



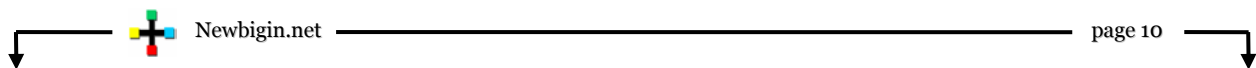
South Africa: A Fabric Of Fear And Hope

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South Africa seems to be a microcosm of the world

The first point that has struck me is that South Africa is a microcosm of the world situation.

At both levels a small minority holds the power and the wealth, and is dominated by the fear of losing it.

At both levels the dominant group tries to hide the exploited majority from its direct vision. In Britain we do it by immigration and nationality laws, in South Africa by the Group Areas acts.

At both levels the dominant group washes its hands of political responsibility while retaining economic power. At the world level we call this granting independence to the colonies. In South Africa it is called granting independence to the "homelands".

I therefore found it impossible to adopt an attitude of moral superiority.

The outlook is very dark and getting worse

It is clear to me that the outlook for South Africa is very dark indeed and that it is getting worse and not better.

It is true that there are a few small relaxations in the colour bar, that in some sectors job reservation is breaking down, that the banks and the multinational corporations are in some cases carrying through admirable programmes for training and promoting blacks to higher positions, and that the Prime Minister has made some promising gestures.

But these are almost infinitesimally small ameliorations when compared with the continuing and inexorable operation of apartheid.

I use the word inexorable because the policy of apartheid removes the possibility of normal human contact between different groups. It increases fear and distrust, which in turn necessitate further measures to separate people.

Violence is a terrifying reality

I came to this country with the question in my mind: can the problems be solved without violence?

I soon realized this was a foolish question. The violence is already a terrifying reality, but it is so sophisticated that one can live – in white society – without being aware of it.

But it was wise and experienced whites who said to me, "We are already living in the midst of an undeclared war."

There is a huge military build up in the "operational areas" to protect the frontiers. People talk with satisfaction about the number of blacks being killed on the borders.

Seen from the black angle, the military and economic strength of this government looks sickeningly formidable. But modern states are vulnerable. We must expect that sophisticated forms of guerilla war will develop.

One of the few hopeful elements is that the military are telling the government and the public that while they will not be defeated by the "terrorists" they cannot and will not win that kind of war.

Church people are a solid bastion of apartheid

The single most important factor is that the government, and the white Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) behind it, are still totally committed to the ideology and practice of apartheid.

The ideology of apartheid has one of its main roots in the theology and especially the missiology of the DRC. The development of it would not have taken place without the Kuyperian version of Dutch Calvinism.

To this day the rank and file membership of the white DRC remains the solid bastion of apartheid. Even when courageous leaders try to take a stand against it, they are overwhelmed or simply cast out by the massive strength of the ordinary membership.

The great majority of ministers and members, who have been taught for decades to accept the ideology of apartheid, believe it is biblical and discount any criticism of it as inspired by communism and therefore as anti-Christian.

Many non-DRC people have said to me, "Stop talking to them. They will listen to no argument but force." Others have said, "Go on talking. Keep on chipping away at the block. Keep on searching for points where change is possible."

My conclusion is that there is truth in both. I do not think that massive political change takes place except by a combination of coercion and persuasion. The art is to know how and when to apply each. That, I think, is what we have to learn.

The uprooting of people is the most horrifying

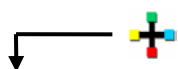
I am clear that quite the most horrifying consequence of the doctrine of apartheid is the massive uprooting of whole communities which is going on through the implementation of the Group Areas acts and the "homelands" policy.

I had, of course, read about this, but the reality was much more horrifying than I had realized.

Whole communities are forcibly removed from the homes they have occupied and lands they have farmed for generations. They are herded into settlements where – in the case of the rural areas I visited – they have none of the essential amenities and not enough land to feed themselves.

