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SOUTH AFRICAN OUTLOOK

Conscience Conscription and Violence

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COVER: *Peace* by Fritz Eichenberg
(from *The Disarmament Catalogue* by M. Polner)

South Africa Outlook is an Independent Journal dealing with ecumenical and racial affairs which, un-interruptedly since 1870, has sought to place its readers in possession of facts and opinion which bear upon the lives of all the people of the sub-continent. Without allegiance to any political party, but according to what it believes to be Christian standards, it seeks to give information and comment on measures suggested either for the regulation or the advancement of any section of the population, by whomsoever proposed.

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Political comment in this issue is written to express the views of South African Outlook by F Wilson, G Hewson, M King and P Moll, PO Box 245, Rondebosch 7700.

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Outlook on the Month

COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Many of the articles published in the Outlook this month reflect the existential struggle of individual Christians wrestling with profound moral issues which could not be contained, safely, within the protective sanctity of a pulpit or the cloistered walls of a university. With hindsight one can see that it was no accident that it should be Dietrich Bonhoeffer, executed for his participation in the plot to assassinate Hitler, who coined the phrase, "cost of discipleship" for it is he above all of the twentieth century saints who most symbolises the dilemma of a profoundly spiritual and sensitive man caught in the vortex of a political situation which could not be ignored by passing by on the other side.

Nowhere has the dilemma of non-violent participation versus armed struggle for social justice been more thoughtfully debated than in the exchange between Daniel Berrigan and Ernesto Cardenal when reflecting on the role of Christians in Nicaragua under the oppression of Somoza. For South Africans the pain of this dilemma has been felt sharply this month with the jailing for 15 years of a young Afrikaans-speaking Christian, member of the Dutch Reformed Church, for his decision to support actively the work of the African National Congress in South Africa. The Berrigan-Cardenal debate will surely enable readers to fathom the depth of this dilemma with more understanding than all the holier-than-thou statements that have been inflicted upon us by commentators of one sort or another.

But our main editorial is the compelling statement, made from the dock, by Fr. Timothy Stanton C.R. when he was sub-poenaed by the State to give evidence against a friend. For his refusal to testify Fr. Stanton was sentenced to six months which he is serving in a Pretoria prison. He is not the first, nor do we expect he will be the last person, squeezed between the dictates of his conscience and the demands of the state. But few people have resolved the issue with greater strength or more inner freedom than is displayed in his short statement.

Your Worship, I am a member of the Community of the Resurrection, which is an Anglican Order. We have been living and working in South Africa for nearly 80 years. We live together in obedience to a Rule, giving priority to prayer and worship, and we serve the Church in various ways according to our gifts and resources. In the Rule of this Community there is a sentence: 'Nothing shall be finally required of any brother which violates his conscience.' I believe that to make a statement, or to give any evidence against Carl Niehaus would violate my conscience.

Carl Niehaus has stayed at our Priory in Rosettenville occasionally. We value our contact with him especially because he is a member of the Dutch Reformed Church. I can say that he is my friend, though in fact I don't know him very well. I have no idea what he has done, or is supposed to have done, to warrant this charge. But I believe in him; I believe that he is concerned to bring about a more just ordering of society than exists here at present. I would wish to support him in this; to give evidence for the State in their case against this young man would be a thing of which I would be deeply ashamed for the rest of my life. It seems to me that it would be a form of betrayal and I cannot do it. I do not mean to be contemptuous of the Court, and I do not wish to impede the course of justice. I believe that the police in fact already have the information which they want me to give on oath. I am told that I shall go to jail, and that going to jail will be an empty gesture, - that it will do no good. Your Worship, I would rather live in jail as a result of an empty gesture made in good faith, than outside it with a guilty conscience of having said or done anything to further the conviction of this young man.

T. Stanton

7 September 1983

REPRESSION OR CONCESSION?

New South African legislation in the light of the German experience

by PETER MOLL

New legislation on conscientious objection to military service was passed by the South African parliament in 1983. Alternative non-military service — whose nature has not yet been specified — will be granted to people who are both (a) religious and (b) absolute pacifists. Alternative service for recognized objectors will last for six years. All other objectors will go to prison for six years. The legislation has been strongly criticized by objectors and by churches on two grounds. Firstly, the penalties are harsh, exceeding those of some of the worst criminal offenders. Secondly, the Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and Congregational churches have all insisted that it is impossible to distinguish in treatment between absolute pacifists and objectors on ethical and moral grounds.

The Defence Force, in its magazine Paratus, stands firm by its limitation of recognition to absolute pacifists only. The line of reasoning is frequently as follows. "In only one country in the world, namely Denmark, is political objection permitted. How then can the South African Defence Force be expected to allow political objection? Instead, as is the case in all Western democracies, we will allow alternative service only to genuine objectors, namely pacifists".

This article focuses on the situation of conscientious objectors in Western Germany. A short historical overview will try to demonstrate important differences between European and South

African war resisters. An examination of the recognized grounds for conscientious objection in Germany will raise crucial and as yet unanswered questions about what the SADF will deem to be "pacifism".

Several thousand pacifists were killed by the Nazis for refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the Fuehrer and join the Wehrmacht. The Germans' concern to prevent history from repeating itself

Is the government's real intention to pay lip-service to alternative service while using the new laws to enforce militaristic thinking on all and sundry?

resulted in constitutional safeguards for pacifists after the war, when in 1949 Germany became the only country in the world where the right of conscientious objection is recognized in the constitution. At that time the memory of Hitler's totalitarianism — when people were killed because "an order is an order" — was uppermost in their minds.

The rearmament of Western Germany began in 1954. Conscription was in-

roduced the next year. From the start non-military alternative service was provided. Conscientious objectors worked in hospitals and institutions for the elderly and retarded.

At the beginning a few thousand registered as conscientious objectors each year. Numbers started to climb at the time of the student protests of the sixties; by 1968 the number rose to 11952, in 1976 to 40618 and in 1982 to 59776. The social significance of conscientious objectors was increasing. A separate Government department was created to deal solely with alternative service for conscientious objectors. Over the years their service options were broadened to include ambulance work and work with the crippled. Some conscientious objectors did development work overseas.

