

# *ALLISTER in WONDERLAND*

By ALLISTER SPARKS

A Talk given by Mr. Sparks to the Black Sash in Johannesburg

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**B**EING A NEWSPAPERMAN I am headline conscious, so have been casting about in my mind for a suitable title for this talk. Finally I hit upon the thought that it should be called . . . "Allister in Wonderland".

This is most appropriate, for a journey into the Bantustans is really a journey into a fantasy world — a world that exists only in the imagination. And I can assure you that the kind of discussion that took place around the bar on this train each night — involving City Councillors from Johannesburg, Pretoria, Vanderbijlpark, members of the Department of Bantu Administration, a couple of liberal newspapermen and one good lady from the Black Sash, plus a few businessmen trying very hard to be businesslike in that company — well, I can assure you that this nightly gathering was not far removed from a Mad Hatter's Tea Party.

Then again, this entire concept of Bantustans and separate development rather reminds me of the Cheshire Cat. It is there; you can see it; it has a voice. But if you try to engage it in conversation; if you start examining it and asking questions . . . why then, you find that it starts to go hazy and disappears — until in the end nothing is left but its grin.

So this evening I am going to take you with me into this wonderland. We shall begin with this substantial—even elaborate—philosophy of separate development. We shall then go through these Bantustans, asking questions and looking at the vital statistics as we go along. And at the end, when nothing is left of the whole great vision, I shall leave you to judge the quality of the grin — whether it is enigmatic like the Mona Lisa, or cynical, or just plain sickly.

But we must be fair. We must try to be as objective as possible in making our assessment of what this Bantustan policy amounts to — what progress there has been and what potentialities there are. I am not here to be destructive; it is not that I have always opposed the Nats and cannot now admit that they may have something. Look, I am a White South African and if separate development really is going to work I shall be delighted because I enjoy the privileges it gives me. Why should I be stirred by the slogan, "White man arise, you have nothing

to lose but a fancy way of life"? I was born here, as were both my parents and their parents as well; I have in my bones all the generations of prejudice that every South African is heir to — I am under no illusions about how difficult integration would be.

But this above all — I want security, for myself and for my children. If separate development is not going to work then I must find that out now. It is no good enjoying all the privileges of being White today, and then using separate development as a kind of tranquilising drug to stop me worrying about what tomorrow may bring. A shot of political LSD, as it were, that sends me on a trip into the wonderland of Oom Daan de Wet Nel. No, that is no good: if separate development is not going to work then I must face up to the alternative — however difficult and unpleasant that may be.

Right away let me make one thing clear: I accept that, in theory, separate development does represent a possible solution in a situation where people of widely divergent cultural backgrounds have to live in one country. But if the country is to be divided up between the various racial groups, then it must be fairly divided. And if they are to develop towards a separate freedom, then it must be a genuine freedom. These two conditions are essential; without them the whole thing becomes a humbug, which can only aggra-

vate rather than alleviate the tension between White and non-White.

But if these conditions are present, then it does represent a solution. Perhaps not the best solution: in a sense a separation of the races represents a shrinking of the human spirit, a refusal to meet the great human challenge of the second half of the twentieth century; it should really be a last-resort solution, to be used only when bolder and more inspiring efforts to bring about harmonious co-existence have failed.

Nevertheless, it IS a solution — in theory.

But what of it in practice? This is the crux of the matter. The Nationalist Government has been in power for twenty years; it is fourteen years since the Tomlinson Commission published its exhaustive blueprint for separate development; and a full decade since Dr. Verwoerd proclaimed as official policy the idea of independent Bantustans. It is time to look for results. If the policy is real and not a rainbow, there should be something to show by now.

I was in standard seven when the National Party came to power. I was a cub reporter when Professor Tomlinson was writing his report. Now I am approaching middle age and I am an Assistant Editor. I think I am entitled to ask for results. I cannot follow slogans for ever.

So let us look now for these results . . .

The first thing I discovered about the Bantustans is that, with the exception of the Transkei, they do not exist — self-governing or otherwise (actually discovered is the wrong word because I knew it all along, but when you see a thing in real life the impact is so much greater).

These homelands of which we hear so much are a host of tiny spots, some no bigger than a few square miles of mission land, scattered like a rash across the face of Africa. Professor Tomlinson counted 264 fourteen years ago and warned that unless they were consolidated the whole separate development plan would become meaningless. In fact consolidation on this scale is a non-starter. Any attempt to move the thousands upon thousands of people involved, the most conservative and immovable in the country, would not only prove prohibitively expensive but would also arouse massive public wrath. As Mr. Vosloo made plain enough to the perturbed men of Sabra a few months ago, the Government has no intention of even attempting to tackle it. It will move Africans — oh yes — when this happens to suit the convenience of Whites, and to give the impression that something is being done. But can you imagine a Limehill for Whites? That will be the day. Yet unless Whites are shifted, and in very large numbers indeed, the homelands can never be consolidated. They will remain fragmented areas, like pieces of shattered crockery.

