

THOSE WHO ARE CONFRONTING APARTHEID SHOULD
KNOW THEY ARE NOT ALONE|

Statement at press conference of the French Liaison Committee against
Apartheid on 9 November 1966 in Paris

by

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Today there is in Africa a cancer that could quickly spread all over. It is Apartheid, a policy systematically practised by the Government of South Africa.

Apartheid is both a practice and a theory. The practice is known euphemistically as "separate development". In other words, it is the enforcement by a minority of three million people of European origin of a policy designed to keep in slavery (the term is not too strong) 14 million inhabitants of African or Asian origin or of mixed descent.

These 14 million inhabitants have no political rights. They cannot vote, hold meetings or belong to trade unions. They are obliged to carry on their person passbooks to justify their presence in various places, passbooks so demanding that they cannot comply with all the requirements and are always potential candidates for arrest. At the same time, they are the focus of a "separate development" or tribalism policy designed by the central Government to prevent the awakening of a national consciousness.

They have no economic rights and no rights of ownership: 75 percent of the population is confined or is supposed to be confined to 12 percent of the land (86 percent for whites). Even so, in the Bantustans - the areas where they are brought together - they are mere tenants on the precious little land allotted to them, which actually belongs to the Government. Elsewhere, they are concentrated, cooped up in townships, which are part shanty town, part concentration camp; they are let out, only with the pass, to go and work in the white city and get out again. This is a rejection of urbanisation. They are denied the right to live in the city even though they are city workers. They find too that their professional qualifications are rejected; in other words, the Job Reservation Act reserving skilled occupations for whites prohibits non-whites from moving beyond the status of manual or semi-skilled workers. A few Coloureds get round this rule because that is in the interests of the large companies, but in general the white working class makes advancement impossible.

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The blacks have no cultural rights. True, the Government of South Africa boasts a 70 percent school enrolment ratio for Africans, but in fact, according to the former Prime Minister Mr. Verwoerd, they are taught what befits their status: first, that a black is inferior to a white, which means that a black is inferior to a man, which means that blacks are subhuman. That is what they are taught in an educational system for which they are charged to boot. They pay to learn that they are subhuman and in return are given the Bible to read. The result is that by the second year, only 20 percent of the pupils are still attending school, and by the third year, only 2 percent.

Forced labour

So these culturally, politically and economically deprived men live in a state of constant intimidation and danger. To begin with, their families are broken up. The African family is broken up because of the notorious apartheid laws of which I will give you a glimpse.

For example, an African who was born in a town, who has always lived there without interruption, but who leaves it, if only for two weeks, loses the right to return and stay more than 72 hours. If he defies that ban, he is committing an offence punishable by imprisonment, and he is indeed imprisoned. An African who from birth has always lived without interruption in the same town does not have the right to let his married daughter, his son over the age of 18 or his grandchildren stay at his house for more than 72 hours. An African who was born in a town, who has lived there without interruption for 14 years and who has worked for the same employer for nine years cannot have his wife, his daughter or his 18-year-old son stay in his house, if they were born somewhere else. These offences which the Africans are constantly being made to commit perpetually land them in the hands of the police and, at the same time, turn them into forced labour fodder.

There are 25 official prison farms; but in fact there are many more. Any farmer can request farm-hands from among Africans arrested for passbook offences, on condition that the farmer puts up a gaol-house on his land where the workers could be confined at night. Farmers are never denied that right; so today approximately 50 percent of the white farmers can be said to be using forced labour provided by the police. The purpose of this practice is to build up virtually cost-free manpower reserves.

This structure of politics and practice which we call apartheid is obliged to rely on police terror tactics. Habeas corpus is virtually abolished for 14 million inhabitants. The townships are subjected to never-ending police raids, sometimes every night for weeks. There are searches, beatings and rough-and-tumble arrests. Any person likely to be a witness for the prosecution can be held at a police station for 180 days without being brought before a judge. Naturally, during those 180 days, the police do not abstain from acts of torture. Trials are then held in camera.

In practice, an African has no way to protect himself. He is constantly a suspect -- and a suspect who can, at a moment's notice, be arrested and detained for years. Very often too a man who has served his time is kept in prison under the excellent pretext that he will thereby be protected from his enemies and also spared the temptation of relapsing into the political transgression he had committed.