Each conscientious objector had to undergo a careful test of his conscience before a four-person board. He had to demonstrate what his grounds were for conscientious objection and show how his thinking had already made an impression on his life and actions. He had to show that he rejected military service in all war on principle; only a universal rejection of political violence is an acceptable ground for recognition as an objector. A situation-

bound rejection of military service, referring to a specific opponent, in a specific war, or with specific weapons does not earn the objector the right to alternative service.

However this narrow band of acceptability for alternative service has been broadened in favour of the conscientious objector in several important respects. Firstly, the difference between a situation-specific and a universal conscientious objector is somewhat fluid. For argument's sake let us distinguish among two broad groups of universal conscientious objectors: 1. Applicants whose conscience excludes on principle any participation in war, because war is always rejected as

morally justified in offering military resistance to oppression? and 2. Would you personally take part in the military resistance of that movement? An affirmative answer to the first question does not exclude the applicant from recognition as a conscientious objector; an affirmative answer to the second does.

Fourthly, while the objector loses his chance of recognition if he admits that he would participate in (violent) defence, he does not if he replies that he would use non-violent means of defence. The concept of Social Defence is gaining popularity in Europe. The prototype was the non-violent social defence employed by the Hungarians during the Soviet invasion in

at the time of the American civil war. They rejected participation, but not the battle itself, and were therefore willing to comply with the regulations by finding a substitute or paying the government a soldier's salary.

It is evident that in the above seven ways the range of acceptable motives for conscientious objection has been widened considerably beyond the position of the "dogmatic pacifist".

Two further concessions are made to the law of universal conscription in West Germany. Firstly, West Berlin has no conscription at all because the area is under British, American and French control. An objector who suspects that his motives would not be honoured in the trial of conscience can settle in West Berlin and avoid all military service. Secondly, theological students and ministers are free of all military service.

The right of the state to conscript for collective defence is not competitive with the right of the individual to remain true to his/her conscience.

wrong in every historical situation without qualification ("dogmatic pacifists"); and 2. Applicants who, as a result of experiences and reflection on the current historical-political situation here and now, decide to reject military service on conscientious grounds, without insisting that their decision would be the same at all times and in all wars.

Alternative service

The first group is obviously entitled to alternative service under the German system. And in fact, as long as they reject all war between Germany and other states, the second group is also entitled to alternative service, according to the West German constitutional court of 20.12.1960. The situation has become ambiguous since, with conscientious objectors being required to reject participation in other wars past and present as well. Secondly, the willingness of an objector to participate in (violent) defence against an enemy whose intention is extermination does not exclude him from alternative service. The constitutional court of 10.12.1975 ruled that in such a situation of emergency one would be "driven" to help the defenceless out of elementary moral considerations. Thus one is regarded as a universal objector even though one would, for instance, fight on the Israeli side in the Israeli-Egypt war of 1967.

Thirdly, in respect of participation in wars of liberation, the conscientious objector may distinguish between two types of questions: 1. Is such-and-such a movement

1956. With at least a little initial success they tried to make their country ungovernable by, among other things, changing the street names.

Fifthly, while a conscript may not refuse military service for political reasons, he may employ political reasoning in order to arrive at his decision of conscience to reject participation in all military service. Political considerations about armament and disarmament, the expansion of NATO, arms vs. development, etc. may legitimately lead the conscript to the insuperable conviction that he must not participate in violence.

Sixthly, while a conscript may not object conscientiously because of nuclear weapons, his application can be accepted if his considerations about nuclear weapons lead him to reject all war.

Finally, the objector has to answer only for his own convictions about war, not for anyone else. He may simultaneously reject participation in war and be tolerant of soldiers, police, wars of defence, United Nations peace-keeping forces and the like. In fact the examining bodies may even take exception to a condemnatory attitude to fellow soldiers! What this virtually means is that one may obtain alternative service for being a "vocational objector", i.e. one who, without morally approving or disapproving of all war, is convinced that he himself must not participate in any. The positions outlined in the third and fourth points above may be described as vocational conscientious objection. This was considered a morally consistent position by Quaker conscripts

Trials of conscience

There has been widespread dissatisfaction with the trials of conscience. In 1974 a commission of Evangelical (i.e. Lutheran) and Catholic churches concluded that the trials were subject to caprice and that the law was too ambiguous. It was unacceptable to leave the burden of proof with the candidate. The trials were biased in favour of those candidates of superior intellectual abilities. Finally, the four-person committee carrying out the trial were "Beamte" (officials of state) and were hence likely to favour the military. The commission therefore recommended abolition of the trial.

In 1977 the law was changed. The trial of conscience was abolished. The conscientious objector was required only to send a postcard to the military applying for recognition, which was granted automatically. The number of objectors continued to rise, whereupon the law was hastily changed the next year and the trial reintroduced.

An organization of conscientious objectors was created in 1971, called the Selbstorganisation der Zivildienstleistenden (SOdZDL). It consists of some 120 base groups. Every two months their newspaper *Info-Dienst* is published. Their ultimate aim is to transform the present alternative service system into a genuine service for peace. Such a service would be socially accepted, meaningful and independent and would use the talents and commitment of young people constructively.

Proximate goals in the meantime are to abolish the trials of conscience; to eliminate the extra service requirement of

one month; to obtain the right to political work during service; and to obtain the right to strike.

A new system will be applicable from January 1984. The trial of conscience will be abolished. In its place the conscientious objector will have to fulfil two requirements. First, he will submit a formal written application which must include a great deal of detail about his motives and clearly demonstrate his commitment to social service and peace. Secondly, his service will be lengthened to 20 months – one-third longer than the military service commitment of 15 months.

This new legislation was passed in December 1982, at the instance of Dr Heiner Geissler, the Minister for Youth, Family and Health. He had done his doctorate on the subject of conscientious objection.

The new legislation has also been the object of much criticism. The chief complaint is that the recognition mechanism might not significantly change. The written application will be read by an official of the alternative service department (Zivildienstamt). If he approves the application, the objector's recognition is automatic. If, however, he senses something suspicious or feels that the objector's motives cannot justify the right to alternative service, then the objector will be examined by a board as under the old system. Thus the only real improvement is that the conscientious objector may be recognized without personal examination. How many will go through automatically and how many will undergo personal examination is up to the discretion of the officials; hence the argument that apart from the longer period of service there may be no real change.