Now what does this look like in real life, as it were? Take the Ciskei. It is the smallest of all the Bantustans, and even if it could be consoli-

dated and raised to independence it could aspire to nothing greater than to be a kind of African Luxembourg. Yet even this little-bitty thing is broken up into 20 fragments scattered from the Free State border to a few isolated bits west of Port Elizabeth. In between are White towns like Alice and Fort Beaufort and Queenstown and King Williamstown, and a whole lot of pretty prosperous White farms. As we were driven through in railway buses none of us was ever sure whether we were inside or outside the much-discussed "Bantu area." There are white spots inside the Black spots and Black spots inside the White spots. Sometimes it was Bantustan on the left of the road, and South Africa on the right; sometimes the other way around; and sometimes the boundary was a farmer's fence. But most times we didn't know where it was — and if you were naughty enough to pop the question as you were bowling along the road from one scheduled stop to the next, you discovered that the Government officials showing us round didn't know either.

In the Northern Transvaal the situation became even more complicated. I had always imagined Vendaland to be something like the Transkei, the only other Bantustan to have geographic coherence. Well, there is a good compact blob of "Bantu area" all right, but I discovered when I got there that it was not all Vendaland. There are bits of Shangaan and North Sotho Bantustan stuck in the middle of it, and there are bits of Venda land in Shangaan and North Sotho territory. This on top of the broken-china effect which you have in the Ciskei, that has thrown white splinters into black areas and black splinters into white areas.

I asked for a map. Everybody asked for a map. It produced quite a lot of embarrassment because nobody wanted to give us a map. We complained that we couldn't make head or tail out of what we were being shown unless we could see the whole complex on some kind of map. I suppose I complained most loudly of all. The Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner drew me aside, apologised, and explained that they didn't want to give us a map because some damn Pressman might get hold of it and make propaganda overseas. The Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner for the Northern Transvaal was more accommodating: he produced a map. When I saw it I was quite genuinely astonished at the tribal mix-up. I asked him how it would be possible to sort them all out in consolidated areas. "You can't", was his answer. But then I asked him: "What can they possibly mean politically, as independent states, if they are not to be consolidated?"

"That's for them to worry about," he said, pointing in the direction of Pretoria. He was a civil servant — and a good one — doing the best he could on the spot.

But for the purpose of this discussion let us make an assumption — a very big assumption —

but let us make it anyway. Let us assume that full and complete consolidation of the Bantustans IS possible. Let us do more: let us not only assume that it is possible, let us assume that it has been accomplished.

This brings us back once again to Professor Tomlinson and his report. There are at present a total of 4,133,000 Africans living in the reserves. Tomlinson calculated, that, with an energetic development programme, these areas would be able to accommodate 9 million people by the turn of the century. In order to do this, he said, 50,000 new jobs would have to be opened up inside the Bantustans each year between 1954 and the year 2000. Of those 50,000 new jobs, 20,000 would have to be in secondary industry — this industrial activity would generate sufficient tertiary activity to provide the other 30,000 jobs.

20,000 industrial jobs, each year, until the year 2000. Let us look now, fourteen years later, at how many there are. The Transkei, as I have said, is really the only Bantustan; it is the only one where there has been any industrial development at all. It has been in existence in a more or less coherent state, and even with some degree of autonomy, since 1882. It has had partial self-government for 4½ years. It is the showpiece of separate development. I have here the report of the Transkei Department of the Interior for last year. The total number of industrial jobs for Africans in existence throughout the Transkei in all that time — including the building industry — 1,700.

There are no industries at all in the Ciskei. On our tours we saw a cane furniture factory at Hammanskraal, north of Pretoria. Throughout the rest of our journey through the northern and eastern Transvaal we neither saw nor heard of another industry. We did not go to Natal, so I cannot tell you what the situation is there — but I would be surprised if it were significantly different.

Of course the government contends that its policy is to help establish industries not so much inside the Bantustans as on their borders, inside the white areas. Of the effects of this on the prospects for genuine independence I shall say nothing. At the moment I am concerned with statistics. The border industries programme has been under way since 1960. In more than seven years it has opened up a total of 44,600 new jobs for Africans — that includes such large and questionable additions as Rosslyn, which is really an extension of Pretoria's industrial complex sited near a tiny spot of Bantu land — a far flung fragment of the Tswana Bantustan, most of which adjoins Botswana — and the Pine-town complex near Durban. It also includes the Phalaborwa copper development. But even with these additions the total of 44,600 jobs in seven years falls far short of Tomlinson's demand for 20,000 jobs each year. And remember, he wanted them inside the Bantustans, and these jobs

are outside. What is more they have been opened up at a total cost of R220 million — which works out at an average of R5 million per job.

