

# SOUTH AFRICA

By The Most Rev. Denis E. Hu

WHEN I went abroad last year I made a firm resolution to be a good South African. By this I meant that I would engage in no criticism of my country or its policies. I would try to explain the situation and leave it to others to draw their conclusions.

Explanations by South Africans are necessary. There is a tendency for people who do not live a situation to simplify it, to paint it in broad sweeps of black or white. When a policy runs counter to the fashionable maxims of a period, the maxims that are the bread-and-butter of politicians, the popular press and the annual school speech-day, one must expect a clear-cut and simplified hostility to that policy. South Africa's policy of segregation shocks people who have never been to South Africa and who are brought up to believe that denial of equal rights and equal opportunity is worse than blasphemy. They can draw only one conclusion: people who preach and practise segregation are tyrants. The picture often existing in the minds of such people is of a South Africa whose population is as homogeneous as their own, a population with a single common culture and view of life, common skills, abilities and capacities, differentiated by the very minor accident of pigmentation, a population composed of two sections, the White oppressors and the Black oppressed.

I found this simplification, as, I am sure, many of my readers found it. When the opportunity arose I did my best to correct it. An illustration I was fond of using was that of patriotism. I would say to people that to understand how difficult it is to solve the colour problem of South Africa, they must imagine a situation in which they would be asked to surrender their own patriotic feelings. Patriotism is an attitude towards one's country packed with emotion and usually fed on false history. The patriotism of Frenchmen or Americans, Germans or British is a carefully cultivated and unquestioning dedication to country and nation. The race-consciousness of White South Africans is of the same manufacture, a particular canalisation of the human herd instinct.

## Imported Racialism?

I would try to throw the blame for South Africa's racialism on Europe, showing that it was an inevitable development once European nationalism, exported with colonial settlers to South Africa, came into contact with such vastly different people as the Africans. This racialism in South Africans was condemned as evil, while another brand of social exclusiveness and arrogance, nationalism, was carefully tended and promoted.

You can criticise South Africa with a good conscience, I would say, when you as a Britisher, come down off the pedestal of assuming that whatever is English is for the good of humanity, or when you,

an Irishman, forget the seven hundred years of English oppression, or when you, a Frenchman, forgive Germany from your heart. If you condemn South Africa's policy as immoral, remember that pride and the unforgiving spirit are just as immoral, and before God there is little difference between individual pride and pride of race and nation, and no distinction between the personal and the national enemy you must forgive.

EDUCATION MAKES A PEOPLE EASY TO LEAD BUT DIFFICULT TO DRIVE, EASY TO GOVERN BUT IMPOSSIBLE TO ENSLAVE.

—Lord Brougham.

All this was fine, and I think I did persuade a few people that our problem is a very complicated one and that it has something of the emotional dynamite that divides the nations of Europe and of America one from another.

But one cannot escape forever questions about the solution to the problem by describing how difficult the problem is. People are generally sympathetic to any country that has a social problem. The French are sympathetic because their own colonial policy is disintegrating in Algiers and Morocco. The English are sympathetic because they have had to deal with a million human problems the world over. The Americans are sympathetic because they have their own colour problem. Sympathy is not lacking, at least in the countries of the West.

## The Essential Elements

So gradually I found myself abandoning my strategy of describing the problem and asking who was clean enough to cast the first stone at South Africa. More and more my mind became fixed on the essential elements in our race problem. Distance and detachment probably contributed to this evolution. When far away from your own country, you see it more clearly in the context of the world. It is a pity that our members of parliament could not be made to go five thousand miles away from their debates and resolutions. Things they say in Cape Town, that seem so sensible and meaningful, would choke them in another atmosphere.

Two realisations grew stronger and stronger during the course of my absence. The first was the difficulty of understanding how people can believe in segregation as a rational conviction. The emotional side you continue to appreciate. Mass emotion is a powerful thing wherever it is found, and it is found in nationalism and racialism the world over. But that people can express their

# FROM THE OUTSIDE

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emotional colour prejudices in clear-cut phrases, in propositions to which they seem to give honest intellectual assent, becomes more and more difficult to comprehend.