Strike of objectors

The SOdZDL organized a strike of objectors doing alternative service on 27.1.83 to protest the stiffening in the new legisla-

regulate the number of conscientious objectors. The point of the legislation was not to recognize genuine conscientious objectors but to cater for the needs of the Bundeswehr. The recognition procedure would be used as a throttle or curb rather than as a means for distinguishing between the false and the true. Therefore they argue that their constitutional right of conscientious objection has still not been enshrined in law.

The West German quarter-century of experience in operating a massive alternative service scheme can provide us with valuable insights and provoke some searching questions at the commencement of the South African alternative service scheme.

I

The Germans have shown that it is possible to honour the consciences of their young men without damaging the strength of the Bundeswehr. The right of the state to conscript for collective defence is not competitive with the right of the individual to remain true to his/her conscience.

The diversity of thought and ideology within society are sufficient to ensure that even a strong peace movement can be tolerated without endangering national security. Therefore it is not necessary for the military to apply massive coercion to make everyone conform to militaristic ways of thinking. There is another way – a better way – of preserving national security than by forcing conformity upon the populace through shoddy propaganda backed up by the threat of years and years in Pretoria Central.

The extension of democracy throughout society should be the chief way of ensuring national security. When people feel they have a stake in the system their natural reaction is to defend it. If, however, they get the feeling that there are huge inequalities in wealth, education and opportunity their perceived stake falls

There is a better way of preserving national security than by forcing conformity upon the populace through shoddy propaganda backed up by the threat of years and years in Pretoria Central.

tion. Some 11 000 of the 34 000 then in service joined. Support was conveyed from groups in Oslo, Helsinki, Copenhagen, Stockholm, The Hague, Brussels and Milan. Even old people and cripples joined in the protest. The strikers argued that the officials of government will still have the power to

to the point where they lose their loyalty to the state and do not see why they should defend it. It is only because South Africa is fundamentally undemocratic that the government feels constrained to maintain the military by giving propaganda to the malleable and jail to the recalcitrant.

II

It remains to be seen whether genuine South African conscientious objectors will be granted alternative service under the new system of whether the government's real intention is to pay lip-service to alternative service while using the new laws to enforce militaristic thinking on all and sundry.

As we have seen, Germans regard their own Zivildienst system as far from perfect. Nevertheless it would be reassuring if the South African system matched up to the breadth of the German one. The debate in Parliament and the utterances by senior Defence Force officials have caused suspicion of the real intention of the new legislation. Questions like the following have been and are being asked.

Non-religious objectors

★ Why is there no recognition of non-religious conscientious objection in South Africa? Western democracies recognize them and have had no grave problem with "shysters". To reply, as one senior official did to me, that it was in any case the churches and not non-religious people who requested legal changes, is to ignore the facts. Firstly, the churches have never distinguished between religious and non-religious objectors. Secondly, the position of the Progressive Federal Party on the rights of conscientious objection – including non-religious conscientious objection – has been abundantly clear for a long time.

★ How narrow, or how broad, will be the SADF's definition of conscientious objection? Will a willingness on the part of the applicant to use non-violent social defence exclude him from alternative service?

★ Will the applicant's inclusion of contemporary political comment (e.g. about Namibian independence) in his rationale for conscientious objection exclude him from alternative service? Or will it be understood, as in the German case, that serious political considerations can contribute to a conscientious objector's insuperable conviction that participation in all war is wrong?

★ Will the applicant's rejection of unjust means (e.g. torture or the strafing of civilian areas) exclude him from alternative service? Or will the authorities have the moral subtlety to accept, as do the Germans in the case of nuclear weapons, that the rejections of unjust means may lead an objector to reject all war?

★ Will the authorities require the applicant to condemn all soldiers in all wars

as deficient in good will? Or will they, as do the Germans, permit the applicant an attitude of tolerance to those who think differently? Otherwise stated, will they require the applicant to answer only for his own convictions, or will they require him to answer for (and roundly condemn) the attitudes and convictions of others? And to put this question into the South African context, will the authorities require of the objector a uniform condemnation of the moral probity of the SADF, the police, SWAPO, ANC, the military wing of the AWB — or will they permit the objector to make moral distinctions among these, while maintaining his conviction that *he himself* should not use violence?

★ Finally, in relation to movements of national liberation, will the authorities allow the applicant to distinguish between moral justification and personal participation, as does the German system? (cf. the previous set of questions). Or will the authorities insist on a position and personal participation as unanimous? More concretely stated, will the applicant be permitted, as in Germany, to have sympathy with the aims of a national liberation movement, while being convinced that military participation in them would

be wrong for him — or will the authorities insist on ideological conformity here too? Or to put it in its baldest form, must the objector's political ideas be the same as those of the authorities before he will be granted alternative service, or will he be able to form his own mind on political matters?

III

Government and SADF officials often defend the new legislation on conscientious objection by saying that South Africa cannot be expected to open the sluice gates to all sorts of conscientious objectors — even if other countries can afford the luxury of doing so — because South Africa is at war and they are not. They argue that a country at war must first see to its national security needs. The politician would be irresponsible to act otherwise. Therefore war-time exigencies demand that dubious individual liberties must be subject to national security.

If this argument is made, it is reasonable for us to request consistency on the part of the government and the SADF.

If South Africa is at war, let the government declare war and state against whom the war is being waged.

If South Africa is at war, then we must

require consistency on the part of the SADF in observing the international laws of war. International conferences starting in the last century, and climaxing in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 have laid down conditions under which war may be fought.

If South Africa is at war, let the SADF grant its prisoners all the usual rights given to prisoners of war. Let them receive food parcels and mail; let them be free of all interrogation but for finding out their identity; and let them have visits from the Red Cross.

But until the government and the SADF conform to international legislation regarding the waging of war, the argument that alleged wartime emergencies must inhibit the rights of conscience will ring hollow.

