

# SIX PORTRAITS OF APARTHEID

## I. THE INTELLECTUAL FRAUD

Dr. ELLEN HELLMANN

*Past President of the South African Institute of Race Relations*

“OUR political apartheid policy is *not*, as the Archbishop wrongly assumes, ‘a policy which aims at entrenching permanent White domination’ over the non-Whites.” So Mr. W. van Heerden, editor of *Dagbreek en Sondagnuus*, wrote recently in one of his regular feature pages. In this “Geselsie met Biskoppe” (3 February, 1958), Mr. van Heerden not only tells the Archbishop of Cape Town and the Bishop of Johannesburg where they are wrong, but ends with a condensed statement of what apartheid really is, so that the new Archbishop may the more fully appreciate how gravely he errs in condemning apartheid as abhorrent.

I, personally, had thought that we had long passed this phase of shadow-boxing and that South Africans were at least agreed on this: that apartheid does, in fact, mean White supremacy. It is precisely because it means White supremacy that the National Party sells apartheid so successfully to its followers, and that its chief Parliamentary Opposition, the United Party, dares not repudiate it, but has to take uncomfortable refuge in such monstrosities as “Discrimination with Justice.” It is surely indisputable that most White South Africans understand apartheid to mean simply that the White man will continue to have pretty near exclusive political power and the immense economic and social privileges that he now enjoys.

If he yields any of these privileges, so runs the dogma, and particularly if he permits non-Whites any share in real government, no matter how limited, then the White man is doomed. He will be engulfed by the Black majority surrounding him; he will be politically subjugated; and “White civilization” will crumble and be swept away. This has been the burden of Nationalist teaching and preaching for the ten years they have been in power and for the many years they were seeking to secure power. In parliament and out of parliament, in season and out of season, the National Party has rammed it home: the White man baas.

But, no, says Mr. van Heerden, apartheid does not mean this at all. Apartheid does not mean permanent White domination.

"The truth," he says, "is the very reverse," and proceeds to elaborate as follows: "The political apartheid policy flows from the realization and recognition that the non-White must and shall develop to the stage at which he will be entitled to full individual and national recognition. Because this is recognized, South Africa's apartheid policy aims at laying in good time the foundation for a political system whereby the demands of non-Whites can in due course be completely satisfied without it necessarily meaning that Whites will disappear in a non-White proletariat. In keeping with this principle, we differentiate between White and Black, not because the one is regarded as superior and the other as inferior, but simply to prevent the non-White element from becoming rooted in White society before the process of planned political and national separation can be completed. In accordance with this, and in no other sense, is the term 'White domination' used, and it means nothing but the continuation of the White's political domination in his own White homeland." Is this, Mr. van Heerden concludes, something to be "abhorred"?

Although the broad subject of apartheid has been debated till the repetition of familiar arguments has become sickeningly wearisome, this statement demands refutation. There are two reasons for this. The first is that one must guard against a technique with which the world has, to its great cost, become familiar: repeating an untruth or a half-truth sufficiently often till its very repetition gives it the ring of veracity. The second is Mr. van Heerden's own influential and equivocal position: influential because, quite apart from being the editor of certainly the leading Afrikaans Sunday paper, he is one of a group of Afrikaans intellectuals to whom great deference is paid; equivocal, because Mr. van Heerden slides so easily from the role of interpreter of the idealistic total territorial separation school of apartheid to that of supporter of ordinary run-of-the-mill Government apartheid policies and, in so doing, adds a moral gloss to obnoxious laws. The fact that apartheid has different meanings, that it means different things in different contexts and when used by different spokesmen, facilitates Mr. van Heerden's multiplicity of roles.

Apartheid can, and to some does, mean complete territorial separation; but they are, I believe, very few. A better and simpler term would be "partition." To this school belong some, but not all, of the members of SABRA, some few of the

ministers of the Dutch Reformed Churches, some of the Afrikaans intellectuals. Put briefly, this school believes that in a mixed society there will inevitably be discrimination against non-Whites; that any attempt to bring about greater equality of rights and opportunities will incur such resistance from Whites that it will lead to conflict; and that the only just and peaceful solution lies in creating separate homelands for Africans. Morally, as Professor Hoernlé made clear many years ago, territorial segregation is a justifiable solution, compatible with liberal principles. But he recognized equally clearly, in the chapter significantly headed "Heartbreak House," that territorial segregation was impossible of realization.

