

# NATIVES NO LONGER KILL TWINS

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'SCRATCH a Rhodesian and you'll find a South African' was the suggestion offered me by a journalist soon after I arrived in Central Africa. It is a useful general prescription against being deceived by 'partnership' humbug. For this humbug plays a vital role in White Rhodesian attitudes.

Any group of people engaged—however reluctantly—in suppressing another needs a rationale, and the more guilty that they feel about it, the more this rationale consists of humbug. (Hitler felt no guilt, and the Nazi ideology, though full of obscene rubbish, contained little cant.) Most White Rhodesians put their 'Britishness' above everything, and most of them have been brought up on vaguely 'public school' values. Consequently they are not only very sensitive to criticism, but also unconsciously guilt-ridden, and the evidence for this is the breath-taking hypocrisy of the official 'partnership' ideology—breath-taking in scale and breath-taking in *naiveté*. (As a friend remarked recently, after reading Lord Malvern's speech to the House of Lords: 'You *can't* parody these people'.)

The edifice of systematic humbug which is the modern doctrine of partnership is getting widely known. For anyone who cares to study it in detail, it is paraded in all its pathos by B. G. Paver in his recent book 'His Own Oppressor', and brilliantly dissected by Cyril Dunn in his 'Central African Witness'. To grasp its full significance, it must be seen as emerging from the White Rhodesian's past, not merely as a shack-built affair hastily run up to satisfy a dubious Colonial Office in Westminster. It is true that the attempt to systematise the doctrine is recent. But its key elements are as deeply rooted in White Rhodesian psychology as those of apartheid are in the neuroses of the Volk.

Some elements of White attitudes are hangovers from the earliest period of settlement, the 'pioneer' phase. Central Africa was supposed to be full of undervalued assets, and Rhodesia was in a position to make a takeover bid. The pioneers, and the settlers who came after them, were there to realize the assets. A few of them shared the less material visions of Rhodes, and perhaps some could imagine a Southern Rhodesia transformed by investment and colonization into a new Cape

Colony. But the keynote of this period was, quite simply, gold. Bulawayo was a mining town, full of speculators and assayers. The settlers were mostly prospectors and farmers, largely amateur, whose approach to these jobs was to persuade Africans to dig for them on the sites of abandoned Bantu gold-workings, to clear the bush where they had pegged out farms, or to herd the cattle taken as spoils of war. Few had much capital, and from this early period dates the reliance (pioneered further south) on pressures other than wage-incentives to make Africans work for White men; exasperation with the labour thus procured; and phoney rationales for maintaining the discrepancy between White and Black pay-scales.

The 'frontier mentality' is often appealed to nowadays as a rather attractive explanation of some White Rhodesian attitudes. For instance, it is said to account for an individualism which is partly responsible for impatience with Colonial Office 'interference', and a self-reliance which makes Africans' lack of skills all the more incomprehensible and irritating to the average European.

The trouble with this view is that there really were some self-reliant White individualists in the 1890's and after, some of them men who had been roaming the country for years before the Pioneer Column crossed the Limpopo. Selous is the most famous of these, and he was followed by others like Chirupula Stevenson and Sir Stewart Gore-Browne in Northern Rhodesia. But that generation is all but extinct, and the new one is singularly lacking in the kind of individualism and self-reliance required by the 'frontier mentality' theory. There can in fact be few people with such a strong *collective* sense of dependence on the laws which shield them from (African) competition as White Rhodesians today. Even the physical reminders of the pioneer period in the towns—colonnaded stucco stores and swing-door bars—have almost all been superseded by the concrete and glass of a highly regulated and cosy partnership between White capitalists and White artisans.

But the frankly materialist attitude towards the land and its resources which dominated the pioneer period, and the sense of exasperated dependence on its African population, remain; these correspond to a continuing reality. The Africans were regarded as, in effect, sub-human. They were cruel and backward. They spoke no English. They had more cattle than was good for them, yet were surly and resentful when these were

taken away. They were dangerously numerous in relation to the settlers, and had to be kept in a state of intimidation after the conquest by periodic exemplary beatings and worse. That they rebelled in 1896, and nearly decimated the White population, confirmed the very worst of the beliefs about them.

