

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TOMLINSON REPORT

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THE BACKGROUND

After the conquest of Southern Africa in the nineteenth century, certain areas remained in occupation by various Bantu tribes, and, by the Land Act of 1913, Africans were given the sole right of occupation of these areas, but were restricted in their rights to acquire land outside them. The Native Trust and Land Act of 1936 made provision for additional land for Native occupation, so that the Reserves now amount to some 17,500,000 morgen (about 57,000 square miles) and they represent about 13 per cent of the area of the whole country. These Bantu Areas, as the Commission calls them, are situated for the most part in the higher rainfall areas of the country and have fairly good farming potentialities, but they have remained under-developed areas where traditional primitive tribal subsistence farming still prevails. Overstocking and bad husbandry are destroying the fertility of the soil, and productivity, always deplorably low by modern standards, is declining still further. The pressure of poverty has led to considerable emigration into the expanding industrial and commercial economy of the rest of the Union, and the Reserves at present accommodate less than half the African population of the country. Of a total of 8.5 million Bantu in 1951, a little over 3.6 million were in the Reserves, 2.6 million were on European farms and 2.3 million were in urban areas. These latter, who are mainly employed in mining, manufacturing, transport and commerce, have been increasing rapidly in recent years. This influx of Africans into the towns has been absorbed in the expanding urban economy and has been an important factor in facilitating the rapid growth of mining and manufacturing, but housing and social services have lagged behind and deplorable slum conditions have developed on the outskirts of many large cities. Moreover the large cities have been traditionally European centres and the large influx of Africans, which inevitably alters their character, has given rise to severe tensions.

The National Party won the election of 1948, and their success

at the polls was attributed in no small measure to their programme of "apartheid", or the separate development of the various racial groups. Although powerful as a political slogan, the concept of "apartheid" had not been clearly defined nor its full implications explored. Interpretations varied over a wide range. Some understood it to mean the total and complete separation of the African peoples in an area of their own, where they would be able to develop their society to the full limit of their capacities: at the other extreme were those for whom it meant little more than the determined maintenance of the *status quo* and the preservation of white dominance. In the former group were many who supported "apartheid" from the highest of motives in the belief that only by separate development could justice be done and the African be relieved of the many disabilities under which he at present labours.

Moreover, in spite of the change of Government, and much talk of "apartheid" and various restrictive measures, it was apparent that the Africans were being absorbed into the general economy at an increasing rate. There was a widespread demand for a clearer definition of "apartheid", and a recognition that its practicability depended upon (a) the possibility of developing the Bantu Areas so that they would be capable of supporting the whole African population, (b) the question whether the general economy of the country could survive if the African labour force were withdrawn or severely curtailed, and (c) the willingness of both White and Black to accept "apartheid" and their readiness to make the sacrifices which it would inevitably involve.

In 1950 the Government appointed a Commission under the Chairmanship of Professor F. R. Tomlinson, charged with the task of devising a "comprehensive scheme for the rehabilitation of the Native Areas with a view to developing within them a social structure in keeping with the culture of the Native and based upon effective socio-economic planning." The Commission's Report was presented in 18 volumes, and an abridged version published in March, 1956. The early volumes are mainly historical and sociological and represent a vast accumulation of fact, somewhat marred in places by the tendentious manner of their presentation, as for example, the attempt to prove that the traditional policy in South Africa has always been one of separate development. It is, however, the later volumes containing the Commission's recommendations which have naturally evoked most interest. These may be regarded from two rather different points of view: either in a relatively narrow context as merely a programme for the rehabilitation and

development of the impoverished Bantu Areas, or in a wider context, as a comprehensive programme for the future development of the Union of South Africa on "apartheid" lines. Let us first devote our attention to the wider aspect of the report.

BLUEPRINT FOR APARTHEID?

