

S. Afr. Outlook 107 (1977)

could not see how one could regard that as being contemptible or harmful to public relations.

Even the average white man would regard the reference to sinful white racialism as a call to repentance, he said.

Mr van Zyl referred Dr du Toit to the 'Role of the riot police' and asked him if he had said it could promote confidence.

Dr du Toit replied that he had tried to say that in a democratic society the functions of the police depended on the confidence of the community at large. There should be an underlying credibility in what they were doing in that community.

If this was lost it became difficult for such an agent to function. It might become necessary for the authorities to withdraw them and send in another kind of peace-keeping force. In a situation where the riot police were held in great esteem in the community, allegations such as those in the pamphlet which, till that time, had been unknown to the community at large, would seriously undermine their authority.

If the riot police were already held to be guilty of the kind of action outlined in the pamphlet, if a situation were beginning to take shape where credence was being given to the rumours, it would become necessary for responsible citizens to counteract these rumours.

Grievances

Asked whether he was surprised that the

Publications Committee had disagreed with him, Dr Du Toit said he was not as 'absolutely astounded' as in the case of the previous pamphlet.

That pamphlet contained a list of basic and moderate grievances that had found their way into almost every newspaper every day of the week. In this pamphlet — 'The role of the riot police' — there were serious allegations that did not find their way into newspapers or ordinary publications every day of the week.

He emphasized that he disagreed with their finding, however, even insofar as this pamphlet was concerned.

The defence closed its case after Dr du Toit's evidence.

Mr E. L. King, SC, who appeared for Mr Russell, Mr Moletsane and Bishop Matolengwe, confined his arguments to the question of retrospectivity in the case.

It was common cause, he said, that the finding of the committee occurred subsequent to the production of the documents, and one could not in court challenge the correctness of decisions of such a committee. Before the court decided, however, that such a decision was retrospective, the court would want to be satisfied that there was either express wording that the decision must have this effect or words which indicated by implication that this was so.

Submission

It was his submission that there were neither

such words nor such implication and he asked the court to find the accused not guilty on the first count — that of producing pamphlets which, in terms of a decision of a Publications Committee, were undesirable. (The State accepted the plea of Mrs Cleminshaw on this count.)

He did not argue on the charge of possession. Mr Russell had pleaded guilty, he said, and there was no reason to comment. (The State accepted the pleas of not guilty of the other four accused on this count.)

Referring to the distribution charges, Mr Ipp said the accused had no reason to believe the documents had been banned for the Government Gazette had not yet arrived in Cape Town.

Admissions

There was nothing incumbent on the accused, he said, to 'phone Pretoria every Friday' to find out whether a particular document had been declared undesirable.

(In admissions handed to the court Mr Russell and Mrs Cleminshaw admitted that during the period 4 to 7 February this year they posted copies of the publications to church leaders, members of Parliament, leading members of the community and the press. According to the charge sheet the Gazette was published on 4 February.)

The case was postponed till 29 July for judgment.

Cape Times, 3.6.77 ●

What being a South African means to me

Nadine Gordimer

The following address, given recently at the University of Cape Town by internationally known writer, Nadine Gordimer, examines issues and questions involved in being white in changing South Africa.

WHAT DOES it mean to be a South African? Who decides?

What does it mean to me to be a South African? Do I qualify?

Of course, only white people in South Africa ever feel the need to ask themselves or each other such questions. And this leads to the last one we shall ever have to find the answer to: Is there such a being as a white African? Who decides?

You will have had, or will have before these sessions are over, many criteria set up in answer to the first question. The geographical criterion will be generally taken for granted as inadequate; living here under Capricorn is not enough. The circumstantial one also is

inadequate; living here under apartheid is not enough. The evidence is in a state of being that has passed, from some people of my grandfather's generation of locals who called Europe 'home' to some people of your generation who feel so detached from our ideologically-dense environment that they are again no longer at home. There is an internal emigration that can be said to have lasted for four generations. A section of the white population has lived from conquest to decline without ever becoming South African-conscious.