This then is the practice of apartheid. The practice is justified by a theory: across-the-board racism, the absolute superiority of the white race over all other races. This doctrine is created by circumstances themselves. The need to obtain cheap labour at zero-level wages leads virtually to the maintenance of slaves. The result is that the South African white quite naturally describes as subhuman one whom he does treat like a subhuman being.

Fear, fear everywhere

This ideology is nothing more than the very product of the economic system and of practice. But it rebounds on itself, since it makes the white man treat himself like a subhuman being, by, first of all, developing his racism on all fronts. There is no country where anti-semitism is stronger and more flaunted than South Africa. There is no love lost on the English, who are called English Jews. That brings to mind something we have heard before. In addition, terror tactics are used against white liberals themselves. There is a Suppression of Communism Act under which anyone can be arrested. Because of the 180 days in detention to which even whites are liable if they are suspected of taking an interest in the cause of blacks, an atmosphere of terror exists and thrives in white circles themselves. Whites spend their time in angry fear of blacks; they spend their time in fear of themselves - in fear of being denounced.

Such terror is not conducive to genuine development of the superior qualities of the white race. Moreover, the same terror tactics are used in the intellectual field. Most foreign instruments of culture are prohibited. A number of books - naturally those of Karl Marx foremost among them - are banned. There is no television. The country's literature is of no account. People live a dreary life of luxury and gradually suffocate. The result is that sociological surveys have shown the level of secondary education for whites to be abnormally low. Similarly, since there are not enough whites, the law reserving "skilled" occupations for whites leads to a shortage of skilled labour, and South Africa is obliged to arrange for immigrants from various other white countries. In a word, it can be argued that the very principle of racism leads the whites to become, as a result of racism, quite inferior to those they oppress. For whites and for blacks life is hell, the difference being that it is the whites who wanted hell.

But I said earlier that this sore was in danger of becoming an all-pervasive cancer. First, there is the fact of a tacit agreement and real links between South Africa, Portugal and the illegal authorities of Southern Rhodesia. This entente is more one of offence than of defence. Many Afrikaners do not conceal their vision of imperialism spreading throughout Africa.

Then again this idea that a strong State can practise apartheid, that is to say, racism reaching the point of its most relentless effects, with complete impunity, is one of the reasons for the re-emergence of Nazism in Europe and the United States of America. The idea inspires young fascist movements; the latter, which, for their part, are finding a real base in Europe and the United States, proclaim in their manifestos, among the first three or four principles, their defence of apartheid and the Government of South Africa.

Admirable courage

In Africa itself, the African States have condemned apartheid at the Organisation of African Unity. Their indignation threatens a dangerous modification of their approach to multiracial unity and, with good reason, the trust they have so far reposed in their European nationals.

With admirable courage and despite all the difficulties, a number of organisations are struggling against the wretched regime. These organisations are established admittedly under the worst conditions. There are still quite a few; unity has not been achieved; they are being decimated; their leaders emerge, resist and are soon in prison or off the scene. But they are continuing the struggle. Under the direct pressure of circumstances and terror tactics, they have slowly moved from non-violent resistance to the setting up of units and activities that will entail violence. The day that conflict breaks out, there will be not a civil war, but a war of independence, a war of liberation, which could bring about a conflagration throughout Africa, for it is inconceivable that black States would let their brothers be massacred without intervening; and the conflict would not be confined to Africa alone. There is no doubt that at that point world peace would be in direct jeopardy.

The United Nations has reacted. Isn't the Organisation founded on the principle of eliminating all forms of racial discrimination? As early as 1962, the General Assembly, in its November resolution, requested (the word speaks volumes) Member States to break off diplomatic relations with South Africa, to boycott its goods and not to trade with it. What is the situation today? The Special Committee established by the United Nations to examine the question of South Africa's racial policy has stated that South Africa has been encouraged to pursue its disastrous policy by the persistent opposition on the part of certain major Powers, which are South Africa's main trading partners. That was in August 1966. Which countries are the main partners? The United Nations text names the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, Italy, Canada and France.