The Commission examines the alternative courses of development and comes to the conclusion that ultimately there are only two possibilities, either the progressive integration of Europeans and Bantu into a single homogeneous society, or their separate development, each in its own area. The Commission writes with a sense of great urgency and to understand this we must consider the demographic situations. According to the 1951 census, there were 2.6 million Europeans and 8.5 million Bantu in the Union, but by the end of the century it is estimated that there will be between 4.5 million and 6 million whites and 21 million Bantu. In 1951, however, 3.6 million Bantu were in the Bantu Areas and only 4.9 million in the so-called "European Areas", but unless the productivity of the Bantu Areas is greatly developed the major part of the increase in the Bantu population will have to be accommodated in the "European Areas", and this number is estimated by the Commission to be about 17 million in the year 2000. Moreover, if the present rate of urbanization is maintained, by far the greater part of these will be in the large cities with consequences that may be illustrated by the estimated population of the Southern Transvaal. This great industrial complex might then have a population of over 10 million of whom 7.4 million will be Bantu, so that Europeans will be outnumbered by 3 to 1 in what is the very heart of the industrial economy.

The Commission draws attention to the rapidly increasing rate at which the Africans are leaving the Reserves and being absorbed into the urban industrial labour force. It maintains, however, that they are not fully integrated into the new urban society because of cultural differences and prejudice, and instead they tend to form an uncertain and unstable group living upon its fringe. They are mostly employed in unskilled jobs and opportunities for advancement, even for the more industrious and talented members, are severely circumscribed. Their potentialities are thus not being used to the full and they inevitably suffer a sense of frustration. The Commission is convinced that as the Africans come increasingly to share our Christian principles and our civilization, and as their sense of duty and responsibility increases, they must be accord-

ed equality of opportunity in the economic, political and social life: indeed any attempt to deny these opportunities would be contrary to the fundamental Christian beliefs upon which our society rests.

The Commission considers the possibility of a peaceful evolution towards a common society in which equal rights in all spheres will progressively be granted to Africans as they adopt a civilised way of life. The Commission is of the opinion that no matter what franchise system is adopted, the European must eventually be swamped in a common society by the superior numbers of the Africans and that this will lead to the disappearance of the former as a distinct racial entity. The Europeans in South Africa have, however, developed over the last 300 years into a definite and self-conscious society, and there are no grounds whatever for believing that they would now, or at any time in the future, voluntarily surrender their own separate racial identity. South Africa is therefore confronted with the dilemma that the Europeans have an unshakable resolve to maintain their separate identity, while the Bantu are increasingly demanding equality of opportunity in all spheres of economic and social life. Under these circumstances, the Commission believes that a policy of increasing integration will only intensify racial friction and animosities, and therefore recommends, as the only alternative, the establishment of separate racial communities in separate areas, where each will have the fullest opportunity of self-expression and development. The analogy is drawn with what was formerly British India where, mainly for religious reasons, the country was divided into Pakistan and India, and the opinion expressed that in South Africa differences are more fundamental than they were in India.

The Commission believes that there is no middle course, and urges a clear and unequivocal choice between "ultimate complete integration and ultimate complete separation between Europeans and Bantu". It strongly urges the latter course and advocates a vigorous policy of rehabilitation and development of the Bantu Areas so that they may become a national home for the African peoples in South Africa. This development scheme offers the Europeans the only hope of continued existence as a separate entity, and to the Africans it offers the opportunity to develop their own society in their own area, where they will enjoy unrestricted employment opportunities and the chance for individual and social advancement.

Although the Commission advocates *complete separation* the hard

logic of fact forces them to be satisfied with something which falls far short of this. If the Commission's development scheme is fully implemented, it is estimated that in the year 2000 the Bantu Areas will be capable of supporting a little under 15 million people, and the remaining 6.5 million Africans will be within the "European Areas". On the Commission's figures the population of the mis-named "European Areas" will at that date be:

Europeans	4.5 to	6.0 million
Africans		6.5 million
Coloureds		3.9 million
Asians		1.4 million
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Total		17.8 million

so that even on the most optimistic numbers the Europeans will be outnumbered by 2 to 1 in the *European Areas*.