But you don't want generalisations; you will want to garner your own, from various views. What does being a South African mean to me? First of all, what are my objective claims to be one?

A vision of home

I was born here, yes, and to me that is a fact of deeply emotional importance, because I

not only believe along with the Jesuits and Freud that the early years of a child's life are carried within that child for always, he may live and discard many phases of experience, but that one, never. I also believe that the shock of confrontation with the physical world, the first landscape you open your eyes on, the first piece of earth you stagger to your feet on, the first faces that bend over you, although they pass beyond conscious recall, put a certain stamp on your perception and interpretation of the world. When I am in Europe or America, or anywhere away from Africa, my vision of home — in that half-waking state when time and distance don't exist — is burned veld round mine-dumps and coal-mine slag hills. Not a romantic vision. Not one that most Europeans would recognise as Africa. But Africa it is. Although I find it harsh and ugly, and Africa and her landscapes have come to mean many other things to me, it signifies to me a primary

impact of being; all else that I have seen and know is built upon it. Many questions to which I shall die while still working out my answers began there.

I have found that my claim to regard myself as South African by virtue of the pre-memory perceptions of birth and infancy are sometimes contested — by fellow whites. I may have been born here more than fifty years ago, but that does not mean I have been here *long enough*. I am the daughter of immigrants, my mother from England, my father from Lithuania. They weren't the sort who called Europe 'home', but that doesn't help. In the opinion of some whites, it is necessary to be able to trace one's ancestry back to the Voortrekkers or the 1820 British Settlers in order to be accepted as South African.

Potato-famine Irish or pogrom-Jewish lineage is parvenu. As time goes by, and the tenure even of whites who can trace their family lines to van Riebeck is challenged by blacks, who for so long would not have been thought to have any say in the matter at all, the question of how many generations a white must have behind him in order to qualify as a South African seems quaintly irrelevant. I have an urbane Afrikaner intellectual friend, educated at Oxford and Leyden, who used to like to annoy me by clinching an argument with the observation — How European you are, Nadine! Whereas he, of course — his covered-wagon pedigree and free-running childhood on a farm among black children who now live not in South Africa at all but shunted off to Gazankulu or Bophutatswana — was a real South African. I wonder how he feels about being polarised, along with the parvenu, as white, simply white, to the proposition of black consciousness . . .

The way things are

Having staked a territorial claim that goes further and further than a mere birth certificate, how does it seem to me my consciousness of being a South African took shape? Well, to go back to childhood: subconsciously, and *innocently* — by which I mean that the subconscious was storing impressions and experiences that were taken at face value. When you are a child, whatever is around you, in terms of human behaviour as well as physical environment, is the way the world is. Immutable. Adults present you with a manner of life; you know of no other. For this child there is a four-roomed house with a red stoep, a lawn in front and in the back-yard a pepper tree, a room where a black servant lives. The father goes on a bicycle every day to open his shop. The child walks through the suburb of bungalows across the veld to school. Once a week she wakes to the sound of drumming and knows it is Sunday because the mine-boys are dancing at the compound. They are black, wear blankets and sometimes white ladies' church hats that have been thrown away; they pee by the roadside, they are always wandering between the mine and the town. A school friend is the daughter of

the mine secretary and invites the child to the Christmas party for staff children. The children are white, like her, like all the children at school. A pet dog is run over by a neighbour; the black servant goes to see a sick brother. *That is the way things are*. There is another place where things are different: overseas; snow and robins and cowboys, a king and queen, read about in children's books. That place — the faraway — is a mystery; everything here is exactly what it is: the given facts are perfectly congruous, none stands out of category, the way an object would catch a bright child's eye in one of those puzzle pictures, meant to train the power of cognitive distinction, where a fool must be singled out among toys, or a fish on land. A long time goes by before the facts of daily life in that small Reef town begin to be sorted into heaps, in a tentative taxonomy. The dead pet will never reappear. The mine-boys are in fact men ('there's evidence of that) although they don't know men don't wear ladies' hats, and although they aren't members of the Mine Recreation Club. The servant is a woman with a brother — another life — she's not only 'our Lettie' who embroiders pillowcases in the sun on the step of her room. The men and Lettie are black. They don't belong to clubs, they don't come on picnics, their children don't go to the Convent of Our Lady of Mercy, across the veld. The fact-sorting process speeds up; the little heaps mount, some merge. In the principle of selection, a norm is the set of facts governing the life of the child herself: if you are white, *you begin from the premise of being white*. Are they different because they are black? Or are they black because they are different?

