

THE AMERICANS AND US

by Alan Paton

When I was the principal of Diepkloof Reformatory, a custodial system was gradually replaced by one of increasing freedom and increasing responsibility. I was lucky in that it worked, but there were exceptions. Again I was lucky in that there was only one tragic exception. An innocent woman lost her life because of my system of freedom and responsibility.

John X had earned a high degree of freedom. He was allowed a monthly home leave, and visited his mother who worked on the East Rand. He broke into a white-owned house, and while he was there the woman of the house returned and found him in the pantry. There was only one exit, and she blocked it. He took up one of the jars of preserves and brought it down on her head. He escaped and she died. He was caught, sentenced to death, and executed. It was a bitter blow to me, though out of ten thousand home leaves, this was the only one that ended in an innocent death.

John X was not a killer, but he had been trapped. Had he yielded, his punishment would have been comparatively light. But the powers of reason do not operate in such a situation.

The Afrikaner Nationalists are trapped too, in a trap of their own making. Four Prime Ministers, Daniel Malan, J. G. Strijdom, Hendrik Verwoerd, John Vorster, have created for their people such an overwhelming security that they won't easily get out of it, and indeed might not be able to get out of it at all. It's a trap, a cage, a prison, a grave. It's what W. A. de Klerk in his book *THE PURITANS IN AFRICA*, called the Edifice. It was built at great cost, in money and energy, behind a veritable forest of scaffolding, which swarmed with tens of thousands of workmen, erecting a great edifice that would reach heaven itself. The scaffolding was unbelievably ugly, but the faithful were told that one day it would all be taken away, revealing the Edifice in all its strength and beauty. But, says, Mr de Klerk, eventually it grew into the building, and now it can't be taken away at all.

I myself hold the view that for the Afrikaner Nationalist to come out of his prison and to begin dismantling — not the

scaffolding but the Edifice itself — is a task of psychological difficulty the magnitude of which can hardly be over-estimated. It is a task which quite dwarfs the actual building of the Edifice. To build the Edifice required determination and devotion, and as many of us know, a great deal of arrogance, and worst of all, an incomprehensible indifference to the price that others had to pay to give security to the Afrikaner. To put it bluntly, it was necessary for others to suffer so that the Edifice could be built, and their suffering was accepted as the price that had to be paid for the realisation of so noble an end. But to pull the Edifice down requires from the Afrikaner Nationalist an entirely different set of qualities and values, one of which is humility, a commodity which has been in very short supply for the last thirty years.

Just what the **enlightened** Nationalists, the **verligtes**, thought while the Edifice was being built, one does not know. One knows very well what people like Professor B. B. Keet thought, because he wrote a book to tell us; he didn't wobble about, he condemned forthrightly the new fierce laws, the Mixed Marriages Act, the Group Areas Act, the Bantu Education Act. But a highly intelligent man like Dr W. M. Eiselen thought it was all wonderful; quite recently he died, but we don't know if he died still thinking it was wonderful. It is probable that he did, for he was one of the chief architects of the Edifice. But perhaps on his deathbed he repented him of his sin, which was nothing less than **hubris**, the arrogance that puts a man above his God or gods.

It was June 16th 1976 that made the Afrikaner Nationalist realise that the Edifice wasn't a safe building at all. And now it would appear that the **verligtes** want to make drastic changes in it, and that the **verkramptes** think it's very fine as it is, and sitting in the middle, holding these two factions in a kind of immovable equilibrium, is the fourth Nationalist Prime Minister. Just where General van den Bergh comes in, or Pik Botha, no one really knows. Pik Botha is able to swallow a very large number of indirect repudiations and setbacks, and then to come back fighting with an almost dog-like devotion to that enigmatic eminence that broods so darkly over us all. There is

also a theory that if Mr Vorster leaned too heavily to the left, he would break the party, but that if he leaned too heavily to the right, that's the way the party would go. What deepens the enigma for outside observers — of which I am one — is that Mr Vorster is the man who spoke of the event "too ghastly to contemplate", a remark which seems to show a degree of perceptiveness, and certainly one which Dr Verwoerd would not have made.