These facts are not emphasized in the published report, but, upon analysis, it becomes clear that the scheme of separate development, as envisaged by the Tomlinson Commission, is the creation of two distinct areas. In one at the end of the century will be 15 million Africans, free to manage their own affairs (though the Commission is reticent about the control of defence and foreign affairs): in the other there will be about 18 million persons of whom one-third will be Europeans. The fact that some 6 million Africans are to remain within the "European Areas" relieves the Commission of the task of investigating the effects upon the national economy of the removal of all African labour. For this they must have been thankful, for one of the main arguments of the opponents of complete segregation has always been that it would lead to the stagnation or collapse of the whole economy. The retention of the 6 million Africans, however, raises other equally important problems. What is to be the status of the non-whites in the "European Areas"? If Africans in the Bantu Areas are to enjoy opportunities for economic, social and political advancement, is it reasonable, or possible, to deny similar opportunities to those Africans in the "European Areas" who by their labour will be making a direct contribution to the prosperity of these very areas? If they are denied full opportunities, surely the Commission's cogent arguments about the present inefficient use of African labour will also apply in the future? It would seem that the "European Areas" will continue to have to face all the problems of a plural society, and it must be regretted that the Commission

failed to give due consideration to these, for to have done so would have introduced a welcome note of reality.

A SOUTH AFRICAN T.V.A.

Let us turn now to a consideration of the Commission's recommendations in the narrower context, regarding them merely as a programme for the rehabilitation and development of the under-developed Bantu Areas. From this point of view the development programme appears as a bold and imaginative project based upon a careful consideration of the existing problem in all its diverse aspects. It naturally invites comparison with the work of the Tennessee Valley Authority for the size of the Bantu Areas is approximately the same as that of T.V.A. Some conception of the enormous task may be gained by remembering that each of these areas is approximately the same size as the whole of England, but whereas T.V.A. was built around a great river which had to be tamed and harnessed the Bantu Areas lack this asset. Moreover the people of the Tennessee Valley were relatively homogeneous in culture: they all spoke the same language and had a similar cultural heritage, but in the Bantu Areas there are half-a-dozen major languages and the people have a cultural heritage which has had little contact with the modern world.

The Commission attributes the present poverty in the Reserves to the survival of a primitive subsistence economy, which through bad husbandry and over-stocking is destroying soil fertility. Yields per acre are deplorably low and in the area as a whole livestock exceed the estimated optimum carrying capacity of the land by 50 per cent. The resultant destruction of pasture and soil is a major problem of great urgency. The Commission reviews the reclamation work being carried on by the Native Affairs Department which, though excellent, is far too slow, and draws attention to the fact that at the present rate of progress it will take 245 years to complete, while experts state that unless effective action is taken in the next two decades the fertility of the land will be permanently destroyed.

At any given time nearly 500,000 adult males are away from the Reserves working in the industrial areas and the average man divides his time almost equally between agriculture and industrial work. The Commission stresses the fact that no real progress can be expected without a radical change in the whole structure. The present peasant holdings are far too small to permit of scientific land use, but to produce economic land units about half the

population at present engaged in agriculture will have to be removed from the land, so that those remaining may become efficient full-time farmers. The Commission's programme therefore includes plans for the radical reform of land tenure, mass education in improved methods of farming, the extension of irrigation, the introduction of cash crops such as sugar-cane and fibre, and large scale afforestation.

Alternative employment for those displaced from the land will have to be provided, and the development programme includes plans for the rapid expansion of mining, manufacturing and tertiary activities, the expansion of transport facilities and other essential services, and the establishment of over 100 towns and cities in the Bantu Areas. It is recognised that poverty, ignorance and certain tribal customs unite to inhibit progress, and that economic advancement is not possible without an advance in the general culture; therefore education, religion, health, and other welfare services have a prominent place in the general scheme for the Bantu Areas.