We are often told that South Africa is misrepresented overseas and undoubtedly there are exaggerations. But are we not responsible for creating a climate in which exaggeration is inevitable? All of us have read quite devastating statements by public men pointing out that White supremacy is the absolute good of South Africa. Everything else is subordinate to White supremacy—politics, economics, marriage, education, culture and now even religion. Any restriction on non-Whites is justifiable if done in the name of White supremacy.

Overseas people who learn this from responsible utterances of apartheid-upholders are mentally prepared to believe any tale of oppression. History justifies this attitude. In the past when determined men have set themselves distorted political goals they have seldom hesitated to use any means to achieve them. It is a characteristic of minds fanatically attached to a perverted ideal that their obsessive purpose becomes the norm of morality. Thus the pursuit of the communist aim is the only yardstick distinguishing the good from the bad in the Marxist code of behaviour. The preservation of White supremacy is an end justifying any repressive measure in the eyes of the segregationist. Overseas people can be excused for expecting the worst from politicians who have a perverted understanding of the aim of government and who accept the principle that the end justifies the means.

## **Bad Overseas Press**

South African politicians have no right to complain of a bad overseas press. They have contributed very clear definitions and statements of political principles that to overseas readers, are absolutely horrifying. The gruesome details may be filled in by some imaginative reporters and editors, but the blue print is without any doubt made in South Africa.

It is the blue print that becomes so incredible when you are outside the Union. It is so much in contrast with the attitude of the rest of the world (with the exception of a shrinking party in the southern States of America), that you are astonished that people have the courage to proclaim it. Of course nobody is taken in by such high-sounding euphemisms as separate developments, development along one's own racial lines. It is enough to know that the people expected to develop are given no choice in the matter.

Let me emphasise again, it is not the emotional side of our racial problem that is hard to explain overseas. People grasp that easily enough. It is the rational formulation of a principle of discrimination that shocks them—and shocks you, too, when

you are away long enough to see things in better perspective.

A second point that assails the mind with devastating force is the realisation of how tragically short-sighted, if not completely blind, present policies in South Africa are. Even if the principle of apartheid were morally justifiable, the facts of modern political life would render it utterly stupid. It ill behoves a small man to insult the big fellows with whom he has to live. South Africa is doing precisely that. No matter what carefully chosen terms camouflage apartheid, there is no hiding the fact that it means only one thing: **a white skin is the mark of the elect, colour is corruption.**

## **Fierce Resentment**

Anybody with any knowledge of world developments knows how foolish it is to proclaim that. It sets practically the whole world against us. It is an insult to Asians, Arabs, Africans and most South Americans. It meets no favour in the United States. It shocks the people of Europe and sets most thinking persons shaking their heads and commenting that "whom the gods would destroy they first make mad."

To Asians, Arabs and Africans the word "apartheid" is as detestable as the word "colonialism." These two terms arouse all the fierce resentment experienced by non-White peoples at having been subject to White colonisers. They are driven to fury at the memory of the White man's arrogant assumption of innate superiority, of his right to rule and to guide the destinies of less favoured peoples for their own good.

The White man may claim that he carries with him the art of good government. Whatever achievements the non-White may secretly attribute to White rule are offset by the incurable hurt of having been considered inferior. "That's all the gratitude you get," deplores the retired colonial officer, but it is human nature not to thank someone for making you feel small, no matter how humanely he did it.

The Asians, Arabs and Africans are the uncertain quantity in the struggle between civilisation and communism. To us the choice is clear, communism is the denial of civilisation. To the non-White peoples the issue is not so definite. For the third "C," colonialism, has too often been associated with what we call civilisation. In his hatred of colonialism, the non-White may be sorely tempted to turn to communism.

