

SACC CALLS ON DE KLERK FOUNDATION TO RETRACT AND APOLOGISE

Saturday February 15, Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana

The statement issued by the De Klerk Foundation yesterday on February 14 - the Day of Celebrating Love, amplifying Mr De Klerk's position that apartheid was not a crime against humanity, but a Soviet propaganda ploy, cannot go unchallenged by the South African Council of Churches. Apartheid was not only a crime, it was more than that, it was a gross sin against the image of God in the humanity of Black South Africans, generally called non-whites, who were legally treated as sub-human, and without the basic rights due to normal human beings.

Apartheid made all South African Whites and their future generations, its beneficiaries in super-abundance. Even so, the victims of apartheid accepted a magnanimous approach that does not pursue retribution and wholesale racial blame. But for the De Klerk Foundation, representing as it does, the last leader of that apartheid regime, to tell us, in blind acquiescence to its patron Mr De Klerk, that apartheid was no crime against humanity, but a Soviet propaganda ploy, is an insult to the millions of South Africans who suffered apartheid, and a slap in the face of those who seek justice, peace and universal progress for all. In fact the position of both Mr De Klerk and his Foundation must be at odds with the spirit of the Nobel Peace Prize of which Mr. De Klerk is a recipient.

If the De Klerk Foundation suggests that the international categorisation of apartheid as a crime against humanity was a false propaganda by the Soviet Union, then it means that the De Klerk Foundation is saying the SACC that campaigned under God, to humanise South Africa against apartheid was a Soviet propaganda pawn. It suggests that the apartheid government's charges through the Schibusch and Eloff Commissions, that the work of Dr Beyers Naude's Christian Institute and the Archbishop Desmond Tutu's South African Council of Churches for social justice and national reconciliation against apartheid was not Christian work.

Their position would justify the 1988 bombing of both the SACC's Khotso House and Khanya House of the Catholic Bishops Conference. It justifies the banning and banishment of the more than 2000 citizens of all races between 1950 and 1990 through the provisions of the wholly unjust Suppression of Communism Act; the detentions without trial for torture, often in extremity, resulting as it often did, in brain damage and death, such as was suffered by Biko, shackled, naked and stripped of all dignity - indeed reminiscent of the very death of Christ, naked and stripped of his dignity, for the sake of the truth. Think of the others murdered by the brutal apartheid security system, Ahmed Timol, Neil Aggett, Onkgopotse Tiro, Steve Biko, Griffiths and Victoria Mxenge, Mapetla Mohapi and countless others. Let them ask the maimed like Judge Albie Sachs, and Father Michael Lapsley. And the De Klerk Foundation has the temerity to say this was not a crime against humanity.

Are they naive, blind, or simply malicious and just unable to fathom the grave impact of apartheid, just because we don't make big of it today? Lest we forget, between 1960 and 1983, the apartheid government forcibly removed some 3.5 million black South Africans in what has been described as "one of the largest mass removals of people in modern history". If this is not a crime against humanity, then either the De Klerk Foundation is suggesting that it is no crime to forcibly remove helpless people under the barrel of a gun, the threat of vicious dogs, and the might of bulldozers, from the homes where they had invested all they could; or maybe the De Klerk Foundation is suggesting that these people were no human beings, for how else could this be no crime against humanity?

If anybody doubts that apartheid was a crime against humanity, read Father Cosmos Desmond's *The Discarded People*; and take time to watch the non-Soviet documentary *Last Grave at Dimbaza*. Let them raise Bishop David Russell from his grave and ask him for the cause of his extended fast on the steps of St George's Cathedral in Cape Town. Let them ask the people of District Six who were uprooted 54 years ago almost to the day, and of Sophiatown whose settled homes and thriving businesses were broken up by apartheid, which sadistically renamed Sophiatown **Triomf** - the triumph of a moral crime! Think of other sites of discarded people - Limehill, Kuruman, Morsgat, Itsoseng, Stinkwater, Sada, Linge, and many more!

Ask any loving mixed race couples who had to marry secretly and live in fear all their lives, for themselves and their children. Let them ask families broken up through arbitrary race classification of the pencil in the hair, some declared White and others in the same home Coloured and thus broken apart. Let them ask us, who lived all our young lives on the run from the police on account of the pass laws through which you could be declared a vagrant, an idle Bantu, an outlaw, or poll tax delinquent - itself a race based politically oppressive tax.

Look at the continued effects of apartheid on the supposedly free South Africa: look at the lot of its victims in the townships and the squalor of the squatter camps! Look at the parlous state of black education; the long term result of the erstwhile architect of apartheid Hendrick Verwoerd who said:

There is no place for (Blacks) in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour.

For the majority of South African victims of the Verwoerdian doctrine of apartheid, his philosophy and policy still resonates with the reality of their current living, despite the strides achieved in the era of constitutional democracy.

For the express education of the De Klerk Foundation and others of like thinking, "the crime of apartheid" is mentioned as such in Section 7 (1) (j) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court which describes Crimes Against Humanity. And it further explains in Section 7 (2) (h) as follows:

"The crime of apartheid" means inhumane acts of a character similar to those...", such as, inter alia:

- Murder;
- Deportation or forcible transfer of population;
- Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law;
- Torture;
- Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender... grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law.

Such acts, the Statute continues, "committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime", constitute crimes against humanity.

The very so-called black on black conflict that the De Klerk Foundation quotes to exculpate the apartheid regime, was the direct result and the logical outcome of apartheid policies, application and machinations. It is hard to believe that the De Klerk Foundation is ignorant of all this! We pray for God's grace to help open their eyes to the effect of their blindness in their interpretation of apartheid. And we appeal to them, for the sake of nation building, to retract their position on this and apologise for the hurt that it causes the majority of South Africans who bore the brunt of the apartheid system.

While they have their right to freedom of opinion and speech, they must also accept that this position alienates them from the South African Agenda for Healing, Reconciliation and Social Cohesion. We appeal to all organised bodies of South Africans to repudiate the De Klerk Foundation's position on apartheid. We request South Africans to identify with the rallying cry that says "Apartheid was a Crime; One South Africa One Nation!"