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RESISTER'S STATEMENT TO MASS MEETING

Brett Myrdal addresses a meeting of protest against the new constitution, at UCT, October 1983

Fellow students; I greet you today in solidarity with all other objectors; with the thousands who have left South Africa rather than serve in the South African Defence Force; in solidarity with Paul Dobson who, after 14 months in the SADF, chose to object and will now join the other conscientious objectors in Pretoria Central.

Last week I heard a report on capital radio covering the Transvaal National Party Congress. A resolution was passed calling for the rapid implementation of the extension of conscription to so-called 'coloureds' and 'Indians'. Magnus Malan, minister of defence, spoke to the resolution.

He explained that the law to extend conscription would, but for shortage of time, have been introduced during the last sitting of parliament. He said it only remained for the new constitution to be accepted, before the extension of conscription would become fact.

So, as I talk today, introduced as a conscientious objector, I am very conscious of the fact that conscription is fast becoming

ing a reality for a far broader group of South Africans. And it is precisely because of the supposed political rights which are being 'given' to the 'coloured' and 'Indian' people, that they now face the threat of conscription in defence of the apartheid under which they live.

F.W. de Klerk, Transvaal Nationalist Party leader, has stated this clearly. I quote: "You can't ask a man to fight for his country if he can't vote. Among the terms of the new dispensation is the guarantee that coloureds and Indians will get voting rights. It follows that their responsibilities will increase accordingly, which means they will hold obligations to defend these rights."

This is one harsh consequence of the new constitution that we, gathered here as members of NUSAS and the United Democratic Front, reject as we reject all aspects of the government's new deal. In July, I failed to report to Potchefstroom Medical Services Corps. I was charged at Voortrekkerhoogte and face a Court Martial there on November 8th. As a conscientious objector, I face a maximum

sentence of two years' imprisonment. But I, like thousands of others, had been morally and physically prepared for war. Why then make this choice?

I attended a high school in Port Elizabeth. Part of its 'liberal' tradition was to train us as officer material for the SADF. The military, in the form of compulsory cadet training, was a part of my life from the age of 13.

Instead of cowboys and Indians, at school camps we played 'nationalists vs terrorists'. We drilled with RI's; we were trained to shoot; 600 boys went on parade four times a year for the Eastern Province Command.

Our cadet camp (and I quote from our school year book) trained us in counter insurgency warfare and attacks on mock terrorist bases.

Then in our last year of school, we all received our first call up papers. The dilemma then was — varsity or national service? This was the year after Soweto '76 — we had always been told to prepare for the war against an external communist threat. But it was clear to many of us that

conflict existed *within* South Africa. Many who were opposed to apartheid went in: 'to get it done with' — they are still trying to get it done.

They came back, some from the border. Many friends of mine couldn't recognise themselves or come to terms with what they had done.

So I chose to come to university. Here I was exposed to new ideas. Through meetings like these, and the work of organisations on campus, I broadened my understanding of conflict in South Africa and of the role I, myself, played in this. The question for myself and for all of us was: 'What system are we called on to defend?' For me it became clear that it was a system based on the rule of a minority; where unemployment has reached 3 million; where the country is fragmented into homelands; where people from Crossroads and KTC are removed, to face repression of the order that we see in Ciskei at the moment. A country, which

calls on its top generals to mastermind a militarily defensible constitution which it then holds out to the people of the country as democracy.

For me it became immoral to participate in the SADF and defend such an unjust system. Immoral to fight against our own people — the youth of Soweto '76 now returning. I could not participate in a war of occupation in Namibia; in cross-border raids; in the suppression of uprisings; and I could not do the work of police in staffing road blocks and resettling people. My dilemma meant that I had to choose sides. And I had to take the side of the people working for a just and free South Africa. For me, commitment to a non-racial struggle has meant that I must refuse to serve in the SADF.

All of you, faced with this situation, will have to make an equally difficult decision. On the one hand, the state increases to 6 years the sentence for C.O.'s. But on the other, the constitution it has constructed

offers no solution to the conflict. The very foundations of the constitution lie in the Group Areas Act, lie in the maintenance of the homelands.

When we oppose the constitution today, our opposition should not be limited to only those aspects of the status quo that are being modified by the constitution. Our opposition should be directed at every way in which an embattled white minority attempts to preserve its power and privilege: detentions, forced removals, bantustan policy, and the increasing militarisation of our society. When we demand alternatives, we cannot limit ourselves to alternatives to the constitution. Our demands must embrace a profoundly changed society, a society where people are no longer powerless and hungry, and shunted around like animals. A society where young men are no longer called on to fight their brothers in defence of a patently unjust system, a society where the people are in control of their lives — where the people shall govern.

Jim Cochrane responds to the Students Union for Christian Action (cf. SAO April 1983)

LETTER TO S.U.C.A.

July 1983
West Germany

Dear friends in the Student Union for Christian Action, I read with interest and encouragement, your views expressed in *S A Outlook* (April 1983). You are a new generation of young adult Christians struggling with the daunting dynamics of apartheid society, a struggle too frequently side-stepped, too often watered down. Because of what you seek to be and do, I would like to make some response, raise some questions, express some concerns about three matters reflected in 'your' edition of *S A Outlook*. They are matters I too (and many friends) have had to confront over the years. Let me put them as questions.

What is reconciliation?

Nico Smith's personal testimony focuses most strongly on this issue, a testimony Mandy Taylor feels "conveys most fully the pervading atmospheres of the 1982 SUCA Congress". It is a problematic testimony. Nico Smith believes SUCA "has the potential to bring about something which very few people may think possible — the reconciliation of people in South Africa, who are assumed to be irreconcilable because of their colour and cultural differences." Only a miracle can bring this about, he says, a miracle that happened at the Congress where "white and black Christian students could embrace one another" in acceptance. Such warm, ice-breaking experiences cannot be decried. But

too much is left unsaid. Must one not be very careful of an all-too-easy unity? Students of whatever colour, despite the deep inequalities of the formal educational system, are still students. You too the, are young people who — by the "normal" (abnormal) standards of the vast majority in South Africa — are objectively at advantage. Articulate, relatively well-educated, more able to move around, with time on your hands to think and discuss extensively, generally able to expect a job at a socially "higher" level than most, greater access to society's institutions and platforms — is it really such a miracle that you can find and accept each other, even in apartheid society?