To be born a South African is to be presented with *given* facts of race on the same level of reality as the *absolute* facts of birth and death. Perhaps that is what whites mean when they speak of the unfairness of black resentment against even 'innocent white women and children' (women being honorary children); and perhaps it is what blacks mean when they argue that every white is guilty, by birth, of oppression of blacks. I have spoken and written often, in my life, of the second or rebirth many South African whites go through. I mean by this simply what happens when the child begins to realise the fact that the black does not enter through the white's front door is not in the same category as the fact that the dead will never come back. From the childhood memories of black friends end from the writings of blacks I gather that, until very recently, and no doubt still, in vast areas of the country, young blacks have a converse mergence into a second consciousness — when they realised that it is not in any natural and immutable order of things to call the white children's fether 'Baas' and 'Master'.

A new consciousness

I date the development of my consciousness of being South African rather than having any other social identity from the birth into that second consciousness. The process is essentially

the discovery of the lie. The great South African lie. In disagreement with popular beliefs, I myself don't equate this consciousness with guilt — that famous guilt white-anting the South African personality comes later, with the age of reason and the shame of consent . . . What comes of the immediate discovery of the lie is revelation; you cannot feel guilt for being conned. From the time I discovered that what was being concealed by my society was that blacks were people — not mine-boys, not our Lettie, but people, I had the opportunity to become what I think of as a South African. I had the responsibility to accept what I now knew. Which is to say that I believe that is where the identity is to be formed: working one's way through the central, definitive experience of black and white as people, with undifferentiated claims on life, whatever else — skin, language, culture — makes them differ from one another. Of course, I don't have to say that it is not as brusquely attainable and clear-cut as it sounds. When I reached the awkward age of reason, I sought ideological and political explanations and formulations for what whites were doing to blacks. To be a South African is to be one for whom none of these theories is abstract; long before you or I are old enough to read politics and economics we have demonstrated in ourselves capitalist exploitation of a peasantry and proletariat, lived this in our lives, going to a free school while our black siblings caddied for our fathers on the golf course or herded their cattle on the farms; long before we have heard of the race theories of a Gobineau or a Hitler, we have been part of a demonstration of the counter-Marxist, western democratic theory that race discrimination and not class exploitation is the basis of oppression in our country.

For me, the black mineworkers were in the compound before the term migratory labour was stored in my mind. I heard in the mouth of a grown-up in that small town the words 'white kaffir' as an ordinary term of abuse between two quarrelling whites before complex analyses of the projection of fears, before the concept of the Other who epitomises one's own obstreperous idea came my way. Now I began to interpret. I began to understand that I was, as a white South African, in terms of social evolution, and to ask how — if — one might break out into another social role. Most important, contact with blacks as people and equals, sometimes very close and personal contact, shaped my consciousness through their ideas about whites, about me; rounded it out through their demands upon me and my dependencies upon them.

In this period of intense give-and-take between idea and flesh, between the theory and the daily reality not only of aspiring to something called justice but of aspiring to become human in the ways South African society was and is not, I was beguiled by the charm of a 'free society' within four walls, so to speak. But outside that room the iron colour bar remained on black backs, not mine. Like many others, I granted too much

counterweight to the groups where there was no 'they' and 'we', only Us.

