

Some of his most outstanding leaders, like Walter Rubusana in the Cape and Magema M. Fuze in Natal answered it by stating in effect that the basic cause of failure on the battlefield was, in the final analysis, not racial. The African had lost largely because the values which gave content to his life or his cultural pattern lacked the creative dynamism of those which inspired the White side. Rebirth into a new destiny held the secret to survival in the circumstances created by defeat.

THEIR SUCCESSORS, LED MAINLY by Pixley ka Isaka Seme and John Dube, both from the Inanda mission station in Natal, set out to give practical form to the ideal rebirth. They wanted to consolidate the identical patterns of culture evolved by the various lingual groups after contact with the White man. The composite whole would be a valuable bond of unity in the African community. It would bridge the cultural gulf between Black and White and in that way accelerate movement toward agreement on the meaning of South African citizenship. An image of nationhood could emerge from this which Black and White could accept with honour. Loyalty to it and the maintenance of its form would be what Willem van Heerden calls the "common purpose, grown out of a common interest and rooted in some sort of

common background."¹

The consolidation actually took place in a national conference held in Bloemfontein in January, 1912 and to which we shall refer later.

The advocates of apartheid ignore the epoch-making events in the African community which issued from the moment of consolidation. They presuppose the non-existence of the composite pattern of culture.

These weaknesses incapacitate apartheid for a correct appraisal of the African's mind. They prejudice its attitude to him, his history and achievements. Dr. Verwoerd's doctrine does not take into account the schisms, the sacrifices and the adjustments which were to reduce the influence of tribal tradition and transform the majority of the Africans into an altogether new people in history.

Because of these handicaps, apartheid cannot comprehend, let alone appreciate, the historical processes, the motivating urges or the depth of feeling and conviction which compelled Seme, Dube and other successors to reject race consciousness. No wonder it dismisses the successors as communists. ●

(To be continued)

¹ From an article in *Optima*, June 1962.

The Anatomy of a Policy

How America looks at South Africa

J. KIRK SALE

AMERICA REGARDS SOUTH AFRICA as an ugly girl regards a blind date: She has a deep conviction that the future is bleak and that there is very little she can do about it, but at the back of her mind is a desperate hope that everything will work out well in spite of her.

On the one hand, America feels that South Africa is a tinderbox which will be saved from explosion only by a thoroughgoing change of policy by the whites. With its New World certainty that hard work and Yankee ingenuity can solve any problem, America is convinced that Verwoerd's Bantustan policies are both oversimplified and Boerishly clumsy. With its happy faith that what-is-good-for-General-Motors-is-good-for-the-country, America is sure that apartheid will prove to be an impractical and uneconomical way to keep the gold and diamonds flowing. And with the brashness of a new world power which only recently has been able to moralize with impunity, America is positive that

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South Africa's policies are sinful and immoral, Godless and unprincipled.

But on the other hand, America is full of desperate hope because it feels guilty, bewildered and impotent. It feels guilty because it knows, in its deepest heart, that its treatment of black people is not so different in kind, though milder in degree, from South Africa's; and while it is thankful for the disparity between the aims and means of the two governments, this is only small salve. It feels bewildered because, having expected so many impossible things of the new independent countries of Africa, it has no idea of what to make of jailings in Ghana or a one-party state in Tanganyika, and is beginning to wonder if maybe the African "isn't ready for self-government" after all. It feels impotent because it realizes that whatever it does to help the African in South Africa will eventually mean fewer nuggets in its pockets, fewer cars exported from its shores, fewer votes on its side.

IT IS FROM THIS AMBIVALENCE of the American public that United States policies spring. Our moral position is towering, and we never lose a chance to look down with scorn and pity on the Verwoerd government, condemning it as easily as we condemn the devil. In the United Nations we have found it not only expedient but proper to warn that apartheid will lead to "bloodshed, war and disaster for all races," and to vote against South Africa when the powerful African bloc gives us the opportunity. We have even stated that we will no longer continue to send arms to the Republic.

At the same time, however, we are unable to offer any constructive suggestions and are reluctant to go so far as to vote for sanctions against South Africa. We are not even sure of how to use our moral and political

influence to get *any* kind of change, hopeful or not. We reject all notions that a Negro should be added to our Pretoria Embassy staff, that U.S. Navy ships should stay away from South African ports or that South African goods (even excepting gold) should be boycotted. South Africa, like the devil, is clearly evil—but we have not yet figured out what to do about either of them.