Some idea of the magnitude of the project may be gained from the recommended expenditure. The Commission estimates that during the next ten years a sum of £104,000,000 will be required and an unspecified sum thereafter. The proposed allocation of this sum is as follows:

	£
Agricultural development	33,886,000
Soil reclamation	27,400,000
Credit facilities	3,000,000
Sugar-cane production	370,000
Fibre production	116,000
Irrigation	3,000,000
Forestry development	3,000,000
Mining development	1,000,000
Manufacturing and tertiary activities	30,000,000
Urban development	12,000,000
Transport and other basic facilities	13,000,000
Health services	5,000,000
Educational services	3,000,000
Welfare services	3,600,000
Total for first ten years	<u>104,486,000</u>

Although they were specifically charged with the task of planning the development and social structure "in keeping with the culture

of the Native", they have declared themselves unequivocally in favour of accelerating the rate at which the African is adopting Western civilization. This would seem to conflict with Government policy, as manifest in the Bantu Authorities Act, which strives to strengthen tribal authority and affiliations. Instead of basing their programme upon the traditional power of the chief in a subsistence economy, bigger and better witch-doctors to improve crops, and upon women's labour as traditional in agriculture; the Commission builds its development programme upon the extension of Christianity and education on Western lines; on schools, technical colleges and universities; on freehold tenure and scientific agriculture; and upon industry and urbanization. These things are incompatible with the survival of the traditional tribal culture, and the implicit recognition by the Commission that for the Bantu the adoption of civilized ways of life is the only progressive course, should do much to refute the myth that it is possible to allow the African to "develop on his own lines" in the twentieth century. Professor Tomlinson and his colleagues have produced a bold and comprehensive programme for the development of the Bantu Areas, and their report has justly become a best seller in South Africa.

REACTIONS TO THE REPORT

The Government's attitude towards the recommendations of the Tomlinson Commission were made known in a White Paper published in April 1956, and in the debate on the report in the House of Assembly. In general the Government commends the Commission for their rejection of the principle of integration and their acceptance of a policy of separate development as the long term policy of the country. It is not prepared to accept the detailed recommendations of the Commission, however, and the Minister of Native Affairs was at pains to explain that his department was already satisfactorily carrying out much of the programme recommended by the Commission. He indicated that he regarded the expenditure proposed as excessive and in general appeared to play down the importance of the report, saying that it should not be regarded as the beginning of a new era, but should be seen as but one of many attempts to solve the problem. Three major recommendations are specifically rejected. The Commission recommended sweeping reform of the tribal system of land tenure and the introduction of freehold tenure in both rural and urban areas as an essential pre-condition for agricultural reform: it also advocated the use of private European

capital and enterprise in the industrial development of the Bantu Areas and the establishment of industries deep within these areas: and it proposed the establishment of a Development Corporation for the Bantu Areas on the grounds that the implementation of their recommendations was too great a task to be carried out by the Native Affairs Department, even if it were to be considerably augmented. These three are essential elements in the Commission's programme and their rejection is a serious blow to those who support the Commission's recommendations.

In June a Volkskongres met in Bloemfontein to consider the report. It was sponsored by the Dutch Reformed Churches, the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations and the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs and there was an attendance of about 800 persons. The Conference was in a dilemma, for many there were advocates of complete "apartheid" and must have felt that the Commission had not gone far enough in this direction. Others must have been disappointed that the Government had not seen fit to support fully the development programme of the Commission. Professor Tomlinson and others associated with the report stood firmly by the Commission's recommendations reiterating those which had been rejected by the Government, but the Congress successfully sat on the fence, commending the Commission for its excellent report, and at the same time avoiding any criticism of the Government's reaction to it.

Whether any positive action results from the Tomlinson Report or not, it is certainly a most important document. It has received great publicity, and extracts and articles upon it have appeared in all the leading papers. Its recommendations have presented clearly the immense difficulties of attempting to reverse the present integration trend, and have demonstrated clearly the impossibility of achieving complete "apartheid" in the foreseeable future. To the sincere Christians who had placed their faith upon "apartheid" as a just and equitable solution of the problems of a multi-racial society it has been a severe blow that will necessitate some deep re-thinking of the whole position, and to the people of South Africa as a whole it has demonstrated that there is no easy and simple formula for the solution of the nation's economic, social and moral problems.