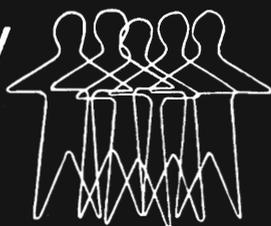


The New African



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Three Americans Look at Africa

SOUTH AFRICA • CONGO
OPERATION ZULU

Jordan Ngubane THE TWO MORALITIES

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U.S.A.: Inept, Shortsighted

THERE IS SOMETHING DEPRESSING about the two articles on United States policies and attitudes to South Africa which we carry on other pages of this number. There is little comfort in the thought that a few liberals in that country are sympathetic but ignorant; and still less in the revelation that it is only in a satirical comment on the machinations that accompany policy making that consideration can even be given to any form of action in relation to this country.

To date, American policy towards South Africa has been marked by a singular combination of ineptitude and shortsightedness. It was not until 1958 that the United States first voted with the majority to condemn apartheid. Even then, it succeeded in giving the impression that it did so as a matter of expediency, not of principle.

This impression has been reinforced by the subsequent behaviour of the U.S. Government. Instead of using its massive influence to bring about change in South Africa, it has made every attempt to water down the attempts of others to bring about the downfall of white domination. And, while other countries have called with increasing vigour for boycotts, sanctions, and other forms of determined international action, it has continued to connive at the increasing inhumanity of South African Government policy. It has done so by permitting the purchase of arms, by allowing its industrialists to extol the virtues of investment in South Africa, and by remaining silent while a Senator compliments the Government on its policy and enthuses about the 'stability' that it has created.

The fact is that American policy appears to have been based on the calculations of cold war strategy, which are as shortsighted as they are irrelevant to Africa. For too long, it has seemed that America has decided to back the short-term winner, in the belief that it represents a solidly anti-communist policy, and if supported will allow itself to be used as a strategic base against communism.

Just the opposite has happened. Dr. Verwoerd's Government has used the United States, along with a few other nations, as his last remaining props against the inevitable demise of white domination. The result has been a lessening of regard for the U.S. and its allies, and this process of disillusionment—with democracy as well as with its leading proponents—may be expected to continue until support for South African Policies is withdrawn.

The difficulty is to know whether any real change can be expected. To be sure America has, since 1958, bowed to the pressure of the African and Asian nations at the U.N.—but in
(continued overleaf)

doing so it has given the impression once more that it is motivated less by a revulsion against white supremacy than by the cold calculations of international strategy. It has continued to drag its feet, and to avoid anything more than mere verbal opposition to apartheid.

If this remains the U.S. policy, disillusion may well

be followed by outright rejection. By allowing cold war motives to determine its policy, it may have forced those who seek freedom to think in cold war alternatives. We hope that this is not the case. But we cannot do more than hope until some real change takes place in American policy.

The Two Moralities

“the white man’s desire for survival and the black man’s desire for fulfilment . . .”

JORDAN K. NGUBANE

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT facts underlined by recent developments in the United Nations is that the problems created by South Africa’s growing diplomatic isolation and the hostility of the civilised world to apartheid have reached proportions where they can no longer be solved by the White community acting by itself.

At the same time Black-White collaboration in moving events away from disaster is rendered difficult by White fears that a non-racial front against apartheid might destroy racialism only to pave the way for communism or a reversion to barbarism. The average European, whose knowledge of the African is gathered mainly from newspapers and political parties, does not realise that there is a powerful and growing section of African opinion which has for generations sought to solve the race problem by reconciling the White man’s desire for security and survival with the African’s yearning for fulfilment.

The government takes advantage of this ignorance to create a crisis mood in the White community which might best serve its ends for some time. Liberalism is equated with communism, although almost any ordinary high school boy knows that the two are poles apart. Afrikaner Nationalism’s will to dominate is asserted with increasing vigour. White resistance to African demands for an effective share in government is intensified. At the same time political breadcrumbs in the form of “independent” Bantustans are dropped for the

Matanzimas to pick. They are designed to give apartheid the time it needs to consolidate White unity in readiness for the bloodbath toward which Dr. Verwoerd’s policy is driving the country.

The overworked argument used to justify this crazy drift to ruin is that Black and White belong to two cultural worlds which have little in common. If they were to be integrated in one social structure there would develop fissions and frictions which would lead ultimately to the destruction of one group by the other. In the end the African’s numbers would swamp the Whites, corrupt their values of life and destroy their achievements. Separate development remains the only guarantee of peace for the African and the European, of security and survival for the Whites and of a better future for all. The so-called failure to establish multi-racial communities in the free countries to our north is cited as evidence to prove the argument.

TO THE OBJECTIVE READER, this line of approach has at least three obvious flaws. Its validity diminishes in proportion not only as we recede from the frontier wars but also as we move deeper into the era of ideological challenges which recognise no colour. It distorts attitudes on both sides of the colour line in ways which transform normal cleavages on social, economic or political questions into fundamental differences almost on every plane. It does not take into account the real nature of the revolution effected in the life of the African people by contact with the White man.

Where the basic intention is to discover and widen the areas of common interest between Black and White for purposes of consolidating non-racial opposition to apartheid while producing a feasible alternative to it, account must first be taken of the historical and cultural processes likely to aid or retard this collaboration.

By finally eliminating the tribe’s potential for waging war against the White settler on the one hand and the African convert to Christianity on the other, Cetahwayo’s defeat in 1879 cast the relations between Black and White in a mould which deserves closer study. The African was forced to accept the fact that the White man had come to South Africa to stay. In that situation Black and White could not see each other from the perspective of the frontier wars indefinitely. Peace brought problems which called for different solutions. Urgent challenges faced the African as much as they did the White man. One of the questions the former asked himself was: What attitude was he to adopt in conditions where he had to live with the White man as a permanent neighbour? Where his political power had been destroyed, his land taken and his future uncertain as a result of the social and economic changes which followed defeat?

JORDAN K. NGUBANE, *journalist, former editor of the Ilanga laseNatal and Indian Opinion, vice-president of the Liberal Party of South Africa, attended the All African Peoples’ Congress at Accra in 1958, and was chairman of the continuation committee of the African Leaders Conference held at Orlando in 1961. This article is Part I of a series.*