

RACE ZONING IN CLOUD CUCKOO LAND

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PROCLAIMING itself the southern bastion against Communism, the Nationalist Government of South Africa nevertheless attacks the very basis of capitalism, the sanctity of private property. Under the Group Areas Act, owners may be compelled to sell their properties, or their properties may be expropriated; not in exceptional circumstances, such as for public works or slum clearance, but as an ordinary routine of racial zoning, affecting hundreds of thousands of people. Owners may be deprived of the right to transmit their properties to their children or other heirs, and the right of occupation may be detached from that of ownership, while the state itself can enter the property market as the major dealer in real estate. The Government has acquired vast powers to set aside vested rights in residence and trade which have evolved over the years, and to redistribute the population in new and revolutionary patterns.

All this is strange propaganda for a Siegfried line against Communism. It is no answer for the Government to say that the property rights of Whites will be largely protected and indeed extended, and that it is mainly non-Whites who will suffer, since the colour of the Government's Communist bogey is black, not white. And the Government would not, in fact, make the answer that it is primarily attacking the property rights of non-Whites, because it maintains a façade of justice about Group Areas. Behind the façade, however, lie the realities of unequal sacrifice and racial discrimination; and the political consequences must be interpreted not in terms of ingenious labels applied by the Government, but in terms of reactions of the groups most adversely affected.

Many organized Indian groups believe that the immediate purpose of the Group Areas Act is not racial segregation at all, but the infliction of such hardships on the Indians as to induce expatriation. The fact that the racial groups specified under the Act were the White, Native and Coloured, was interpreted as indicating the Government's reluctance to concede to Indians even the right to ghettos. This point of view was

supported by the overt hostility of the Government toward Indians and the report of the Government Committee whose recommendations are substantially incorporated in the Group Areas Act. The Committee concluded a survey of European evidence before Land Tenure Commissions with the comment that the fundamental theme of this evidence in its "most advanced form" was the repatriation of Indians, failing which, compulsory segregation with boycott to induce repatriation. The Committee's statement that its own recommendations would not unduly endanger the possibility of repatriation appears to many Indians a masterpiece of under-statement.

Certainly, numerous Group Areas plans submitted by local authorities are extremely drastic in their consequences for Indians. They take the form of proposals that all the Indians of a town, or the great majority of them, both traders and residents, should be moved to the boundaries or well beyond the boundaries, and often to undeveloped land. The first major proclamation of the Government, for portion of Johannesburg, is of this drastic type. An estimated 9,000 Indians will have to move out of areas proclaimed White, and between 700 and 800 Indian traders are threatened with uprooting. The value of Indian properties affected, including the stock and goodwill of Indian traders, is said to be almost six million pounds. Compensation will be paid for properties, on a basis which Indians fear will be most inadequate, but no compensation is payable for goodwill. This apparently is the Government's way of telling the Indians that a life-time spent in the lawful building-up of private enterprise and private property is a life-time ill-spent. This apparently is the Government's propaganda for Western Civilization and its answer to Communism.

The interpretation of the Group Areas Act as primarily intended to heap sackcloth and ashes on the Indian population has some foundation, but is not fully adequate. The threat to the Coloureds is also sharp. Equally extreme proposals were submitted by Government appointed bodies for the redistribution of the Coloureds in Cape Town, the main centre of the Coloured population. As for the Africans, they are largely controlled by means other than the Group Areas Act, but they too are threatened with vast movements in the interests of a brave new world of racial zones. The general pattern is clear—racial zones for Africans either on the periphery of the towns, or more often well outside the towns, and separated from other groups by

substantial buffer zones. