

LIBERAL OPINION



PARTITION

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. . . OR DEATH!

When Dr. Verwoerd opened the Nationalist Party's Natal Provincial Congress in Durban last year, he offered White South Africa his two alternatives for the future—partition or death. He went on to make it quite clear that by partition he did not mean a clean division of South Africa into Black and White, but the implementation of his own apartheid policy. However, whatever Dr. Verwoerd's view of what constitutes "partition" may be, there are a number of people who are looking to it as the ultimate saviour of the White man and there are a number of overseas journals of repute which have been canvassing this "solution" to the intractable problem which South Africa presents to the world.

It is probable that White South African protagonists of partition see in it the only hope of saving some part of South Africa as a White man's preserve. They see the continent pressing down upon them, they know that the pressure will grow, they fear to lose everything, and so they prepare to give something. They know that what apartheid offers will never relieve the

pressure from the North and so they seek to offer something better, a division of the country. They see a Black state and a White state growing up in friendship and prosperity next to one another. It is a pretty picture, but is there any substance to it?

"WHITE" THEORISTS

All partition plans so far put forward have been based on a division of South Africa thought desirable by **White** theorists. The lines are carefully drawn so that the Witwatersrand and the Free State Goldfields and the industrial areas of the Eastern and Western Cape fall into White South Africa and only Durban, of the major centres, is thrown to Black South Africa as a sop. It should be clearly understood right now that this kind of division is no answer to anything. If partition ever comes to South Africa, it will only come because White South Africans have been forced to it by a major crisis, either internal or external. It will come at a time when White South Africa feels forced to make concessions. In such a crisis it is highly unlikely that Black South Africa would accept a division which left the vast bulk of the country's wealth in White hands. It is much more likely that the White portion of a partitioned South Africa would consist of no more of her area and wealth than the White percentage of the population entitled to it.

SECURITY ?

Partition is presumably intended to bring security to White South Africa and to placate Africa and a hostile world. But what will the policy of the new White state be? Is it intended to be anything else but apartheid and White domination? Surely the only merit in partition, for those who want it, comes from the realisation that it will not be possible to have apartheid in the whole of South Africa and therefore one must retreat and have it where one can? It will be surprising if the new White state of the partitionists does not have the same

apparatus for the preservation of White "civilisation" as the old—no mixed marriages, no mixed sport, more job reservation, more Group Areas—all the laws which Africa regards as a blot on the continent and an affront to African dignity. Is there any reason to think that the laws will seem less obnoxious because the area to which they apply has been reduced?

If partition is going to be real, there is going to have to be a vast uprooting of people. Hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people are going to have to move. Where have mass removals produced anything but misery and suffering? South Africa herself spent thirty years unsuccessfully trying to move her Indian people back to India! What possible prospect is there of moving the White population of Natal and the Witwatersrand and the Free State and the Transvaal? Or the vast numbers of Africans now living in the Cape? Make no mistake, this is what true partition would require.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

The economic problems presented by partition are staggering. Where is the Johannesburg financier and the mine magnate going to find a new outlet for his talents? What is the mealie-farmer going to do without his farm, or the miner without his mine to dig? How are all these people to be absorbed into an economy based on the Western Cape, the Karroo and the Orange River? It is an inevitable consequence of any true partition of South Africa that there will be an overall drop in the standard of living everywhere and a particularly sharp fall in the agricultural productivity of Black South Africa and in the industrial prosperity of White South Africa—for Black South Africa will need White farming skill and White South Africa will need Black industrial skill and markets.

It may be argued that it will not be necessary to uproot vast numbers of people, that

most people will just stay where they are. If they do the minority problems become enormous—each White person in Black South Africa and each Black person in White South Africa a potential fuse to set off an international incident. White South Africa would be even less secure than she feels today.

HOW LONG WOULD IT LAST ?

Supposing in a moment of crisis, South Africa were to accept partition as her solution? How long would it last? Would White South Africa really be able to exist, each person taking in his neighbour's washing? For that is what it would come to. At the very best White South Africa would be a small corner of the African continent without any of the mineral and agricultural resources which at present make her rich. She would be an overgrown Group Area. It is highly unlikely that she would be more acceptable to the people of Africa because she was smaller than before. As long as her political philosophy rested on the same racial assumptions as those on which apartheid rests, she would be anathema to the whole continent. Pressure on her might be eased while partition was effected but it would be put on again as soon as the new state showed the slightest manifestation of White arrogance. Then White South Africa would be less able to resist. Her economic position would have been enormously weakened and her military position would not be much improved. She would have a shorter frontier to defend but more people to defend it against—including many new recruits who really knew what apartheid meant.

TEMPORARY PALLIATIVE

Partition should be seen now for what it is, an attempt at a moment of final crisis to preserve one small area of White domination at the bottom of Africa. It should be realised that partition means the bulk of the present Republic being absorbed into a Black state, and it should be recognised that it means a vast up-

rooting and removing of people and a general decline in living standards for all South Africans, Black and White. Most important of all, it should be realised that it can be no more than a temporary palliative, for, in the end, no state in Africa which is based on policies of White supremacy has any chance of surviving—however small it is.

In the end White people living on this continent will have to learn to live as individual members of the African community, not as members of a special group. It is time they started to learn that lesson, instead of being led up the garden path by partition theorists. The ordinary people of the Transkei have emphatically rejected racialism and come down on the side of race co-operation. What better guarantee for their future could White South Africans want than that? It is time they showed themselves brave enough to accept the hand of race co-operation, on a basis of equality, which African people have been holding out to them for so long.

THE TRANSKEI ELECTION

South Africa's English-language Press habitually interprets all national issues according to their meaning for White South Africans. Thus, when the Transkei's general election was held on 20th November, 1963, the newspapers had boiled down the extremely complicated issues at stake into a simple contest between "the multiracialist Chief Victor Poto" and "pro-apartheid Chief Kaizer Matanzima". It was made to seem that the Transkei's 880,000 Bantustan voters were going to the polls to vote simply for or against the right of White people to live and work in the Transkei as before.

The Press did, of course, by this means