Looking at these figures, if Tomlinson's development programme is to be met than R100 million should be spent each year on industrial development ALONE in the Bantustans. Yet in the last budget the Government voted a total of only R38 million for ALL Bantustan development — a figure which, it is worth noting, is a good deal less than we spent on munitions.

Now the Government's answer to this one is that agriculture must be developed before industry can be. As the Honourable Hans Abraham puts it with such eloquence, he says: "Man, if you put an industry where nothing happens you will have a happening." O.K., he has a point, of sorts. The problem is that it is inordinately difficult to reform African agricultural methods. Tribal tradition, the whole structure of African society with its emphasis on the extended family and its investment in personal relations, is something which grew out of the necessities and uncertainties of a subsistence economy. And so the whole of tribal philosophy, from the *lobola* or bride price to the duties of wives and children, is intimately interwoven with the tribe's land and its animals and its methods of farming. If you are going to introduce the fencing of land and the culling of cattle and the rotation of crops, then you are going to run into the full resistance of tribal tradition. Fair enough if you are prepared to break down that tradition — it might be the quickest way of hauling Africans en masse into the twentieth century. But when for political reasons you are simultaneously trying to resurrect and prop up tribal traditionalism, then you have an awful conflict.

Now those of you here who have anything to do with factories know very well that the African is a pretty good factory operative. He may be a lousy farmer, but he is an efficient factory operative. He is quick to learn and he is competent — and for the simple reason that on the factory floor there are no problems of tribal traditionalism that have to be overcome before he can learn to do the job well. At the Letaba Citrus Estates in the eastern Transvaal (which now rates as a border industry) there is a fruit juice cannery and a box-making plant. Here Africans can be seen side by side in their capacities as farmers and factory operatives. The manager of the estates said he was amazed at the difference — and he was quite at a loss to understand it.

But there it is, a difference of the first importance. If the Bantustans are to be hauled up fast, then either tribal traditionalism must be smashed or the development must be primarily industrial. At the moment it is neither, and the result is utter stagnation.

Before leaving this subject, let us look at some specific instances of agricultural development.

At Qamata, in Kaiser Matanzima's Emigrant Tembuland region of the Transkei, is the biggest single Bantustan development undertaking of all.

It is an elaborate irrigation project involving a large dam — bigger than the Hartebeestpoort Dam — a diversion weir, a tunnel, a number of subsidiary dams and an extensive system of concrete canals. When the scheme is completed 2,356 African farmers will be settled on 1½ morgen plots each with a potential yield of R450 a year.

In other words it is costing R3,000 to give each man an income potential of R37.50 a month (that is in the unlikely event of his turning out to be an efficient farmer). He could earn half as much merely by investing the money in a building society. In fact he would probably do a whole lot better, since he is bound to turn out to be an inefficient farmer.

In the Ciskei, near Keiskammahock, is the Gxulu Irrigation Scheme. It is not as costly as the Qamata scheme, but it too is a monument to the hopelessness of the overall task. It has taken eight years to establish the scheme, and now it gives 80 farmers an average income of R215 a year. The Government is particularly proud of this achievement: it has surveyed the whole of the Ciskei and earmarked spots where similar irrigation projects can be undertaken. Altogether it has plans that will eventually place 0.1 per cent of the total area of the Ciskei under irrigation. And as I have already said, there is not a single factory in the Ciskei. In the Northern and Eastern Transvaal the pattern is exactly the same — irrigation projects to place farmers on 1½ morgen plots where they can earn (in this instance) R120 a year. That and no factories. With the exception of the Transkei and part of Venda land these are not high rainfall regions — but the development has to be agricultural, and it has to be intensive agriculture. It is like trying to turn dust bowls into Denmark.

SEE NOW HOW THE CHESHIRE CAT'S FACE IS BEGINNING TO GO A LITTLE HAZY?

But we are in generous mood — you have to be to get along with all those Pretoria City Councillors around the bar — so let us make another assumption for the sake of the discussion. And this time it is a very large assumption indeed. We have already assumed that consolidation has been accomplished, now let us assume that Professor Tomlinson's rate of development is being achieved . . . that those 50,000 jobs a year will somehow be opened up before the turn of the century, and that the Bantustans will by then be able to accommodate 9,000,000 Africans.

At the moment, as I have said, these areas hold an estimated 4,133,000 people. Tomlinson reckoned his programme would push it up to



9,000,000 by the year 2,000. Fine. Now let us look at the population projection for the year 2000. The figures I am going to quote are those of the Bureau of Census and Statistics, published only a few months ago.

