

EXODUS

It is done. South Africa no longer belongs to the Commonwealth. Six months ago such a development seemed improbable enough. At the beginning of March, a few days before the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference opened in London, it seemed impossible. The bulk of the British press busily assured its readership that the British Prime Minister had the whole issue snugly in hand. He was, one newspaper predicted, to conduct the conference like a meeting of the British Cabinet, cutting short controversy and moulding the concensus of opinion. The top people were even told by the Archbishop of Cape Town—in a letter to *'The Times'*—that the non-whites of South Africa wanted it so. Sir de Villiers Graaff, leader of the albino United Party Opposition, and Mr. Harry Oppenheimer of the Progressive Party, De Beers Consolidated Mines and the Anglo-American Corporation, emphasised the desire of all South Africans to remain in the Commonwealth.

The campaign had been so well mounted that it almost deserved to succeed. That it should instead so ignominiously have collapsed was due to a number of sudden interventions. Chief A. J. Lutuli, President-General of the banned African National Congress in South Africa, cabled *'The Times'* to contradict the Archbishop's appeal and request South Africa's expulsion. Two days before the conference began, Julius Nyerere, Chief Minister of Tanganyika, cabled the London *'Observer'* that to vote South Africa in would mean voting Tanganyika inevitably out of the Commonwealth. Public opinion in the Afro-Asian member states had persistently hardened against South Africa's association with the Commonwealth, till the Commonwealth itself was increasingly coming under assault. It is a mistake no doubt to confuse governments with peoples; but no government, however cynical, could continue to ignore what had become a popular passion. It would, of course, have been calamitous had a split over South Africa resulted in which white and black members of the Commonwealth would have faced each other across a canyon of recrimination. That this was avoided must be credited in the main to Mr. Diefenbaker, Prime Minister of Canada, who recognised that a Commonwealth which contained apartheid was a Commonwealth that carried cancer in its blood-stream. The determination of the British Government to

readmit a republican South Africa at all costs began indistinguishably to sag.

There remains little doubt, however, that Dr. Verwoerd could have emerged from the conference with readmission secured, had he shown the slightest willingness to unclench his fist. The other Prime Ministers would have gone far to avoid the precedent of rupture. Instead of compromise, however, Dr. Verwoerd had chosen the course of effrontery. He did not apologise for apartheid; that would have been too much to expect. He did not attempt to excuse it. He did not even observe a decent silence about it, in the knowledge that any display would inevitably draw attention to its character. He flaunted it, brandishing it with all the tawdry decorations of his own State Information Office, till the very shootings at Sharpeville became a malignant misrepresentation of white South Africa's benevolence. To commit a massacre is one thing; to claim it as an adventure in good neighbourliness is a little too much for even the well-lined stomach of the twentieth century to hold.

Had he left his disfigurements at the conference door, Dr. Verwoerd might yet have got his way. That he should have flashed his intransigence behind the curtains of Lancaster House was an indication not only of his arrogance but of his ineptitude. It seems, indeed, reasonably certain that all attempts at compromise finally floundered when Dr. Verwoerd refused to undertake that representatives of non-white Commonwealth states would be permitted diplomatic entry into the Republic. After two days of rancorous discussion, it became clear to him that South Africa was likely to be refused unconditional readmission, and he formerly withdrew her application.

Dr. Verwoerd has entered the wilderness, and by his own choice. Though his supporters pulsed with pride at their latter day exodus, they are well enough aware—as how can they not be?—that their promised land is behind and not in front of them. Soon after his return to South Africa, Dr. Verwoerd registered a significant gain in a by-election at Bethal, the Transvaal rural constituency so celebrated for its forced labour and farm prisons. It would, of course, be fatuous to believe that white South Africa will reel from Dr. Verwoerd at the sound of the first shots fired over his head.

The Afrikaners are not escaping from enslavement; it is to avoid their enfranchisement that they are undertaking this vast

racial exodus from the outside world. They will follow Dr. Verwoerd into the wilderness as long as it is the wilderness of their own sterile dominion. They will desert him in the end, but only when their very survival is made contingent upon their enfranchisement to reason.

History recounts few instances of rulers who have by choice abdicated their dominion. To expect white South Africa to be coaxed or berated out of its privileges is to discount the very humanity that alone will liberate white South Africa from itself. Precisely because white South Africans are human, they will retain their privileges for just as long as they can; precisely because they are human, they will surrender them when surrender is the only route left them for survival.