To-day it is not more, but even less capable of realization. A larger proportion of Africans is permanently settled outside the Native Reserves. The economy, greatly expanded since then, is more dependent on non-White labour, not only in unskilled, but in operative ranks.

The Government-appointed Tomlinson Commission itself, ideologically committed to partition though it was, has in fact and figure shown up partition as an impossibility. Its starting point was the distribution of the African population at the last census in 1951:

In the Bantu areas	..	3½ million, which is 43 per cent.
In the Towns	..	2½ million, which is 27 per cent.
On the European farms	..	2½ million, which is 30 per cent.

This, obviously, is no basis for partition. Not only is more than half the total African population outside the Bantu areas, but the 3½ million in the Reserves are sunk in poverty, not economically self-supporting, and dependent to a large extent on the extra-Reserve earnings of migrant wage-earners in order to live even on the low standard of Reserve living. The Commission made a thorough study of the Reserves—240 different areas, varying in size and soil and rainfall, one-third of them lying in the Union's best climatic zones, but constituting in all some 13 per cent. of the total area of this country. The Commission surveyed these areas, assessed carrying capacity, laid down the requirements for economic units on which a full-time peasant family could be self-supporting and, after careful calculation, reckoned that the primary sector of the economy, that is agriculture, forestry and mining, could—by planned development—carry 2.4 million people. On the analogy of Canada (why this particular analogy no one knows,

nor is it explained), where the agricultural population constituted 29 per cent. of the total in 1941, the Commission calculated that a further  $5\frac{1}{2}$  million would find a living in secondary and tertiary activities. This, together with a half million migrants working in the "European sector" and their  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million dependents, would give a total *de jure* Reserve population of some ten million.

So far, so good. Good, that is, overlooking the obvious fact that a half million migrants do not logically fit into a plan for total separation and that, in social planning, one does not normally plan for migratory labour. In point of fact, normally one embarks on social planning to prevent just that. But the real snag in this carefully mapped blueprint is that, according to the Commission's projections of population growth, by the time this agricultural, industrial and commercial regeneration has been brought about in the Reserves, there will still be six million Africans for whom there will be no room in 'their own areas'. What all this amounts to is that even if the optimum expectations of the Commission are realized, if within the next 25 to 30 years a complete transformation of the Reserves is brought about, there will still be  $6\frac{1}{2}$  million Africans, nearly 2 million more than in 1951, in what is called the "White area." Africans—quite apart from Coloureds and Indians—will still greatly outnumber Europeans.

But that there is not the least likelihood of even this position being reached is plain from the Government's reaction to the Commission's report. The Commission made individual tenure the cornerstone of its plans for agricultural rehabilitation. The Government rejected this proposal outright. The Commission, urging with great emphasis the need for immediate large-scale action, said that £104 million must be spent on its plans over the next ten years. The Government voted £3½ million for the first year and did not even spend that.

It has been said before. But it must be said again. Total territorial separation—partition—exists nowhere but in the imagination of a small band of idealists. For the rest, it is a convenient fiction and nothing more; a fiction that acts as the grand camouflage under cover of which justification is sought for the actions of a Government which legislates in the "White areas" as though the fiction of the development of the Bantu areas had become fact. Mr. Leo Marquard put it precisely when he said: "Territorial apartheid was born as a

myth and has grown into a blatant fraud.”

It is this fraud inherent in the approach of the proponents of territorial apartheid that I want to stress. It is fraud to preach what amounts to the gospel of the Tomlinson Commission when, firstly, even the full implementation of the Report would not bring about territorial separation and, secondly, when the Government's reaction to the Report has been such as to ensure that its recommendations will not be carried out. It is fraud to tell an Archbishop, allegedly too new to South Africa to understand what is happening here, that “we differentiate between White and Black, not because the one is regarded as superior and the other as inferior,” without telling him that in fact we legislate in such a way as to ensure the superiority of the White man and the inferiority of the non-Whites. It is hypocrisy to tell the Archbishop that “White domination” only means the White's political domination in his own homeland without telling him that this “own homeland” comprises 87 per cent. of the Union's area, includes all the cities and towns of this country, and has—on to-day's figures—more than five million Africans in it, many of them permanently resident there and with no other place to live.