These beliefs went unchallenged by any important voice in the outside world. The protests of the Aborigines Protection Society were dismissed as ignorant sentimentalism, while the British public at large was riding on the full tide of imperialism. And so the real legacy of this period remains the fact that the African population as a whole have never been accepted as possessing the 'full human endowment'. By too many of each succeeding influx of settlers they have been regarded chiefly as one of the liabilities encumbering a real-estate venture, which the White man hopes to turn into a going concern. And this, of course, is what the central distinction of the 'partnership' ideology—the distinction between 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' persons—is really about. The idea of an 'uncivilized person' is a modern (and very British) formula for talking about a form of life which is not really a *person* at all.

In the second phase of settlement, the incoming Whites were no longer strictly 'pioneers', but the kind of jobs they came to do remains significant today; gold small-working, railway building and operating, public works, mine engineering and management, building. In this society the foundations of job reservation were laid; because capital investment was being pushed ahead by the Chartered Company in order to get the mines and farms paying, and for this imported skills were needed. When the next phase of development proved disappointingly slow, White artisans began a long struggle with employers and government to get security against replacement by Africans.

The Company was the government. While Rhodes lived, Southern Rhodesia was really run, as far as the settlers were concerned, like one of the proprietary colonies of America, such as Penn's Pennsylvania. 'Mr. Rhodes' periodically toured the country, hearing grievances, making personal loans, promising a bright future; and even after his death, Jameson maintained something of this atmosphere for a few years. But after this the 'Chartered' was a more remote body with a fairly impersonal Administrator. In extracting from this form of government laws and development spending designed to make their living standards more secure, the settlers formed an attitude towards govern-

ment which has also survived. They had come into the country on 'patriotism plus 5%', and the government's job was to underwrite this proposition.

Here is another key element in 'partnership' thought. The reiterated desire that party political divisions should remain on the 'real' (as opposed to 'racial') issues is of course one way of expressing a desire to maintain the general *status quo* of European supremacy; but it also expresses a more particular desire to maintain what is really a *communal* (White) parliament, a responsive and informal (White) administration, the *family* atmosphere of the White Whiggery. Government has always been a friend to the White Rhodesian, no matter what party has been in office (and it is no accident that one party has in fact been in office since 1934). 'Partnership' means preserving this.

Yet another strand in current settler attitudes is traceable to this period; in the early 1900's the Company turned its attention seriously to European farming, and began the chequered chapter in settler experience so vividly evoked in Doris Lessing's 'The Grass Is Singing'. This was *real* settlement. There were (and still are) relatively few White farmers; but unlike, for example, miners working on wasting orebodies, they represent the White population's faith in its own permanence. Yet of all groups in the White population, this was until recently one of the most economically insecure, and even now the image of the prosperous tobacco farmer is a misleading guide to White farming as a whole. During the depression, the farmers required a particularly wide range of discriminatory measures and subsidies to keep them on the land; their insecurity and the remedies adopted for it epitomized the insecurity of the high-consumption White population as a whole.

Speaking generally, the depression years produced the apparatus of White supremacy in Southern Rhodesia as we know it—the Land Apportionment Act, the Industrial Conciliation Act, the Public Services Act, etc. Segregation was embodied in the law under the slogan of 'parallel development', without any interference from Britain. This was the work of settler government (responsible government was granted in 1923). And here, above all, is the key to the *humbug* in 'partnership' ideology.

Its major tenet is that sovereignty belongs to all 'civilized' persons, discovered by criteria which take no account of colour. Yet there can be few electorates with so clear a notion of the

way in which a White monopoly of political power is essential to White social and economic privileges.

From the 1930's also dates the settler bugbear of 'outside interference'. As everyone knows, it was Lord Passfield's famous 1930 declaration on the 'paramountcy' of native interests in Northern Rhodesia which touched off the settler pressures which eventually led to Federation. But the settlers' morbid sensitivity to the new criticism is of more general interest. It betrayed some of the guilt which underlies White ideology in Central Africa. And it illustrated an already well-developed tendency to project blame for internal difficulties onto scape-goats. 'Outside interference' began to replace 'big business' and 'monopolies,' and take its place alongside the Africans' backwardness, irresponsibility and idleness, as a general cause of difficulties which, in reality, were due to the high standard of life which the settlers required an impoverished country to provide.