There is more nonsense written and spoken about the ethics of intervention than almost anything else. Let us suppose that there exists a small republic somewhere in the Pacific, ruled by a religious fanatic and his followers. Let us suppose too that the ruler's peculiar fanaticism pivots upon the evils of this world and requires national Salvation in the purity of death. Suppose then that, supported by his well-armed converts, he sets out assiduously to transport his subjects to heaven, by slaughtering them all. Are we to accept that this is a 'domestic affair'? Is the world idly to watch the final murder, before intervening to the extent of repopling the cemetery? Let us suppose that the population of the republic does not share the fanaticism of its rulers, that it struggles with sticks against sten guns to survive and so only accelerates the approach of its end. Suppose too that it cries out for help in order to survive, that it appeals to the United Nations, over the heads of its own legal government. Are the great powers to quote the Charter at each other, or threaten counter measures to any unilateral intervention while the slaughter proceeds?

It is, of course, a grotesque hypothesis; but only perhaps because of the motivation and the degree. How far, in pursuit not of religious fanaticism but of greed, will Portugal be permitted to go in order to retain control over Angola? Let us suppose—not such an improbable hypothesis after all—that the already widespread nationalist rising in Angola persists, and that repression by bombing raid and massacre continues to mount. At what stage will pacification at last become genocide? At what stage will it be manifestly irrational for the world community to limit its intervention to pious demands for enquiry

and explanation? Should the Soviet Union find it profitable to intervene unilaterally against Portugal, will the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation be enlisted in support of Salazar?

Despite shootings and mass imprisonment, despite banishments and bans, the non-white peoples of South Africa will continue to resist race rule. Resistance will lead to repression, repression to resistance, till rebellion and massacre make of South Africa itself one long internal haemorrhage of humanity. It is difficult to see how non-white rebellion, isolated from outside assistance and assailed by modern weapons of war, can ever accomplish change; it is equally difficult to see how the non-whites can ever surrender to perpetual subjection. It is certainly foolish to believe that a government which showed itself capable of the unprovoked Sharpeville shootings would flinch at using aircraft to silence whole townships and districts. As long as the world regards what happens in South Africa and in Angola as a finally domestic affair, so long it gives to Verwoerd and Salazar the encouragement to crush resistance at any cost.

One may reasonably ask how the President of the United States can engage in attempts to overthrow the Cuban government, while viewing with a purely verbal distress the racial violence in Angola and the Republic of South Africa. It is a matter for considerable debate whether or not the Cuban régime is a popular one. No one can sanely suggest that the governments of Angola and South Africa enjoy the support of the populations whose resistance they contain only by an ever-growing exercise of force.

It is, of course, imprudent to encourage and even permit any state to intervene on its own against the government of another country. Once the principle is patently established that a state may do so—under the slogan of national security, justice or personal liberty—every society becomes vulnerable to assault by other governments, whose interpretation may differ widely from that entertained by the most of mankind. What does not endanger the free society, what can only increase the fundamental security of rational rule, is united intervention, undertaken at the judgement of the world community itself.

Indeed, it is only this form of intervention that can block effectively any risk of the other form; it becomes man's ultimate sanction against inhumanity. That the principle of such action was cemented into the very meaning of the United Nations is clear from the Charter. If the United Nations was at its founda-

tion an unreasonable reflection of the world community, it is clearly a far more adequate measure now. There are sufficient member states uncommitted to either of the power blocs to prevent any international intervention in the cause of one.

White South Africa and the Salazar régime that neighbours it have together undertaken an exodus from the contemporary world. It would be well if this were reflected in another exodus, a departure by the world community from the domestic obsession and power balances of the last century. By intervening openly in Southern Africa, the world community can do a service not only to the voiceless, voteless, anguished millions of the sub-continent, but an immeasurable service to itself. Should it refuse to intervene, it can only encourage intervention by an individual state with a far richer imagination. Southern Africa ought to be the battlefield of man against racial savagery and unreason. It must not be allowed to become the occasion for a war of men over strategic demarcations. There are some twenty three million non-whites in the Republic of South Africa, Angola and Moçambique. Their humanity should be of some concern to the rest of the world.