June 16th 1976 convinced many Afrikaners of the need to change. But there are others who are incapable of accepting — logically, but more deeply psychologically — the importance of reform (abolition one could hardly expect at first) of the draconian and cruel laws. And it is these psychologically disabled people who prevent the Afrikaner from adapting, intelligently to the changing world. Or to put it in another way, it is these people who will make inevitable the destruction of Afrikanerdom.

The Liberal Party often warned of the destruction of Afrikanerdom. The "LONG VIEW" in CONTACT warned of it twenty and more years ago. Whether it can be avoided, I don't know. But I still feel it a duty to warn of it.

It soon became clear to the majority of South Africans that if Mr Carter became President, the American attitude towards white South Africa would harden. Many of them welcomed this. They felt that Dr Kissinger had kept quiet about change here because he wanted Mr Vorster's help to get change in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe and South West Africa-Namibia. Yet the problem was just as urgent for us.

I welcomed it also. I believed — and believe — that pressure from the United States could result in constructive change. I wanted to avoid only one thing, namely the danger that America would exert her pressure in such a way that she would make it impossible for the Nationalist to make changes at all.

I regarded the demand for immediate majority rule in a unitary state — expressed with differing degrees of clarity by Mr Young, Vice-President Mondale, and President Carter himself — as a demand that the Nationalist would be unable to accept. He would be like the boy caught in the pantry, he would try to get out, he would cause the death of others, and in the end would bring about his own. I decided that when I visited America in May 1977 I would try to see Mr Vance. I was successful in this, and told Mr Vance of my view that the Nationalist — not only through stubbornness but also through psychological inability — would be totally unable to accept the demand for immediate majority rule in a unitary state. What is more, I felt it would deter him from making any meaningful change at all. Pressure from the nations of the North, assisted by Cuba and equipped by Russia, would finally result in war. In this war the Afrikaner would be destroyed from without and from within, but so would countless others. Our economy, much more sophisticated than that of Mozambique or Angola, would grind to a halt. Our ports, our cities, our railways, our medical services, our industries, our agriculture would collapse. How long the struggle would take, no one could predict, but the grief and desolation would be immense. The Western nations have made it clear to us that they would not intervene to save White South Africa from defeat in a war brought about by its own intransigence. It seems to me therefore inevitable that in such a conflict Afrikanerdom would finally be defeated, and that means, finally be destroyed.

I have no wish to see Afrikanerdom destroyed, because a great deal of the cost would be paid by others. Nor have I any wish to see Afrikaner overlordship continue. Nor have I any wish to live under a government imposed on us by Communist nations, with the aid of South African exiles, some of whom are implacable enemies of the values by which I live. Therefore I urged on Mr Vance that American pressure should be exercised "with skill and wisdom". **I did not urge America to go easy with the Nationalists.** This is no time to go easy, but I reject utterly a future that can be secured only by devastation. And what is more, I would not expect the triumph of justice through the weapons of destruction. I do not share the radical view that nothing can be built until everything is destroyed.

Lastly, I have no personal wish for the destruction of Afrikanerdom. I certainly have nothing for which to thank our rulers. Through their own arrogance they have created for themselves what sometimes appears to be an insoluble problem. They have caused much suffering, much more than the hated British ever did. But the rise of Afrikanerdom has been a great historical drama. I have no wish that it should turn into a tragedy.

WHY GO TO SEE MR VANCE AT ALL?

There have been many criticisms, not only of my predictions of what will happen if the Nationalist makes no meaningful change, but of my decision to try to see Mr Vance. From our rulers there has been no public criticism at all, but one must not imagine that silence gives approval. The first criticism is obvious. Why should the West show any consideration for the Afrikaner? What consideration has the Afrikaner shown for black people? Under the Group Areas Act he took away much of their property. Under the policy of resettlement he moved thousands of people away from cherished homes, and dumped them on the veld, in tents, and iron huts, on miserable pieces of ground. Under the policy of influx control he broke up countless families. He seemed to have no compassion at all.