The years just before Federation saw two final evolutions of settler ideology. One was due to immigration. Many of the newcomers were fugitives from Crippsian austerity in England, lower middle- and upper working-class people whose rejection of the Welfare State ethos was highly consistent with the inegalitarian values of White Rhodesia. There was also a new superstratum of the administrative and professional classes, and these furnished some of the more articulate propagandists called for by the final stage in ideological growth.

'Parallel development' had to be exchanged for a coherent new doctrine to form a basis on which the British Government would agree to federate the Protectorates with Southern Rhodesia. It is fascinating to trace Welensky's transformation from being a militant trade union leader, and frank champion of White interests, to being the oracle of 'partnership'. His ideological and tactical mentors in this process are typical of the astute new 'backroom' ideologists. (These are a kind of 'liberal realists' whose liberal object is to keep more reactionary politicians out of office, and whose realistic method is to ensure that the present government is always quick enough to take reactionary measures itself.)

And so the Central African Europeans confront reality with the doctrine of 'partnership', the doctrine that the whole of this area, with its 7 million inhabitants, can be run 'for the foreseeable future' by a government responsible only to a handful

of those who, in the eyes of the settlers, are 'civilized'—all the settlers, and perhaps a few thousand Africans; the doctrine that the 'real' issues do not (or must not) include the colour-bar; the doctrine that the 'average' ('uncivilized') African is ignorant and politically indifferent; the doctrine that the 'emergent' African is forming a new 'African middle-class' which will identify itself with the settlers and their regime.

Not a very convincing doctrine, objectively regarded, and this seems to be why it is often bolstered by mystical appeals to the historic civilizing mission of the White man, with his 2,000 years of civilization behind him; to irrelevant and dubious theories of Bantu racial characteristics, to time, and to anti-Communism; and why such phrenetic emphasis is placed on the theoretical differences between the doctrine of 'partnership' and that of 'apartheid'.

*For the doctrine of 'partnership' cannot be abandoned, however unconvincing it may be. Its essential tenets spring from deep psychological imperatives of the settlers' situation.*

Once we grasp that this ideology is indispensable, we can begin to understand the ferocity which its protagonists are capable of displaying towards African nationalism. The very phenomenon contradicts the 'partnership' ideology in a way that is not necessarily true for 'apartheid'. According to the former, most Africans are ignorant and politically apathetic; consequently manifestations of independent African mass organization must be the work of 'agitators', malevolent, and self-seeking corrupters of the uncivilized masses. Against these people partnership is engaged in a crusade. The champions of partnership look upon the ruthless imprisonment of 1,000 African leaders with the satisfaction of worthy policemen who have rounded up a gang of racketeers. It is even clear from White reactions to the emergency that the fifty obscure people who have been killed in Nyasaland are widely looked upon as victims, not of the troops, but of the African Congress! (In the same way Lord Malvern once spoke as if the people killed by the police in Nyasaland in the anti-federation disturbances of 1953, had really been killed by Michael Scott). And the police-state apparatus currently being rushed through to completion is not regarded as a grim necessity to preserve White control, but is welcomed by all White parties for the 'protection' it affords to the ordinary African.

In other words, there is a grim aspect to the 'partnership'

humbug. Its lack of contact with reality is appalling; yet since it purports to embody all the moral values of the 'British way of life', any challenge to it is treated as vicious, justifying rigorous repression.

It is no accident that the recent wave of repressive measures was justified as a response to a series of 'plots', alleged or hinted at (only the Nyasaland 'plot' charges were ever specified). Richard Hofstadter, speaking of the extreme right in the U.S.A., has aptly identified the readiness to believe in 'conspiracies' as the *paranoiac stage* of reasoning on the part of any group of people whose aims and beliefs have moved too far out of touch with the actual trend of reality.

Just how out of touch they are, Cyril Dunn poignantly reminds us with a Rhodesian newspaper headline whose fatuous ineptitude captures perfectly the ignorance, the doomed good intentions of 'partnership' liberalism: NATIVES NO LONGER KILL TWINS —THEY ARE PROUD OF THEM.