Complicating this public ambivalence is an even more serious ambivalence among those who forge our political and economic policies on the spot in South Africa itself. For these Americans, a little learning about South Africa is a dangerous thing. Before they visit the Republic these Americans—foreign service officers, businessmen, politicians—firmly believe that they will find stern, white giants in the streets of Johannesburg who delight in giving passing Africans a swift kick in the shins; they suspect that at least a half dozen blacks are shot every weekend; and they know that the Africans would run a happy, peaceful land if only given the chance.

When they finally arrive in South Africa they are shocked to find that life is not like this at all. The Africans seem to be relatively well off, the whites have built a booming, modern (and in many ways Americanized) country, and most of the Africans they meet in kitchens and mine compounds don't look as if they could be successful ministers. And what is so bad about separate train stations, anyway?

THE SHOCK OF FINDING conditions in South Africa better than they had expected usually swings Americans' prejudices the other way. Now they delight in writing to their incredulous friends about the progress that has been made in the Republic, never once missing the opportunity to tell them that the Africans in South Africa own more cars than all the Russians put together. (I was told this titbit at least a dozen times, usually by Americans, but no one in the Government Information Service had any notion of how to verify it). And if they enter the social life of any large city, Americans quickly get to the point where they are swapping stories of the deficiencies of their servants with the best of them.

Slowly these people, the ones running America's government and American businesses in South Africa, get caught by the web of propaganda. The magnificent myth-machine of the government, of the social leaders, even of the English-language press and the Progressive Party, soon has them revising their opinions of apartheid: "Well, I guess it isn't morally right, but what else can they do?" Back home, "some of their best friends are Negroes", but here they see only ragged African labourers, silent servants or a few of the upper-class Africans who are usually down on their race. Eventually they really believe that Zimbabwe was built by the Portuguese.

Now much of this ambivalence of Americans in South Africa is clearly understandable, for, like the hanged man, they swing freely without any base to rest on. But what is indefensible is that they refuse to learn—or, more charitably, that they are unaware of—the other

side of the story. Using faulty scales and only a single pan, they can never get a proper balance. With their absurd but built-in fear of Communism, Americans are easy prey to those who assure him that the Liberals and radicals are really Communists in Western clothing, and it is not long before the American fears learning the radical point of view equally as much as he fears swimming home. One high American official in Johannesburg told me with perfect seriousness: "I suppose you've read *Cry, the Beloved Country*? Well, I wouldn't put too much stock in that—Paton's sort of, you know, leftist."

WITH MEN SUCH AS THESE Americans guiding U.S. policy in the Republic itself—and my portrait is not an exaggeration—it is little wonder that official America has never been able to make up its mind as to what course to follow in South Africa. Washington knows that apartheid is probably unworkable and dangerous, but its envoys assure them that there is really no other way; Wall Street is sure that apartheid is uneconomical and potentially explosive, but its men on the spot tell them that there is no money to be made in opposing it. The natural ambivalence of the American public, combined with acquired ambivalence of the American representatives, combines to erode any influence the United States could have on getting the Republic out from the shadow of fear and sorrow.

There is probably no easy solution to this ambivalence. America could, of course send as ambassadors men who are more familiar with Africa, but just now these are in short supply. We could send men of exceptional intelligence and judgment who would listen to the radicals as well as the myth-makers, but if there are any of these on the top level of the foreign service they are doing jobs in more important capitals. We might even have the African desk at the State Department enunciate a firm American policy to which future officials would adhere, but the chances of any unequivocal decision coming from this department are remote.

In the long run it is probably more valuable to educate the ambivalent public than the ambivalent officials. The South African government's propaganda machine in this country is very weak—it doesn't even attempt to run a South Africa House campaign *à la* the *Sunday Times* and *Observer*, and its defensive letters in the *New York Times* are always nicely rebutted. Thus the way is clearly open for an intelligent expression of the liberal-radical point of view in whatever form seems most profitable. Of course this does take money, but \$2.80 spent in America—which, like it or not, is a considerable power—would bring more returns than a pound spent in England.

AT BOTTOM, THERE ARE ONLY two responses for the ugly girl faced with a blind date: Either she can acquiesce and try to make the best of it, or she can reject it and try for something better. America can either continue to go along with South Africa and try to make the best of it, or she can reject the Republic and try for something better. The choice is ours, but the means of persuasion are yours. ●