Even there they have no security of tenure. They can be evicted at any time on the order of the administrator, or the whole settlement may be moved again if the area is needed for whites.

The so-called "homeland policy" envisages separate independent states,



each of which will be the home of one tribe. Already two million people have been uprooted in the name of this policy.

The resulting "homelands" are largely separate patches of land incapable of becoming a viable state. In fact they are simply concentration camps for the reception of surplus labour for the white economy.

I was repeatedly told that the blacks are better off than in other parts of Africa. This is exactly as useful as telling a struggling old age pensioner in England that she is better off than the people of Uganda.

But it is, I think, revealing that the infant mortality rate for whites in this country, at 16.6 per thousand, is the lowest in the world except for Sweden, while that for blacks must be among the highest. A recent conference of the economics of health care in Southern Africa put it at not less than 220 per thousand.

Education is a burning issue for non-whites

Next to these uprootings of communities, the most burning issue of all for non-whites is the issue of education.

It is difficult to convey the depth of feeling.

It is not only that there is a scandalous discrepancy between the expenditure on education for the different races, but that the education given to blacks and "coloureds" is controlled by an ideology which they reject and by agencies in which they have no voice.

The widespread boycott of schools is an expression of total rejection of the education being offered. Competent witnesses estimate that not less than 100 school children were shot dead by the police in recent disturbances in the Cape Town area, but the young people are not intimidated. Nor are they satisfied with promises, for they have seen so many promises broken.

The official statistics show their position relative to the whites. The per capita expenditure on black education in 1953 was 14 per cent of that on white. In 1968 it was down to 6.4 per cent and in 1979 has reached 10.7 per cent.

Discontent brings an ever-growing repression

The response of the government to these discontents is an ever-growing repression. Any person, black or white, who indicates a critical attitude to the government is liable to be harassed.

Any person may be detained at any moment, with no reason given and no recourse to the courts. He may be kept for an indefinite period and may be tortured. At the end he may be released and no apology given.

Pastors are monitored by informers placed in their congregations and are liable to be detained and interrogated at any time if their sermons are thought to be subversive. Pastors' wives have to be ready for the possibility that their husbands may not return home and that there is no way of finding out where they are.

Police vans tour around to pick up blacks who are found in white or "coloured" areas without permission. In a recent case a black woman with her child came into a Cape Town township to search for her husband, and was arrested, charged and fined \$130 or 75 days in prison, and told by magistrate that she had better get herself another husband.

Printed material critical of the government is liable to be banned. Banning can be and often is retroactive that is, a man may be prosecuted for having a book or magazine which, at the time he had it, was not banned.

The impression I get is that South Africa is moving steadily in the direction of a state ruled by the party with the help of the police. More and more power is removed from the courts. Judges cannot intervene, or are required to administer laws which, on any ordinary showing, are totally unjust.

Summary: liberation, propaganda and prayer

First, the black and "coloured" Christians among whom I have been living are liberated, confident and determined. They know that apartheid is an evil system which cannot be amended or modified but must be totally destroyed.

They know that the odds against them are (humanly speaking) enormous. But they have a deep and simple confidence in God. They are never going to make terms with apartheid. They will not rest until this evil thing is removed from South Africa.

And if this means that they must suffer, they will suffer to the limit. And therefore they are hopeful and joyful.

Second, the white Christians know, I believe, in their hearts that the present position cannot continue for ever. The minority face this openly. The majority hide it from themselves by means of the myths provided for them by propaganda.

It is a terrible thing to say, but I have been unable to get out of my mind that text of Isaiah which is the most quoted in the New Testament

"Go and say to these people: Hear and hear but do not understand, see and see but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts and turn and be healed."

And yet, if I remember these words, I know that they are spoken also to the comfortable English middle class to which I belong. For, as I have said, South Africa is a microcosm of the world.

Third, we can certainly do as Bishop Desmond Tutu (general secretary of the South African Council of Churches) said with the utmost seriousness and as the one essential, we can and must pray for South Africa.