One has to clean up one's own backyard. Since we are in France, let us see what characterises this partnership as far as France is concerned, beginning with trade exchanges. The total volume of trade remains modest, but doubled between 1961 and 1965. As to investments, Renault, Peugeot, Berliet and Thomson-Houston have industrial branches in South Africa; France is the third largest investor, after the United Kingdom

and the United States. Scientific and technical cooperation is moving forward. The French have set up a satellite tracking station near Pretoria. South African experts are going to be trained in space research at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (National Scientific Research Centre). French technicians have been sent for the oil-drilling operations that have just begun in South Africa. All this is taking place in a climate of "friendship". In March 1963, the representative of Thomson-Houston said during a visit to South Africa: "The political situation is good and the Government has things well under control. There is no reason for that to change".

The fact is that the French Government is the first to encourage relations with South Africa. On January 7, 1966, France refused to U Thant's question concerning the non-application of the arms embargo -- for a very good reason: our country has never stopped selling arms to South Africa. It is selling Panhard armoured vehicles, it is selling Alouette helicopters, it is selling Mystere and Mirage aircraft. The Thomson-Houston company has a contract to design and test some 20 solar batteries for guided missiles. In justification of this attitude, we have the remarkable statement by Mr. Roux, a UNR member of Parliament, on his return from a visit to the country of hatred and fear, whose entire society feels sick: "This Republic belongs to Western culture". Either this is naivete, or else it is a strange admission of what we are.

The French Government, for its part, maintains that it is simply applying here its principle of non-interference in internal affairs. But there is, mind you, a sinister side to this joke. What! A country chooses its government freely when 75 percent of its population are the slaves of the other 25 percent and have no right to vote or to hold meetings? When the 75 percent cannot express their views without being put in prison, how can we say that this country has chosen its government freely? The sale of arms to the masters so that they can continue their bloody domination of the slaves, that is the interference, that is the attack on national sovereignty. Such sovereignty must not be for whites only; it might at best be expressed by means of universal suffrage, but the latter does not exist. The French Government's principle is therefore totally spurious.

On several occasions, aircraft have machine-gunned peaceful blacks in South Africa. Who is to say that next time it will not be our own aircraft, and how can we allow the French Government, which has proclaimed its solidarity with the countries of the third world, with the newly independent nations, to be an accessory to the acts of terror and slaughter to which colonisers are subjecting colonised people at the tip of Africa to prevent them from achieving independence?

Those responsible and the accessories

The letter from Mr. Marof, Chairman of the Special Committee mandated by the United Nations to examine the race question in South Africa, which will shortly be read out to you in full, includes a passage to which we should be particularly sensitive: "It is painful for me," he writes, "to have to point to loop-holes in France's official attitude which do not bode at all well for liberty, for the equality so dear to

the French people. By increasing its trade with South Africa, by its massive shipments of deadly weapons to the racist regime in Pretoria, by its guilty complicity at the United Nations and its defiance of all the resolutions adopted on the question of apartheid, the French Government is disillusioning even its most ardent supporters".

Our Liaison Committee proposes to fight to make the French Government cease its outrageous behaviour and apply the United Nations recommendations to the letter. What precisely can we do to help those organisations which have long since been formed to resist terror in South Africa? It is not for me to say, but we can begin by mentioning one thing we can do: provide information. We must first inform the public, and that is why we have asked you here today. We must first inform the French public, because if it knew how men were treating other men in South Africa, it could not fail to rally to our struggle. It could not fail to do so because, even after the crimes perpetrated during the Algerian war, the French settlers in Algeria look like angels beside the Government of South Africa. We cannot be given a guilt complex; we were bad, but they are one hundred times worse.

Our Committee therefore proposes first to inform the public. It then proposes by various means, to affirm our solidarity with the resistance movements - not only verbal solidarity, but practical and effective solidarity. Those men who are heroically going it alone in the struggle must know that they are not alone, that in addition to the condemnation of apartheid by the United Nations, private organisations the world over are with them - organisations whose members will include major trade unions, churches, and men and women in general without distinction.

If we were to fail, not only here in France but everywhere else also, if we were to fail to draw the majority of the public into this struggle, with a profound and sincere commitment, we would be responsible (and accessories), through our passiveness, for an intolerable and virulent strain of neo-nazism which, originating in South Africa, will infect even Europe. This is what we must understand by the highly significant words which Mr. Marof uses in his letter: "France's official attitude does not bode at all well for liberty and equality". Mark well what this means: if such practices are tolerated, if we continue to tolerate them, then South Africa, which is today the hub of fascism, will send the Fascists back to us to teach us a painful lesson.

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