Let us get it clear. Government legislation during their two terms of office, a decade of apartheid, has not meant merely “differentiation”: it has meant discrimination, naked and deliberate discrimination, and ruthless curtailment of the already restricted rights of non-Whites. To-day the African is confined in a straight-jacket of legislation which makes of him not only a voteless, but one of the most rightless of beings this side of the Iron Curtain.

The total pattern is clearly one of securing and entrenching White supremacy. And this is what it is represented as by its political supporters, morally veneered by the assertion that White supremacy is indispensable to the preservation of the thing called White civilization. To attempt to justify this massive repression in the so-called “White area” by reference to unlimited opportunities for development in the Reserves is fraud: for these unlimited opportunities are a myth. To describe what is taking place in South Africa as “parallel development” is a complete distortion. Parallel development demands equivalence of opportunities and of facilities. These do not exist. What we have is division, deliberate and in-

creasing division and inequality.

And that is why world opinion is so hostile. Not because South Africa has not succeeded in building the perfect social order. What nation has? Not because there is injustice and inequality. Where isn't there? But because over 5 million Africans and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  million Coloured people and close on half a million Asiatics who live in an area wrongly called the "White area" or the "European sector" are subjected to naked dictatorship and are denied the right to earn equality. It is a dictatorship that can remove them from their homes, force them to shut their businesses, close customary avenues of employment to them, order their removal to another part of the country. Where, in all this, is there any manifestation of what Mr. van Heerden describes as "the realization and recognition that the non-White must and shall develop to the stage at which he will be entitled to full individual and national recognition"? There will be no rest and no peace and no diminution of tension in South Africa until all its citizens realize at last that it is one country, that there is no such thing as a European sector. One look at this "European sector"—at its streets, its factories, its farms, its businesses, its homes—dispels the fiction and lays bare the essential basis of its economic structure: the complete inter-dependence of all groups. Even on the Railways, precious preserve of "civilized labour", the non-White labour force exceeds that of the 108,345 Whites. These non-White workers, millions of them, are "rooted in White society". They are economically rooted already, and the other processes of taking root are developing at such a pace that the process of "planned political and national separation" will never and can never catch up. Further, there is no likelihood that this process of economic inter-dependence will be reversed. On the contrary, it accelerates steadily and irresistibly.

These are, no doubt, the facts that motivated the Archbishop in making the statement which provoked the Government's strong reaction. One does not have to spend a lifetime in South Africa to comprehend the essentials of the South African situation. Nor does one have to spend a whole life absorbing through one's pores South Africa's "traditional outlook" to comprehend whence it springs and why it survives. The desire to maintain a privileged *status quo* is not a peculiarly South African defect, but a universal human characteristic. Racial prejudice is not a sentiment unique to South Africans.

It exists and manifests itself over vast areas of the globe. The difficulty of accommodating within the framework of one society peoples of completely different cultures may be particularly great in the South Africa of to-day, but it is not a difficulty outside the range of historical experience. What is particularly South African—and this is the core of the South African tragedy—is our insistence that a special sanctity attaches to normal and universal failings because they are traditionally ours, and that a special virtue inheres in our rigid refusal to adjust our social and political framework.

To depart from traditional ways is never easy, particularly when the future offers no guarantees. The United States of America, with all its wealth and resources, its borders stretching right across a continent, the relative population homogeneity of the whole North American continent, its commitment to an agreed creed, is experiencing a series of profound political and social convulsions in its attempts to make equal rights a reality for its 10 per cent. minority of Negroes. For South Africa to start creating the conditions wherein its non-White majority will find expanding opportunities and a greater justice cannot proceed painlessly. But in the world of to-day—whether West or East—there is no choice. South Africa deludes itself at enormous peril if it believes it can still choose. The only choice is between voluntary action now or compulsion later. If people in the strategic position that Mr. van Heerden holds would throw in their weight to condition men's minds to the need to drop pretence and to move away now from an outworn traditional outlook, they would be helping to guard this country against a later but pitilessly inevitable compulsion.