## **Friendship with Non-White Peoples**

It is this consideration which weighs so heavily with the United States in its Suez policy, and which is going to exert an ever-increasing influence in American foreign policies in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It is essential for America, as leader

## SOUTH AFRICA FROM THE OUTSIDE (Cont.)

of the civilised world, to retain the friendship and trust of the non-White peoples. If this occasionally results in her treading on the corns of European colonial powers, she is prepared to take that risk. She dare not let herself be associated too closely with colonialism if she wants to save another third of the world from going communist.

Here we are then in South Africa proclaiming ourselves part of the civilised camp, yet playing into the hands of communism by insisting on that by-product of colonialism, apartheid. No wonder we distress our friends.

America cannot dare to show any sympathy to our solution of the Colour problem. Internationally, as I have mentioned, she is committed to creating bonds of friendship and trust with Asians, Arabs and Africans. Internally she has set her face firmly against segregation. In the future the Coloured vote in America is going to exert increasing influence. Negroes, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans will constitute an important segment of the electorate that no party dare neglect.

As regards Europe, the colonial powers have seen the writing on the wall. They have lost Asia, and the African colonies are going fast. Within twenty-five years I doubt if there will be a White administrator north of Livingstone. There may be some loose external association between old colonies and European countries, but that will be all.

South Africa, somehow, has to live in this rapidly changing world. How can we hope to live with our policy of insulting our neighbours?

### International Contacts Jeopardised

Without much foresight one can see what will happen. South Africa will find herself more and more embarrassed in the international exchanges

that are such an important part of modern life. Sport, culture, commerce, agriculture, hygiene, religion are all marked today by increasing international contacts. How long shall we be allowed to participate when the things we stand for are an affront to half the other participants? How can they bear our presence when they know that in South Africa politicians seriously propose that all mixed gatherings should be prohibited by law, and that opposition to restrictions on freedom of worship is termed blasphemous?

Perhaps we shall be brought to our senses when we find ourselves the pariah nation of the world—banned from football federations and Olympic Games, omitted from the list of invitations to international conferences for fear of a boycott by other nations, harbours closed to us, airports denied us, diplomatic representatives refused to us, investors and merchants avoiding us.

There have already been a few indications of what is to come.

As I said at the beginning of this article, I began answering questions about South Africa by explaining how difficult a colour bar problem is. Very soon I found that the explanations were occupying a smaller place in my mind and that two big realisations were growing bigger and bigger: firstly, how utterly incredible it is that civilised men in this age can formulate in rational terms a policy of discrimination, and secondly, how completely stupid it is to advocate apartheid in a world in which non-White nations are rapidly assuming a dominant position.

The difficulty of dissolving quickly the emotional blocks involved in our colour bar remains comprehensible. People understand that. But they see no sense in giving these emotions a pseudo-rational justification. They know, as we know only too well, that our own hope for the future consists in facing the facts and giving the leadership to our heads instead of our hearts.

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## Control Boards Have Cost Us Millions

(By permission of the "Sunday Times.")

THE taxpayer has been warned that he will have to make good the stupendous losses on foodstuffs exported by the control boards for the sole purpose of keeping up prices in the Union—in other words creating local inflation.

We are officially told that in five months of this year the Mealie Control Board lost £1,000,000.

Other losses by the other boards were £250,000 on butter and £35,000 on dried beans apart from the huge loss on exported eggs.

Citrus and deciduous fruits are beyond the pockets of 90 per cent. of the White population.

Meat is obtainable but at exorbitant prices, and South African sugar is dearer locally than it can be purchased overseas.

Tens of thousands of tons are exported annually.

The Government itself profits by hundreds of thousands of pounds every year on rice—a food which is universally consumed in this country.

What tremendous benefits would accrue to the mines, the Government, industry, commerce and all other employers, including farmers if these so-called surpluses were sold locally at reasonable but profitable prices.

Cost-of-living allowances throughout the Union would be substantially reduced, mines on the verge of closing would be given a new lease of life and the wealth of the nation enhanced.

The value of the £1 to purchase foodstuffs is worth less than 8s.

Inflation and high land values can be blamed on subsidies.—**HIGH EVERYTHING** (Maritzburg).