This is not an idle question. Many white businessmen describe the ease with which they relate to their black compatriots, socially, at home, in parties, and so on. Christians have no monopoly on personal reconciliation. Of course there are important differences here. Perhaps the question may be put differently: how easily do students relate to workers, migrants, the illiterate people, those whose analysis is "folk-wisdom" rather than sociological criticism, the Christians of the independent churches? Only those from such back-grounds are likely to have these links, and even then perhaps only weakly. Is one in danger of seeing too much in reconciliation between those at least potentially designated as the future elite of South African society (or of one corner)? The concept of reconciliation — beloved for some thirty years in South African Christian circles — needs to be much

more deeply thought through. Reconciliation across barriers of education, privilege and power has less to do with colour and culture than with materially, objectively different places in society, and interests in where it is going. John O'Leary's article on the history and the nature of apartheid society hints in this direction. Roderick Davids points out that "SUCA members are not to be fooled by the euphoria of a conference of this nature."

I would appeal to you to pursue this issue critically — and self-critically. When Paul speaks of reconciliation as the "healing of a broken relationship" (Sheldon Rankin, in his article), is this merely a subjective matter, a question of the encounter of persons? What if the relationship is objectively, permanently threatened because the one is well-off, a master of the spoken word, while the other is poor, always tired and under-nourished, the broken speaker in broken words of language not his/her own? When one pursues reconciliation of the mouse with the elephant, on whose terms is such supposed meeting likely to be? Is reconciliation "the kernel of the gospel" (Nico Smith) under such conditions? Did not Jesus fling a string of terrible, violent curses at the pharisees (Matt. 23:25ff., and para.)? Did not Jesus allow the rich young man who wished salvation to go his way (Luke 18:18ff., and para.)? Did he not command to wipe the dust off one's feet against the unwelcoming town (Luke 10:10ff., and para.)? One could multiply the examples — the root matter, the core of the possibility of reconciliation is always apparent. It is *not* possible unless the objective conditions are changed, unless the Elephant (the pharisees, the wealthy, the powerful, the privileged) accepts terms other than its own. And then the gospel warns us, it will be easier for the camel to go through the eye of the needle . . . or, as we know, it will be easier for the Elephant to trample the mouse into the ground. A gospel understanding of reconciliation cannot afford to leave these elements out of its reckoning, nor, as Mandy Taylor puts it, any "costly and painful" implications.

Whose perspective are you reflecting?

Already in the Congress Declaration (p.55) a feeling arises that the way SUCA expresses its understanding of 'reconciliation in action' reflects the perspective of those who dominate South African society or who are influenced in some degree by an ideology of domination. This is surprising, as SUCA clearly includes representatives of those who are dominated. No doubt the conflict of perspectives is already part of SUCA's own internal struggle for identity. So for example, paragraph 2 ("Searching our consciences . . . with regard to participating in unjust . . . structures in South Africa . . .") could only refer to those who benefit from the

system, either directly or by virtue of favours granted. Paragraph 4, which speaks of "repenting of the sins of our people" and the need for "simple lifestyle", again reflects a view from above, so-to-speak. The great majority of South Africans are of course the victims of the sins meant here; they struggle even to *rise* to a simple lifestyle, from an intolerable poor one. Perhaps a pointed way of raising the question is: If this declaration of 'reconciliation in action' was to be framed by Christian labourers, or families from a relocation camp, would it read as it now does? Unlikely. This does not, as I see it, invalidate what SUCA seeks to say, but once more, it does suggest a need for you to think further, deeper, more penetratingly about yourselves, for the sake of what you courageously seek to be and do.

We arrive immediately at the third issue: Where are the Christians?

The somewhat aloof nature of SUCA as it appears in the pages of Outlook emerges most clearly here. Many of us who have walked the way of SUCA, some previously members of now illegal Christian groups, have fallen into assuming that organisations outside of overtly Christian ones require *our* presence. Keith Matthee says as much: "We need to start looking towards those structures/organisations which we think God is (might be) going to use to destroy the present structures in South Africa — a Christian presence in such structures is vital." (p.64, "Amos and Azania"). Further down he repeats a call made many times before — "identify yourselves . . . (with) the feelings of the person or persons who feel aggrieved." But where are the Christians? Are the Christians not present in these structures/organisations already? Is the identity required not already there, because so many Christians *are* the aggrieved? Should one not recognise among those concretely struggling for their liberation (whether in political movements or among such as the independent churches) a vast crowd of Christians? In short, many have already made the move from confession ("Apartheid is a heresy") to resistance ("Apartheid must be fought"). Eberhard Bethge (see S A Outlook Nov. 1983) has addressed the point, showing how the Confessing Church, unlike its hero Bonhoeffer, largely failed to move from confession to resistance, a costly failure out of a less than costly grace. *This* is the crucial issue, rather than that of an insertion of a Christian presence from outside, as it were. Here one could truly apply Nico Smith's words: "The task still lies ahead of all who are associated with SUCA, and enormous and highly dangerous task, a task which will have to be handled with the utmost care." (p.56). SUCA is indeed a "tiny ray of light" (p.56), but you may be less alone than you think. Strength to you, and may you strengthen others.

Jim Chochrane

BOOK REVIEW

William Beinart, *The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930*. Johannesburg: Ravan, 1982.

WARNING — this book is for enthusiasts only! It's perhaps the most rigorous economic history of a rural area in South Africa yet written; slow and tough-going at times, yet like a piece of good biltong

it proves to have been surprisingly filling when the last bite is swallowed.

Beinart writes within parameters established by Colin Bundy. In *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, Bundy set out to prove that the backwardness and poverty of agriculture in today's African homelands are not the result of inherent primitiveness and lack of innovation. Instead, a period of African peasant enter-

prise in the 19th century was ended by legislative pressures culminating in the 1913 Natives Land Act, confining Africans to communal production in the Reserves and 'freezing' social relations there since. This was an effect of the political muscle of a 'Gold-Maize' alliance — the mines and white farms needed African labour and farm prices were being undercut, so independent African farmers had to be destroyed.

