

# The white alternative...

## GIVE GROUND WHILE YOU CAN

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by Prof. Arthur Keppel-Jones

The future of South Africa will be decided by the Western powers, indirectly by the South African Government and its black and white opponents.

The Western powers, of which the United States is the one that counts could not afford to fight for South Africa in its present form even against a direct Soviet attack. To do so would be to drive the Third World, which means most of three continents into the arms of the Russians. All South Africa's wealth and strategic bases could not compensate for that.

American and other Western support against Soviet imperialism would be given only if the West were satisfied that enough concessions had been made to black demands.

What they regarded as big enough would depend mainly on the judgment of South African blacks and Third World governments.

Nothing short of total surrender of political and economic power to the black majority would satisfy black radicals, either in South Africa or elsewhere.

But if the radicals were in control, they would let the Russians in anyway.

If this were the alternative, the whites would no doubt prefer to die with their boots on.

But this is not the only alternative to the status quo. The Western powers would not want the Russians to take control of South Africa. There are several Third World countries that would not want it either. All would settle for less than a total surrender to radical demands, and there may still be enough black South Africans to accept a system in which power was shared and minorities protected.

Everything therefore, depends on concessions by the South African Government and acceptance of them by its opponents. Time is running out. White South Africa is like a fish which the receding tide has left stranded on the beach.

What has receded is the tide, flowing for the last few centuries and, being at its flood early in this one, of white racial supremacy in the world.

By using very forceful means to preserve that supremacy within their own borders the white South Africans have been able to avoid noticing that the tide has gone out.

It is a dangerous delusion, but also a natural one. It is not easy for anyone to adjust to colossal changes occurring at

great speed, or to the realisation that the familiar world is about to crash in ruins. But the effort is worth making if something can be saved from the wreck.

Can it? If by something it means white racial supremacy, privilege and exclusiveness then the answer is no. But those are not the only things that are threatened.

Peace, stability, individual liberty, the rule of law (these at present in a rather battered condition), government by consent (not now a characteristic of African countries, white or black), and private property (a sacred cow to Americans) are at stake too.

Can some of all this be saved if racial discrimination is genuinely abandoned? The omens are not good, because, over the years, white governments have gone to some lengths to ensure that none of these things, except peace of a sort is attainable.

That makes it easy for them to believe they "have nothing to lose but their chains." Yet, if the chances are not good now, they will be worse later. The longer the whites delay the surrender of their monopoly of power and privilege, the higher the price they will have to pay when the inevitable surrender is made.

Thirty years ago they could have struck a good bargain but they chose apartheid instead.

The body of moderate Africans dwindles all the time. In 1976, the Coloured people braved the police bullets for no other reason than to show they sided with the blacks against the whites — the ultimate result of the subversion of the Constitution in 1955.

The whites cannot escape from this trap by the use of force.

There is a strong temptation for them to do so because of their vast superiority over the blacks in this respect. But they should remember the Americans had a force greatly superior to that of the North Vietnamese.

Nearer home, Milner, the most powerful man in South African history, made the mistake of thinking that people were inanimate pieces on a chessboard, to be pushed around as the player chose. He failed, and the Americans failed.

If white South Africa chose to preserve the status quo by an unlimited use of its physical power it would fail too. Physical

force can win a battle, but cannot hold a society together if most of its members are alienated.

Nor if — as would happen in this case — its use resulted in the total and active hostility of the rest of the world.

There is nothing to do but to get rid of racial discrimination — and to do it quickly. But what then? If it is done, it will be done to prevent a Communist take-over.

A surrender of power which leads to a Communist take-over anyway is therefore, ruled out.

Can the baby be saved when the bathwater is emptied?

This appears to be the object of the negotiations for a new, united and expanded opposition party. Such a party would be caught on the horns of a familiar old dilemma.

To have any hope of achieving power under the present dispensation, it would have to win the support of a large number of Nationalist voters, and to do that it would have to water down its non-racial principles to the point almost of non-existence.

If it stood by its principles, it would have no hope of achieving power. That is what happened when the old game was played according to the old rules. But the old rules are not likely to remain in force much longer.

There are two probable alternatives.

One is that the domestic violence and repression and the

foreign pressure will soon make a crack in the apparently rigid structure, which will then crumble as a revolutionary situation produces rapid changes;

The other is that the initiative for controlled, though far-reaching, change is taken by a section of the National Party, which then aligns itself with the other verligte elements, these together coming to power and quickly dismantling the apartheid structure.

If this could be done to the satisfaction of a substantial section of the black population, itself brought in to share the power, there might be a glimmer of hope.

I am not optimistic. A large verligte — very verligte — break-away from the National Party would not be in character. The tradition (now more than a century old) that all Afrikaners must stand together at all costs, the appeal of *stem Nasionaal*, the horror of *skeuring*, run too deep. But if there are not enough Nationalists able to rise above these traditions we shall see the strange and terrible sight of the self-immolation of a people, *Stem Nasionaal* would have become the swan-song of Afrikanerdom.

White South Africa in general, and the Afrikaners, in particular, would prove to have been no better than Louis XVI or Nicholas II — monarchs who, lacking intelligence and strength of character, went to their deaths without a glimmer of understanding of what had hit them. □

# A NEW CONCEPT OF POVERTY

by Patrick Kearney

“ . . . . . for the first time in history . . . . one will be able to give scientific proof that ‘blessed are the poor’ who voluntarily set community limits to what shall be enough and therefore good enough for our society.”<sup>1</sup>

Poverty is looked upon as a scourge of the human race, preventing man from being all that he could be, and providing a constant provocation to violent conflict all over the world. It is therefore very strange to find a man actively encouraging poverty, and stranger still for a visitor to one of the world’s poorest countries anxiously reaching out for ‘development’, to tell the inhabitants that they ought to see poverty as an ideal. Yet this is what that redoubtable critic Ivan Illich did at a recent conference on development held in the Palace of King Moshoeshe II in Lesotho (March 8 - 13, 1976).

Of course there have been people like St Francis, who extolled “Sister Poverty” and freely chose poverty for himself and made it a condition for those who wished to follow him. Such freely chosen poverty has always been a feature of monastic life, drawing its inspiration from the Gospel injunction:

“Go sell what you have, and give to the poor, and come follow me, and you will have treasure in heaven.”<sup>2</sup> Members

of religious orders take a vow of poverty in order to obey this command more faithfully. At its best, this practice has provided a model for those who were not members of religious orders. But it has also had the rather unfortunate effect of leading the majority of members of Christian Churches to believe that only religious could take Christ’s invitation seriously.

What is significantly different about Illich’s words is that he is not only suggesting the need for all Christians to look seriously at poverty as an ideal, but that we have reached a global situation where such an attitude is essential for all people.

In this article I would like to examine this idea more closely, first of all by determining what Illich is not saying. He is, of course, not extolling that poverty of misery which the Church at one time seemed to condone by holding out the hope of heaven, almost as a distraction. The poverty of misery is now roundly condemned by the same Church: “ . . . . . the Christian must be aware that in facing poverty he is facing no accident but something in our society which is evil. He is confronted by sin which has to be overcome in the Spirit of Christ. The response starts in locating in the structures of our society, what it is that brings about poverty.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Illich, I. “How will we pass on Christianity?”

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 19:21

<sup>3</sup> Weston, A. “Poverty: the Christian Response,”