Working with blacks

During this period — and it lasted more than a decade — I also had new relationships with whites that developed my awareness of what might be involved in being a South African. In particular there was my close friendship with a woman who already lived in a way that seemed to be evolved in particular response to the situation. She was an Afrikaner, but there were others like her, Jewish or of English descent. She was a white prepared to take full responsibility for the past that can't be changed and the future that must be. Through her I came to understand that we whites are not European and that in order to be *anything* we must change profoundly. It was in the 1950s, long before we had been frightened by the concept of black consciousness and before the concept of white consciousness had begun to be considered as anything but white supremacy. At the time it was still possible to work with blacks; she did just that: not *for* them. She considered proxy a crippling thing to those on whose behalf concessions were asked. She believed no-one could assess black needs but blacks themselves; no-one could decide for them how they could free themselves from white oppression: only they knew what it really was. She would argue political tactics passionately with blacks, but she did not expect to prevail by assumption of white-knows-best, if not out of despotism then out of an equally despotic compassion. I watched her in her daily life, as an organiser of a mixed trade union, then running a co-operative, willing and able to work under blacks in political activities on *their* terms, astonishingly free of any sense of self-sacrifice or nobility in the risks she ran, the naming and banning and periods of detention — in simple, unshakeable acceptance that if she suffered it was as much to remake the meaning of being a white South Africa as to remake that of being black.

Radicalism and courage

A lot of cant is talked in the context of whites like you and me suffering on full stomachs the psychic damage of over privilege; but if we are to try to discover if there is any validity in a concept of white consciousness, we have to examine how privilege sub-consciously hampers the will to change. And it still seems to me that people like my friend saw the real aspects of this and took their own hard way towards curing it.

Today men and women such as Beyers Naudé and some young people who have been student leaders show that same courage.

Jean-Paul Sartre, as an old man in his middle seventies, says his only regret in life is that he was not more radical; I think it is likely that I, too, from that safe shore, may say the same. Certainly I am aware that I have not been nearly as brave as being a South African has turned out to require, and it so

happens that active radicals and bravery have gone together, in South Africa.

How much can I blame on the tumbril of history, whose destination is unlikely to be that rendezvous where there is room for all? How much must I blame on the lingering sloth of privilege, convictions not matched by courage; the writer's fiercely-exclusive sense of his existence through his work? It is hard to be honest about these things, even with oneself.

'Only connect' was a fragile bond. Part of my continuing consciousness of being a South African has been to accept, quite long ago, without sneering at the limited but undoubted value it had, that that bond between black and white has broken, defiled by 'dialogue', the zoo teaparty at which noises remarkably like human exchanges are made. That bond has been rent like gossamer by brutish removals, medieval detentions, and finally, the shooting of children.

Constant response

At no time in my life has my sense of being a South African been final and definitive, and it is not, now. Being a South African is a constant state of response to demands; continuing and changing demands. I often mark how different is the social state of being of American or English friends. They begin to seem to me a protected species; in one way, I could define my South Africanness by the extent to which they differ from me in their secure sense of what they are. Once mature, they may have to make adaptive changes to outward circumstances; they may have to face slumps and unemployment, changes in the standard of living, even the possibility of atomic annihilation together, but they will never have to change the concept of who and what they are in relation to their country.

This is exactly what is being demanded of whites in South Africa now: to change the concept of who and what they are in relation to South Africa now: to change the concept of who and what they are in relation to South Africa. After more than three hundred years, Blacks are demanding it of whites; whites such as the students who have organised this series of discussions and inquiries, are demanding it of themselves. In the political parties' understanding of the nature of the demand, there are varying degrees of sincerity and realism; what we have to keep foremost in our South African consciousness, there, is that although some wild things have come out of the mouth of Mr Andrew Young, and although the diplomatic notes of protest from the big powers as well as those of Mr Pik Botha fell thick upon Mr Andrew Young's head when he said South Africa's government was illegal, only legalistic, sophistic arguments can prove him wrong. Morally, our government is illegal. When our Nuremberg comes — and the trials go on in private, inside us, already — no one will be able to deny that the 'legality' of our government consists in its being legal in our country for a parliament representing only a white minority to make the laws...

I don't think the public platform is the place for me, but I am here because I take seriously the SRC's intention to examine the feasibility and validity of a white consciousness concept as a response to our present situation, psychological and practical. I am not prepared to dismiss white consciousness out-of-hand as merely the acceptance, black-dictated, of racialism in reverse. The rejection by young and not-so-young blacks of the white spectrum from liberal to radical is a traumatic experience, make no mistake about it, for whites. For myself, I can say that rationally I understand it and consider it necessary, but as individual experience I find it as wounding as anyone else does. It is not easy to take as a new starting point. Black thought insists that, beginning again from rejection, whites must work out a social and psychic route based on the idea that they will arrive so changed back at the point of departure that it will be possible, then, for there to be equality of acceptance. For blacks will emerge from their great pilgrimage into full self-hood; and the thread that leads out of the labyrinth of struggle will turn out to have been in the hands of both and to have brought them to a meeting-place, not some hall where the petty apartheid signs have been hastily taken down.

Towards white consciousness

Is this just a ghastly mirror-version of 'separate development'? I fervently hope not. I don't think so. Mongane Serote once wrote a little poem: 'White people are White people, they must learn to listen; Black people are Black people, they must learn to talk.' It has happened. But we must not expect blacks to tell us what we must do, or even what they want of us. It is frustrating that they will not, can not.

If we declare an intention to identify fully with the struggle for a single, common South African consciousness, if there is such a thing as white consciousness as a way to human justice and honest self-realisation, whites will have to take their attitudes apart and assemble afresh their ideas of themselves. We shall have to accept the black premise that the entire standpoint of *being white* will have to shift, whether it is under the feet of those who loathe racialism and have opposed it all their lives, or those to whom race discrimination is holy writ.

One of the most difficult things of all to face is that black thinkers talk at the moment as if they prefer, in principle, white racialists and conservatives, those who have decreed and pursued the persecution of blacks with pious cruelty and detached hubris, to those whites of the liberal-to-radical spectrum who have pursued the cause of black liberation, at worst, yes, out of self-interest disguised as paternalism, at best out of commitment to destroy self-interest as whites have known it, along with apartheid. There is no objective reason why the ugly sincerity of white racialists should be regarded as more 'sincere' than the sincerity of

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It is important that we make progress towards normalizing relations with the people's Republic of China. We see the American-Chinese relationship as a central element of our global policy, and China as a key force for global peace. We wish to cooperate closely with the creative Chinese people on the problems that confront all mankind. We hope to find a formula which can bridge some of the difficulties that still separate us.

Finally, let me say that we are committed to a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Southern Africa. The time has come for the principle of majority rule to be the basis for political order, recognizing that in a democratic system the rights of the minority must also be protected. To be peaceful, change must come promptly. The United States is determined to work together with our European allies and the concerned African states to shape a congenial international framework for the rapid and progressive transformation of Southern African society and to help protect it from unwarranted outside interference.

Let me conclude:

Our policy is based on an historical vision of America's role:

It is derived from a larger view of global changes;

It is rooted in our moral values;

It is reinforced by our material wealth — and by our military power;

It is designed to serve mankind;

And it is a policy that I hope will make you proud to be American. ●

What being a South African means to me

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whites who want to ditch racialism. But the thing is those whites failed; failure in the ranks of those who have power is not forgiven by those without power. Yet this failure of whites has become one of the most important factors in black consciousness — in the form of the realisation that liberation cannot be gained on *one's behalf*, by others. Could white consciousness — once you have decided what it is and how to put it into practice — provide a means for whites to participate in the legal and economic and spiritual liberation of blacks? Will it find a way in which whites themselves may at the same time be liberated from the image of the Janus Oppressor, the two archetypal stereotypes, grinning racist or weeping liberal, of the same tyrant? Is this what consciousness is? You are making a Pascalian wager on it; and that's the only way to find out. ●

Crisis in Zaire

American Friends Service Committee

Emergency US airlift of military supplies — fighting in a mineral-rich province of a central African country — Moroccan troops sent in to aid the Zairean regime — France and Belgium involved — what is going on in Zaire? What are the reasons for US involvement and what are the risks?

I. A HOUSE OF CARDS

'Zaire is a good friend and a good investment.' — President Richard M. Nixon toasting Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko in 1972.