In Pondoland events followed a slightly different path. After 1860, capitalist trade penetration was followed by annexation, taxes, land limitation and natural disaster, and by the 1930s, migrant remittances were essential to the survival of the average household. But there was no large-scale expropriation of land, and the very lateness of inclusion in the capitalist economy meant that the region — then and now, it seems, — was better off than most.

'Gentile stimulus'

Beinart charts, in careful detail, economic changes in Pondoland during this period. In the mid-19th century, the backbone of the economy was cattle husbandry and tribute. Permanent settlement, population pressure and innovation led to shifts towards maize production, made certain by the rinderpest and East Coast Fever which killed off much of the Transkei cattle herd in 1897 and 1912 respectively. African men began to migrate to earn additional income, a process encouraged by a barrage of Cape Colony taxes at the turn of the century. Their subtle intention, put so well by Rhodes, was to "give some gentle stimulus to these people to make them go on working" — in white industrial areas, that is.

Until the 1930s, labour migration from Poland coexisted with increased agricultural and livestock production. Migrant earnings were invested in cattle and ploughs, and maize farming was made easier and more efficient. Indeed, known Pondoland cattle holdings increased from 102 000 in 1918 to a probable all-time high of 520 000 in 1932, and maize output also rose. But killer droughts and low migrant wages in the 1930s dealt rural production a blow from which it never recovered. From then on, for the average household, migrant remittances were the difference between bare survival and desperate poverty.

Migrant labour faulted

The problem was that the low-wage migrant labour system destroyed rural production in many subtle ways. The absence of male labour meant new fields were poorly cleared, and time-consuming soil conservation practices were ignored. In the 1930s, the price of outside inputs and livestock rocketed, eating up remittances. African families were not allowed in 'white' cities, leading to rural land, population and fuel pressure, land overstocking (too many cows and sheep eating every last shred of grass), and marginal areas being brought under plough in a desperate struggle for food.

So during droughts, stock and grass would die off, leaving thin cattle and thin people behind, and when the rains came, fertile soil would simply be washed away. Beinart also examines Pondoland politics in this period. He shows how the South African state gradually co-opted existing systems of political control, centering around the dominance of chiefs, headmen and older men. 'Xhosa law' was retained, chiefs were paid good salaries, headmen were appointed from Pretoria. They had access to local magistrates and police support. All this was conditional, of course, on the mass of the people being kept quiet and subservient. The strategy worked remarkably well for a while — in the 1930s the Transkei had a police force of 655 men, the smallest for its population in the British Empire!

Political safety-valve

Thus the reserves became a political 'safety-valve' for urban African unrest. 'Send them back home where they belong' became the refrain, back to sluggish villages in the middle of nowhere. Disgruntled Africans wouldn't organise trade unions and mass meetings — hopefully they'd lie around in the shade, drinking beer and talking about rain instead.

But rural areas weren't a haven of bucolic peace and comfort for their inhabitants. As Beinart unfortunately does not show, it was the very intensity of struggles for control over resources that prevented a rural political mass movement from emerging. Men organised to control women's labour, young men fled to the mines to escape the oppression of the elders within the kraal, households manoeuvred to control land and steal cattle, and amidst all this, no decisive challenge to the power of the South African state emerged.

Instead, as is happening today, rural crises tended to lead to an urban trek, with households moving wholesale to cities rather than sitting on barren fields waiting for infrequent remittances. As this threatened the migrant labour system (the backbone of the South African economy), the state was forced to intervene in the countryside to make sure most households had at least some access to land and food. If they have a small plot of their own, the theory went, they're unlikely to support revolution — exactly the housing policy argued by the Urban Foundation re the so-called Black Middle Class these days!

'View from below'

In his political analysis, Beinart tries to capture the 'view from below', the way

dominated groups actively tried to develop political and economic responses to colonisation and the reserve system. Households did not blindly follow pre-ordained needs of capital and state. In the early part of this century they tended towards conservatism, escaping the dreaded capitalist economy by withdrawing into subsistence production. The Mpondo supported the Natives Land Act, for example, as it gave them secure collective rights to the land on which they lived, while the reverse was the case for Africans on white farms. But when their land was directly interfered with or the rule of chiefs became too oppressive, people resisted vigorously.

In a way, then, it is a pity Beinart ends his book in the 1930s. He does not deal with the resistance to massive state Betterment efforts which were to resettle and plan the land of 200 000 Transkei households after the Second World War. The schemes were a last-ditch attempt to regenerate the land by forcibly preventing the people from misusing it, and also ensured state and chiefly control over them — indeed, the chiefs were being groomed to take over local government, leading to the present-day Matanzima oligarchy in Umtata. Ordinary people were all too aware of this, hence the 1960 Pondoland Rebellion during which hundreds of thousands of Africans vigorously opposed Bantu Authorities and Betterment — only to be crushed by the armoured cars and helicopters of the South African Army!

Depth of research

Beinart does not radically reinterpret South African rural history. But he offers a tightly-argued account of an important area within Transkei, made all the more impressive by an almost unparalleled depth of research ranging from British colonial papers to South African archives, unpublished letters and papers and a large number of interviews. His methodology is described in an appendix to the doctoral thesis (University of London, 1979) on which this book is based, and is well worth reading.

Such research is difficult (especially for white scholars) as rural people are inclined not to trust outsiders who come into their areas asking questions (are they tax collectors, perchance?), and, in the case of some researchers, making lavish promises. There's also an ethical problem here — does one have the right to take up their time without being able to do anything for them in return? At any rate, Beinart suggests many directions in which future work should go.