Total African population then 28,000,000.

7,000,000 Whites.

6,000,000 Coloureds.

1,500,000 Asians.

Subtract the 9,000,000 Africans in the Bantustans and what are you left with:

7,000,000 Whites and 26½ million non-Whites — almost exactly the same as our present ratio of four-to-one.

After all the agony and expense, after half a century of effort, and even after making these very large and improbable assumptions in our discussion here, we have achieved . . . precisely nothing.

Back in wonderland (or is it Through the Looking Glass this time) we will have joined the Red Queen in running faster and faster while staying in the same place.

But, since we are being generous, we might as well go the whole hog, let us make the supreme concession. Let us assume that the Bantustans can somehow, by some miracle, be developed to the point where they are able to accommodate so many Africans that we can look forward to the day when there will be a majority of Whites in what is fondly called "White" South Africa. A tremendous assumption, you'll agree. Yet even when it is made, even then the policy does not become workable. Because our economy requires that the Africans must come to the cities in increasing numbers. There are acute manpower shortages as it is and no amount of im-

migration or Botha babies can fill all the new jobs that are opening up each year.

So that even if the Bantustans could accommodate all these non-Whites, we could not afford to let them do so.

**AND IF YOU LOOK, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, YOU WILL SEE THAT THE CAT HAS DISAPPEARED.**

We have found that at every stage the thing is unworkable. We have made every concession and it still won't work. You ask me: What is *separate development*? And I say to you that it is an anthology of impossibilities.

Yes, the cat has disappeared, but the smile is still there. When you open your newspapers tomorrow morning, and read the parliamentary page, you will find the controllers of your destinies and my destiny extolling the virtues of this policy. You will find them wallowing in self-satisfaction; the world, they will cry, is coming around to our way of thinking, it is coming to realise that South Africa was right all along; look we are back in the Olympic Games; look Malawi has sent a diplomat here; look Alec Douglas-Home thinks we are not so bad. You will find them holding out *separate development*, not only as a solution to our problem of group relations, but as a philosophy which they are now commending to the attention of the whole world. We are saving the world: the pariah has become the saviour.

I tell you, its not a policy its a drug. There is not one of them that will try to meet the argument that I have presented here. They would sooner run a mile. I know: I tried night after night on that train to get someone to answer me, to explain just how the damn thing was going to work in the face of the facts we had all seen and the figures we all knew existed. But no one would. Not one. You must have faith, they would say — as if I can get to heaven on the strength of someone else's faith. You must accept our goodwill, they would say — and increasingly I doubt even that. Or finally: "What is your alternative? Integration! Never." But I can say there is no alternative. If there are two courses before you and the one is found to be impossible, then there is no longer a choice between alternatives — and neither faith nor goodwill nor determination can change that fact.

Integration is not only the course we must follow, it is the course we ARE following. Every day we become more integrated economically, and in the end we will have to adjust our politics to meet that reality. But while we are taking drugs we are unable to perceive that simple truth: we simply churn on in a stupor, sending a thousand people to jail every day under the pass laws; smashing up families; evicting people; endorsing people out; banning people; banishing people; inflicting untold human misery and brutalising ourselves in the process. For South Africans are losing their capacity for

feeling human compassion. We can inflict suffering and feel nothing. We can uproot people and send them to the squalor of Limehill — and then sneer at the priests who try to help them. We can disfranchise the Coloured people — and then laugh at the White politicians who will be deprived of their votes. There is only one kind of human species for whom we are capable of feeling pity — and that is ourselves.

I say to you tonight: Thank God for the brave women of the Black Sash. At least they are still able to feel compassion for those who are made to suffer. And while we wait for South Africa to recover its senses and see the obvious, such work as is done in the Black Sash advice bureaux here and in Cape Town is the most noble that can be done. I would like to see it done by others as well, and in other fields.

### Breakfast quip



"One of the beautiful things about separate development is that Whites are not forced to move to new homelands!"

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perspektief verleen om te oordeel oor die sukses, die mislukking of die gevolge van so'n beleid nie. Dit is nog geen geskiedenis nie! Onderrig gee oor teenwoordige politieke toestand kan nie getoets word volgens geskiedkundige waarhede nie. Op sy allerbeste beteken dit intelligente beskouing en argument en op sy ergste skandelijke misbruik van ons opvoedkundige stelsel, wat sodoende 'n middel word vir propaganda van die Nasionaliste Party.

Ons is diep ontstel oor hierdie verdere indoktrinasië van ons kinders. Wat nog meer ontsetend is, is dat hierdie afbreuk van gedagtevrheid deur die grote meerderheid van blanke Suid-Afrikaners sonder meer sal word aangeneem.