'Over a period of years, President Mobutu has been a friend of ours. We've enjoyed good relationships with Zaire. We have substantial commercial investment in the country.' — President Jimmy Carter, press conference, 24 March, 1977.

Hunger in a land of wealth

A country of disparities, whose capital is an oasis of office buildings and superhighways in a desert of rural poverty and malnutrition, Zaire is a classic case of the 'development of underdevelopment.' While foreign capital flows into mining, hotels, and other investments oriented towards the Western market economies, the rural areas are left without basic services or an adequate diet. 'Once self-sufficient in food crops, increasing quantities of food must now be imported by Zaire,' the US Agency for International Development stated in its fiscal 1977 budget submission. 'Malnutrition is endemic . . . At least 70 per cent of the rural population does not have access to health services' (USAID Submission to Congress for FY77, Africa Programmes, pp.128-9). According to a 1975 World Bank report, a third of the population suffers from 'deficiencies in caloric intake' and most of the population gets insufficient protein (World Bank report cited in Guy Gran, 'Policy Making and Historic Process: Zaire's Permanent Development Crisis,' a paper presented at the African Studies Association meetings in November 1976).

The Zaire Self Help Project, a Quaker-supported grassroots development project in Kasai Occidental, described the link between poor diet and poor health in a 1975 report: Heavy reliance on manioc, a starchy root crop, contributes to low protein diets and even this poor but usually reliable crop is now threatened by diseases hitherto unknown. Malnutrition is amply evident among children and can be readily assessed by statistics. The fact is that half the children contracting measles die due to low resistance caused by malnutrition.

The Oligarchy of Mobutu Sese Seko

In Kinshasa, the capital, Zaire's '300 families'

dine on beef, eggs, and citrus fruit imported from abroad (Robin Wright, WP 4.9.77; V. S. Naipaul, *New York Review of Books* 6.26.75) and President Mobutu has built for himself and the Zairean elite a life of opulence and corruption.

'Mobutu has diverted enough of his country's wealth into his personal coffers to become one of the world's richest men. And he has created a super-rich class of underlings whose lavish tastes are, at best, conspicuous' (David Lamb, *Los Angeles Times/Philadelphia Inquirer* 4.5.77).

The aura of princely grandeur surrounding Mobutu is . . . bolstered by a life style that includes palatial residences in each of Zaire's eight provinces and others in France, Belgium, and Switzerland. There is not only a luxurious palace in Kinshasa but a 20 square-mile 'presidential domain' at N'Sele 40 miles away, which contains two more residences and a swimming pool billed as Africa's largest. To shuttle between his international chain of palaces, Mobutu uses the national airline, Air Zaire, as a personal transport service. His high-handed habit of commandeering planes at a whim has made Air Zaire's timetables something of a joke. When Mobutu visited West Germany last spring, he took the line's 747 for himself and a DC-10 for his wife, leaving Air Zaire suddenly without its two largest planes (*Time* 10.28.74).

A former police clerk and Brussels-trained journalist under the Belgians, Mobutu Sese Seko 'has ruled what was once considered an ungovernable country by buying off his opponents and permitting them, like his supporters, to indulge in the spoils of one of Africa's most blatantly corrupt systems . . . Bribes are necessary to accomplish anything from making a long-distance telephone call to clearing customs at the airport. 'To survive in Zaire today,' said a European businessman, 'you need to know only two things: Who do I see and how much will it cost?' (Lamb, op. cit.)

In March 1976 Monsignor Kebanga, archbishop of Lubumbashi (the capital of Shaba province), wrote a pastoral letter calling on the nation's leaders to respect the dignity and worth of every person and speaking of the 'suffering' and the 'moans' of the poor. President Mobutu is reported to have summoned the Catholic bishops and demanded that they repudiate the letter. They refused to do so. (Siradiou Diallo, *Jeune Afrique* 2.11.77; Professor Jan Vansina, quoted in the *Washington Post* 3.19.77)

The US Stake in Zaire

'Whatever Zaire has become today, both politically and economically, the US assumes a large share of the responsibility.'