Terence Moll

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN THE MEMBER STATES

Member State	Conscription?	Length of military service	C.O. permitted	Permitted grounds for CO	Recognition test
1) Belgium	Yes	10 months in Belgium; 8 months if stationed in West Germany	Yes	All serious reasons of conscience	Test of conscience by a three-member commission
2) West Germany	Yes	15 months	Yes	All reasons of conscience	Test of conscience by a four-member commission
3) Denmark	Yes	9 months	Yes	All reasons of conscience	No test of conscience, only checking of the application for formal omissions
4) France	Yes	12 months	Yes	Religious and philosophical convictions against the use of weapons under all circumstances	Strict test of conscience by a 7-member commission, of whom 3 are military
5) Greece	Yes	24-33 months	Yes	Religious grounds only	None
6) Britain	No	<i>During the World War II non combatancy, nonmilitary alternative service and outright exemption were provided for. Religious and nonreligious motives were admitted. Explicitly political reasons were admitted eg. communists were recognized as conscientious objectors.</i>			
7) Italy	Yes	12 months in Army and Airforce 18 months in Navy	Yes	Insuperable reasons of conscience against the use of weapons, based upon deep religious, philosophical or moral convictions	Decision by the ministry of defence after a hearing by a 5-member committee
8) Ireland	No				
9) Iceland	No				
10) Liechtenstein	No				
11) Luxemburg	No				
12) Malta	No				
13) Netherlands	Yes	14 months in Army 14-17 months in Navy and Air Force	Yes	All insuperable convictions against the performance of military service	Decision by the ministry of defence after an expert opinion or after a hearing by a committee
14) Norway	Yes	12 months in Army 15 months in Navy and Air Force	Yes	All serious reasons of conscience against military service	Decision by the ministry of justice on the strength of submission by the military and police authorities
15) Austria	Yes	6 months basic military service and 2 months of camps	Yes	All serious reasons of conscience	Testing of conscience by a civil service commission appointed by the ministry of the interior.
16) Portugal	Yes	16 months in Army 21-24 months in Air Force 24 months in Navy	Yes	All reasons of conscience	Test of conscience in a simplified hearing by the court in the objectors area of residence
17) Sweden	Yes	7½-15 months in Army and Navy 8-12 months in the Air Force	Yes	All deep personal convictions against armed military service	An easy recognition process by a 7-member committee, which only turns down an application in the case of obvious misuse of the law
18) Switzerland	Yes	49 weeks	Yes	Ethical and religious reasons of conscience against military service, the breach of which would cause the objector extreme distress	Test of conscience by the recruiting commission of the Defence Force
19) Spain	Yes	15 months	Yes	Serious reasons of conscience, which are based on deep religious or ethical convictions	Test of conscience by a national commission for conscientious objection
20) Turkey	No				
21) Cyprus	No				

OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AS OF 1 JANUARY 1981

Alternative service?	Length of alternative service	Areas of service
Yes	(a) noncombatancy 8–10 months (b) civil defence and health services 15 months (c) social services and cultural institutions 20 months	Noncombatant military service, civil defence public health care, care for the elderly and disabled, service in private and public institutions of a social or cultural kind.
Yes	16 months	Tasks that serve the general good, especially in the social area. No noncombatant military training. Civil defence service and work in emergency services only by the objector's choice. Development service abroad.
Yes	11 months	Forestry; work in social and cultural services. Civil defence and civil protection only by the objector's choice.
Yes	24 months	Noncombatant military service or alternative service the first year of alternative service is done in forestry, the second in the agricultural, social or cultural sector.
Yes	Double military service	Only noncombatant military service.
Yes	20 months	Noncombatant military service, civil protection, forestry, social services, teaching, youth work, development service overseas.
Yes	19 months	Service in the public and private sector, in hospitals, psychiatric institutions, old age homes, institutions for the disabled, teaching, museums, youth work. No non-combatant military service and no obligation to engage in civil protection.
Yes	16 months	Areas of importance for society, in particular, health and social services, and cultural services as well. No non-combatant military service and no civil protection service. Alternative service must have no connections with military institutions.
Yes	8 months	Tasks which serve the general good, especially social services, forestry, protection of the environment; civil protection and emergency service. No non-combatant military service.
Planned	Same as military service	Non-combatant military service and non-military alternative service.
Yes	420 days	Tasks that serve the general well-being. Civil defence, emergency service, rescue service, social services, protection of the environment and teaching.
Yes	Same length as combatant military service	Only non-combatant military service in the medical corps.
Planned	Double the length of military service (planned)	Service in the public interest, especially in the area of emergency services, of environmental protection service and in health and social services (planned).

Based on "Kriegsdienstverweigerung in den Mitgliedstaaten des Europarats"; in Klaus Polatzky, ed., *Zivildienst—Friedensarbeit in Inneren* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1983)

Niehaus: ANC bombings necessary

Own Correspondent

JOHANNESBURG. — Convicted traitor Carl Niehaus told the Rand Supreme Court yesterday that violence, the deaths of innocents and even the assassination of the Prime Minister, were options which were necessary and understandable in the pursuance of the ANC fight to overthrow apartheid.

Giving evidence in mitigation, Niehaus, who was convicted on Monday with his fiancée Johanna Lourens of high treason, said that bombings such as the Pretoria car bomb which killed 18 people, were necessary, and civilian deaths inevitable.

He said that he would continue to believe in the inevitability of an armed fight against the government, and the inevitable deaths that it would bring, even if he were released.

"After 20 years it is only now... recently that the ANC has started with campaigns that also involve the loss of human life.

"It is important to see an element of retaliation in the ANC attacks after the South African attacks on ANC targets in Maputo and Lesotho which have been proven

in the international news media to have been attacks on civilian targets," Niehaus said.

During cross-examination by the prosecutor, Mr Jan Swanepoel, spectators in the gallery applauded one of Niehaus's replies prompting Mr Justice Myburgh to order that anyone offending the dignity of the court would be thrown into the cells and "severely punished."

Explaining his belief that violence was a necessary part of the ANC's activities, Niehaus said:

"Initially I was very concerned about the use of violence. On one side there is the violence which is institutionalised in South African society, on the other side there is the kind of violence employed by the ANC. The ANC line also happens to agree

with my Christian principles.

Nazis

"I would like to draw a parallel with Nazi Germany where the churches very lamely went along with the system. A small number of people in the church disagreed and there were people, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer who wanted to assassinate Hitler.

Mr Swanepoel: "Would you go along with the assassination of the head of the South African Government?"

Niehaus: "I wouldn't have done it."

