

Why is it that the resignation of van Zyl Slabbert and Alex Boraine from the white parliament caused such a shock to whites whereas the blacks and ANC welcomed it, and saw within it a sign of hope? The answer is that South African history is presently not determined in Parliament and by the whites. History is basically made in Soweto, Langa, Bellville and Lenasia in the black struggle to be human, and on the shopfloor to try and earn a living wage.

Parliament can only be relevant and important if it represents all people, and takes care of the interests of all people. The basic problems in South Africa is that Parliament represents the form of democracy, but denies its contents, proclaims official freedom, but practices bondage for the great majority. Parliament announced apartheid as outmoded and past, but it was a man, classified as white, who announced it to white parliamentarians, representing classified white constituencies, in the absence of blacks, who are apart from parliament.

In such a situation one has two choices :

* One can protest, complain, resist and testify against this unjust system in parliament and, as a white person, try to negotiate with the Nationalist government to persuade it to change. This Slabbert and Boraine had done to the extent where friend and foe acknowledged their competency, whether they agreed or not. However, to no avail. The deeper they delved into the activity of the Nationalist Government in their professional task as opposition to evaluate them, the more they uncovered the rotten system of racism, lies, cruelty, domination and an unwillingness to move beyond racist apartheid despite camouflaged rhetoric.

Although both Slabbert and Boraine said that this process of critical evaluation should be done, the crucial message is that the situation is too desperate and dangerous to ignore the real forces in society, which are determining South Africa's future. Parliament, by not attending to the interests of the vast majority of South Africans, has made itself irrelevant and practically unimportant.

The PFP cannot blame their leader for what he has done as they claimed to be a relevant critical force against the Nationalist Government. But if the white parliament has manoeuvred itself into an irrelevant corner by not facing and tackling the dilemmas of the citizens of the country, will the opposition not also share the same fate protesting on that irrelevant platform? The PFP should now be true to its claims that their nature is to be an opposition force of quality - to be a force for justice and against injustice where it really counts.

* The other choice, next to protest in parliament, is to face and grapple with the real issues in education, in the labour field, and in the socio-political arena. Not by way of an apartheid-structured parliament in the straight-jacket of authoritarianism without hope to succeed, but by moving with the forces in society which propels South Africa and to which parliament reacts, albeit irrelevantly.

What does it mean to be involved in the struggle and interests of the people? What is the crucial role that a Beyers Naude, a Mantate Motlana, a Desmond Tutu, an Elizah Barayi (Cosatu), an Allan Boesak, and also a van Zyl Slabbert must play in the liberation of South Africa? The task of such people is enormous and entails inter alia the following :

* To conceptualise and verbalise worldwide the focal points of oppression and suffering in the economic, political, health, social, educational and labour fields.

* To complement analysis and critical evaluation with reflection of black aspirations, wishes and hopes; to be a voice of the voiceless.

* To move beyond the present apartheid reality to ways and means of liberating society and erect models and symbols of a new, free and democratic South Africa. We stand on the brink of calamity and we need creators of structures of life and communication beyond the chaos of the present system. We need leaders to accompany us out of the burning ruins of a white dominated parliament and country where the black giant refuses to be compliant anymore.

* To be committed to and to identify with the black struggle for justice and democratic freedom.

* To join hands as human beings, across the artificial barriers between "blacks" and "whites" and to build bridges in the process of solving problems by way of negotiation. And, ultimately to pave the way for the drawing up of a constitution by all people for all people. In practice this means that representatives of all people will do it, but in principle it means that everyone has access to this process.

The time has come to stop fighting the Nationalist government on its own terms, to stop thinking in the mould of its crooked forms, although critically, and to stop playing its game according to its rules, albeit as opponents. This is the message of two brave men who are now being crucified by friend and foe: get out to the fire - South Africa is burning and suffering - and put it out. This cannot be done by rhetoric in parliament, nor by mere peripheral changes of apartheid laws. The Nationalist Government's acts in parliament are like a man facing a fierce dragon and trying to feed it reform peanuts with a whip in his hand. The whip does not impress the dragon at all, but it supplies a feeling of security to whites.

Are Slabbert and Boraine now rejected by the majority of whites? If they are, is that not a token and symbol of the deep and total rejection of our fellow human beings, our black brothers and sisters? Does it not mean that nothing really changed a bit in white minds, despite all the talk of reform?

This courageous act by these politicians will not awaken whites to the storm in the dark night ahead. What will? Hopefully a full-scale revolution and bloodbath would not be necessary. God forbid! But is that not the logical consequence of the present road of our white parliament? Should Israel then not listen when its prophets have spoken and acted? Or do they not care to go into banishment?