure the mustering of men such prestige, knowledge and representative authority that the results of their deliberations will not only gain the attention of the rulers of the nation, but also command respect in the eyes of the world.

I am convinced that such a "Council Reappraisal" of our social, economic and political situations, with particular emphasis on considerations of race and colour, will provide the Government with widely and strongly held views on our national problems which could help it greatly in its policy-making, the Opposition with practical and constructive ideas on which it could base more effective Parliamentary action, the Nation itself with an opportunity to judge in how far our processes of government are conducive to the proper management of our national affairs, and the world outside with a necessary and illuminating window on the unique and complex problems of a sorely troubled people.

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