This is true. But something else is equally true, that if he is driven into a corner, he will destroy much more. **I choose to use what influence I have to prevent this.**

The second criticism is equally obvious. In the days of the Liberal Party I supported universal suffrage in a unitary state. I now think it must come through federation or confederation or some such arrangement. Why have I ratted? Am I creeping back into the laager? Or am I hanging on to my possessions? I should like to place on record that I think the laager is the place we must at all costs get out of. It is the cage, the prison, the grave, the Edifice. The Liberal party set itself the task of persuading the white electorate, and failed. But universal suffrage and a unitary state imposed from without is not — for me — compatible with a liberal ideal.

I should also like to say that I believe that the just and eventual outcome will be a unitary state. But if it is achieved at the cost of the destruction of Afrikanerdom, the unity will not last long.

Some critics think that my estimate of Afrikaner resolution is quite wrong. They argue that when the Afrikaner sees that continued resistance will mean his destruction, he will undergo a personality change and be sweet and affable. I don't believe it. But even if I did, I would ask

myself the further question, **and who then would care if he was affable or not?**

A LAST WARNING

I have already written about the danger from the North, if no meaningful changes were made, and of course the danger of unrest from within. Yet this danger would be doubled if the nations of the West used their economic weapons against us. It is my belief that they do not want to do this, because it would play yet further into the hands of those nations, who would be ready to destroy us militarily. Yet if we do nothing they dare not refrain from doing it; their interests in the rest of Africa are beginning to outweigh

their interests in South Africa. They want us to make significant changes, not just because President Carter is a moralist, but because it is not in their interests to see Southern Africa plunged into war.

If Afrikanerdom compelled the West to use economic sanctions, its doom would be finally sealed. It's only hope of survival is to begin the dismantling of Apartheid, to begin removing the gross disparities of wealth and possessions, to abolish Bantu education and improve black education, and to consider the whole question of our constitutional future, not unilaterally, **but in consultation with the representatives of all our peoples.**

Can the National Party do this? I do not know the answer to that question. □

THE SEA COAST OF BOLIVIA

by Edgar Brookes

Some of the most pleasant scenes in Shakespeare take place beside the sea coast of Bohemia. Bolivia, a land-locked country, has about it something of the same romantic quality of the Shakespearean reference in "The Winter's Tale", and it was in our winter that some of the daily papers carried the story of an offer by Bolivia to receive 150 000 "white Africans". The motives behind this offer were undoubtedly good and it is not altogether fair to treat so humanitarian a proposal lightly. Still it would be worth while to see what fate would hold for the 150 000 "white Africans" if they did emigrate to Bolivia. Of the South American countries Bolivia has, with the exception of Paraguay, the biggest percentage of Indian blood among its inhabitants. Even in the ruling class many, if they immigrated to South Africa, would be designated as "Coloured".

The two main towns in Bolivia are named respectively La Paz and Sucre which, from my imperfect knowledge of Spanish I would think to mean "Peace" and "Sugar". It sounds like a prospering version of the Natal North Coast. But there are differences. The Andes rise high above

the Bolivian plateau and UNESCO once considered the effect of these high altitudes on the birth rate and the quality of the children born there.

The total population of Bolivia exceeds five million, so the 150 000 "white Africans" would be less than one-thirtieth of the total population. The demographic factors would be harder on the "white Africans" than if they remained under a black rule of Rhodesia, Namibia or South Africa.

We ask ourselves what would be the point of die-hard Afrikaner people going to a country ruled by "Coloured" persons in which they would be a still smaller minority than in their own home countries. Perhaps after all it is right to treat the whole issue as one of Shakespeare's romances rather than of practical politics.

Some years ago "Punch" published a statement that one of the new cars manufactured in America reached no less than 2 486 revolutions a minute. "Punch's" comment on this was, "Bolivia must look to her laurels." Perhaps if Dr Albert Hertzog leads his followers there Bolivia may have a chance of beating the motorcar. □