Swanepoel: "Is there a line. Can they (the ANC) kill innocent people in the streets of Pretoria, but not the Prime Minister?"

Niehaus: "I think the line is drawn by innocent people dying in the homelands.

"... I would understand it (killing Mr P W Botha) if, and I repeat, if, it is going to bring an end to the horror of this system... it may be an option. It is important to distinguish between the Pretoria bomb and saying that the assassination of the Prime Minister would bring about political change."

Referring to his fiancée Niehaus said that she was a supporter but not a member of the ANC. "She would be favourably inclined to the ANC but she has many problems with the violent side of the ANC."

He said that he had asked her to drive him to the Carlton Centre in Johannesburg so that he could plant a pamphlet bomb but had not told her what the parcel contained.

Outlining his life Niehaus said he had become politically active while studying at the Rand Afrikaans University where he had stood for membership of the Students Representative Council and met Lourens during his second year.

He had helped organise a "Free Mandela" (Nelson Mandela the jailed leader of the ANC) campaign on the campus and had put up notices about it without permission from the SRC.

Subsequently he was called before a disciplinary committee.

He left and had become alienated and rejected from students and parents alike.

His life in disarray and no prospect of returning to university until the 1981 term he had gone to live in a commune and become a worker first for a church in Alexandra and subsequently as an unpaid worker for the Black Sash Advice Office dealing mostly with pass offences.

Niehaus said that the country was faced with civil war in which those who joined the ranks of dissident groups such as the ANC were seen as the enemy.

The trial continues today.

The issues raised by Carl Niehaus' statement from the dock are universal. To see what Niehaus says against the background of another theatre of violence should be instructive for South Africans

CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE AND REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE:

*An exchange between
DANIEL BERRIGAN and ERNESTO CARDENAL*

Back before the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua (July, 1979) Father Daniel Berrigan, disturbed by the acceptance of violence by his Nicaraguan friend and fellow priest, Father Ernesto Cardenal, wrote him an open letter which was published in the National Catholic Reporter of May 4, 1978. Father Cardenal responded to him after the victory in an interview published in the NCR September 14, 1979. By that time he had become Minister of Cultural Affairs for the Nicaraguan Government. The exchange clearly illustrated the division of Christian conscience on the morality of the use of violence even in a just cause.

F D Berrigan and P E Cardenal are both Jesuits, and followers and associates of Thomas Merton. This connection has brought them together under differing circumstances several times over the years. Berrigan has followed a path of passive resistance and spent time in prison for actions against all forms of US militarism from the Vietnam War to nuclear armament. He views with dismay his friend and fellow Ernesto Cardenal's embracing of guerilla activity to combat the regime of Somoza in Nicaragua.

Dear Brother Ernesto Cardenal,

Your account of events in your community of Solentiname has been widely distributed in the United States, especially by the religious press. One translation appended a word; "It is important for us in this country to be able to listen and not to judge this."

Indeed. But at least we can talk together. Please consider what follows then, as a continuing reflection on matters you have had the courage to open up, and indeed, to act on.

May I also summon a memory or two, as you do so poignantly in your statement? You visited my brother Philip and myself in jail in February of 1977, when we were locked up after a demonstration at the Pentagon. I hope you could read in our faces all your visit meant; a visit from a fellow priest, a poet, a good communitarian, a struggling friend, whose fame was great but whose human warmth was his best gift. Thank you once more for coming to us.

Then there was our first meeting a few years previously when you brought the art of Solentiname to New York for an exhibition. I had the joy of greeting you, this poet, the intense quiet Latino, known in the southern countries for his sandals and flowing hair and beard, his kindly myopic eyes; known here for his poetry, his courage.

The shadow of Thomas Merton's death lay heavy on us. I think we were seeking consolation in one another's eyes. And we found it.

I am not going to start with the customary disclaimers about your statement. Such are not only superfluous, they verge on the insulting. What Latino, what Yankee doesn't know by now the deadly mutual interest which in Washington, prop up the Nicaraguan military government of the Samozas? And who would regard you, an exile, a priest who must now anoint your forehead with the ashes of your dream — regard your convictions, your choices, with anything but the utmost respect? All this is implicit in friendship itself.

I would like to do you a better courtesy, that of taking you seriously: your words, and the actions which by now, I presume you have taken.

Let me say too that the questions you raise are among the most crucial that Christians can spell out today. Indeed, in your own country, your life raises them. But you thrust them also at us, and rightly so. They are far more than a matter of domestic importance.

There is first of all, no parallel in America to the violence you describe — whether of the Samozas or the Sandinistas.

What indeed are a few guns, or even a few hundred guns in the hands of guerrillas, in comparison with the doomsday cache of nuclear horrors lurking in our mountains and bunkers? What reasonable comparison can be made between the sorties of your Frente Sandinista, and the lunar devastation of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia? On your part, a few deaths, much love, exalted goals. On the part of America — but words fail me.

These things I grant with all my heart.

What then nags at me, when I ponder your words? I have some inkling of what you face, what your companions face, the students and workers and peasants of your country. I know that the Samozas, given the leash, could swallow all of you tomorrow. I know that on the same day, the U.S. military could swallow the Samozas who had swallowed you — the mouse within the dog within the python — and hardly feel sated. On the world scale where the stakes are piled high — oil, uranium, laissezfaire larcenies, predatory markets, ripoffs and standoffs; in a world where the superpowers warily circle one another like urban thugs, nuclear firebombs in hand; in such a world, you or your followers, or even your persecutors, count for little.

You and the Frente, and the Samozas, could disappear tomorrow. Only a minor breeze would stir the papers on the desk of some sub-secretariat of the State Department. A lie or two at a presidential press conference would be your obituary, the Nicaraguan folder transferred to a dead file. The empire, in sum, can take your life, and take your death, and take your theology and the destruction of your community, and your resistance, all in stride.

I say this in no spirit of cynicism. Merely to suggest that in a way I find both strange and exhilarating, your situation lies quite near the realities of the gospel. It ought not after all, depress us beyond measure, if the empire finds you and me expendable. That is quite normal and constant in the history of such entities. What is of import finally is whether we are able to

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