

FOUNDATION CREAM

IN a clamour of newspaper headlines, a big business beauty parlour was opened at the end of 1959 to give the face of apartheid a less lurid international look. Consumer boycotts of South African goods abroad, derided to begin with, had developed a dizzying momentum; the international trade union movement, this side of the curtain at least, had at last lost its temper with South Africa's industrial conduct and threatened action against forced labour and the persecution of trade unionists; while the possibility of economic sanctions against South Africa for as long as its government defied United Nations authority over South West had at last achieved the distinction of corridor conspiracy in New York. Dr. Verwoerd could no longer be depended upon to secure the profits of white supremacy; if the dividend cheques were to continue to arrive, it was essential for leaders of commerce and industry to assist him.

The backing which the new South African Foundation received was stereophonic. British and American branches were simultaneously announced; the first under the management of Sir Francis de Guingand, a high-ranking officer during the Second World War who now cultivates a profitable South African retirement among the orchards of British big business; the second under Mr. Charles Engelhard, the platinum multi-millionaire, whom gold promises, Verwoerd willing, to make even richer. With Mr. Anton Rupert, Afrikanerdom's most successful industrialist, whose great trek into tobacco has unfurled the flags of the 'volk' as far afield as Canada and England, Mr. H. F. Oppenheimer, head of the Anglo-American gold, diamond and copper empire, and twenty-one lesser thrones, dominions, authorities and powers of the pound, they constitute the provisional Board of Trustees. It is South African finance in excelsis.

Sir Francis de Guingand propagated his mission at the launching party. "South Africa is being undermined by an organized campaign of misrepresentation abroad, and it is high time (to set up) . . . a non-political front to present the real South Africa to the world". The British industry that Sir Francis represents abroad must have mixed itself a speedy scotch-and-soda. Then the Board of Directors, spreading its wings, at last took delirious flight. The aim of the Foundation was "to secure for South Africa and its peoples from the world community of



nations, of which they are members, recognition for the contributions they have made and support for the service they will continue to render towards the progress, on the continent of Africa, of a civilization founded and built on the Western European way of life and ideals, and of a sovereign democratic state essential to the assurance of Western influence and security on this continent". Apartheid is ugly enough in all honesty: but with foundation cream covering her pimples; sufficient make-up to blur her features; a corset to press her bulging figure into shape; a platinum rinse to hide the streaks in her hair; and a gold cigarette-holder and tastefully-mounted diamonds to finish her off, it is hoped that the outside world will not look too closely at her complexion. Even if the cream and the paint that the Foundation plans to apply do not cover away her acne adequately, the glitter may be expected at the least to distract the eye.

It is pathetic and frightening, like a worn-out whore decked by the House of Dior; and the whole Foundation might be contentedly ignored were it not for the association of Mr. Harry Oppenheimer and a number of powerful press proprietors with it. Certainly its first venture into the exterior should have demoralized to silence even the second-rate Scheherazades in the State Information Office. In between purblind conducted tours and flatulent reminiscing in drawing-rooms, Viscount Montgomery discharged such petulant inanities on the rule of racialism in South Africa that he produced the effect of a cartoon character blowing bubbles with exclamation marks instead of words. Imported by Sir Francis de Guingand as the first of the distinguished visitors who are to return home as neon-signs for apartheid, Montgomery was really too garish to be believed. Within moments of his arrival, he attacked the United Nations for interfering in South Africa's domestic affairs; his top-gear visits to selected African townships and his conversations with prominent white industrialists persuaded him of the sincerity and justice of apartheid without the tedium of discussing it with its antagonists; and, waving back the tide of world repugnance at Mrs. Mafekeng's banishment, he claimed that the Government was justified in its treatment of agitators. He made no effort to pretend an impartiality or ignorance that might later have fortified conclusions; and common-sense abandoned him completely when he commented on Verwoerd. Anyone who can call the Prime Minister of the Union "kindly" would have found

Stalin tolerant and Goebbels restrained; and one can only assume that the effect of Dr. Verwoerd on field-marshals is, like war, a form of back-line moral shell-shock. It is certainly encouraging. With Sir Francis de Guingand in charge of the beauty parlour, apartheid is likely to come out in bumps from her facials and lose all her hair under the dryer.

Mr. Charles Engelhard will doubtless experience similar difficulty in persuading the American people of his own candour and the bright benevolence of apartheid. Apart from his local platinum interests, he controls the American South African Investment Company, with its shelves of South African shares; and reason suggests that his primary interest in the Union is to keep the passage clear for traffic to his pantry. With boycotts and disinvestment threatening to eat his cupboard bare almost as quickly as he fills it, he will do all he can to stop the mouths of discomfort and distrust. One wonders, however, whether he realizes the price that he may one day have to pay. He is hanging his assets fast from the neck of white supremacy, to fall in the basket if the head should ever have to roll. And the choice is not solely his. He is a citizen of the United States, acting as a self-employed public relations officer for the government of a foreign country to which the vast majority of its citizens are irreconcilably opposed. One is justified in asking what facilities the State Department would be likely to afford an American millionaire who devoted his energy and assets to the confirmation in power of the present Hungarian regime. And Mr. Engelhard's brace for the slipped discs of apartheid is by no means a patent of the Foundation. Regular appearances at dinners of the various South African chambers of commerce and industry testify to the zeal with which he enjoys the economic advantages of race rule. On several occasions he has attacked the importunity of the press in examining the produce and the price-list of apartheid, with the bewilderment of one whose political morality is limited by the lines in his company ledger. All this undoubtedly endears him, together with his country, to the Nationalist Government. It is speedily, however, making the non-whites suspicious of the precise role that foreign investors, and the countries that house them, are playing in the perpetuation of white supremacy. The objectives of struggle are shaped by the course that the struggle takes, and the West will have only itself to blame if it engenders in the non-white masses of South Africa a deep disgust at the hypocrisy of the free

world.

Immediately serious is the presence on the Board of the Foundation, in congenial company with powerful Nationalists, of Mr. Harry Oppenheimer and others of greater and lesser influence over the career of the Opposition Press. Indeed the control or distribution of every English-language newspaper in the country enjoys representation on the Board. It is a sign of the small spirit of editorial independence still left that not all the newspapers found it essential to coo in the new establishment; the Port Elizabeth *'Evening Post'*, though represented through the chairman of its governing group on the Foundation, voiced a distinct discomfort. But this was almost lost in the chorus of shrill hosannas that rose like altar-offerings to Head Office; and one cannot but feel uneasy about the future that critical journalism is likely to have in South Africa. A number of local newspapermen 'string' for overseas journals; and the Foundation's attack on the "campaign of misrepresentation abroad" promises an early meddling with their activities. If apartheid is to be squeezed into a less reprehensible shape, the corset of voluntary censorship will be applied with rigorous energy.

Mr. Oppenheimer's presence on the Board, however, has additional implications. For he is not only a public supporter of the new Progressive Party, he is commonly reputed to be its pocket. Whether or not his cheque-book gives him complete control over the Party's policy must remain the province of an enlightened speculation; but much of the Party's present prestige and nearly all its newspaper support result from his known association with it, and only those too artless for this world will suppose such assistance to be utterly gratuitous. That he occupies a significant place in the policy formulation of the Party, however indirectly, will be widely assumed; and the Party's standing with non-white South Africa will therefore dance to the tune that his pipes are heard to play. If he thinks at all otherwise, then—astute as he is generally noised to be—he misjudges the degree of political schizophrenia that may properly be permitted even so eccentric a figure in South Africa as a progressive millionaire. What he would do well—and his Party even better—to consider is just what part of the South African population it is most profitable to woo. Loyalty to the South African Government abroad and support for the aspirations of the non-white peoples are increasingly exclusive of each other; and whoever addresses himself to the first will soon enough find himself repudiated

by the other.

Organized African opinion is articulately angry at the establishment of the Foundation; one would have to travel deep into the wonderland of Bantustan, where the Prime Minister's puppets so preposterously perform, before encountering that patriotism of apology to which the Foundation is dedicated. Yet the Progressive Party has no future at all if it cannot gain the at least tacit support of the non-white political leadership; without it, like the United Party from which it split for that precise reason, it will wither in the bleached wilderness of the parliamentary vote. It is an unfortunate beginning for the new Party to have made. We do not believe that any number of interviews between prominent Progressives and individual leaders of Congress on a tea-sipping level will repair the breach in non-white confidence that Mr. Oppenheimer has blasted by his membership of the Foundation. And in lieu of Mr. Oppenheimer's immediate withdrawal from the Foundation, the Party cannot be too strongly advised to withdraw as soon as possible from Mr. Oppenheimer. The road to white-black co-operation in the fashioning of South African democracy may have many detours; but the South African Foundation, as at present paved, is unlikely to be one of them.

The new beauty parlour, we know, has many proprietors and even more willy-nilly associates; but its clientèle is of necessity limited to only one paying customer. And she, unhappily, is old as well as ugly. One wonders for how long she can stand the strain of being made over with quite so much industry. Too scanty a treatment is unlikely to do much for her looks; but too energetic an overhaul runs the risk of reducing her to collapse. We do not doubt that the proprietors are clever at their work; we merely think it prudent to ask them whether they are fully aware of the gamble they are taking. When their one client dies, as die she must one day—doubtless the sooner for her frenzied attempts at rejuvenation—will there be time and opportunity left to find another? And if the company goes into a final forced liquidation, are the proprietors and their associates likely to escape the effects of its insolvency? The search for beauty, we are told, ennobles and rewards. The attempt to disguise ugliness instead promises to prove not only degrading but costly.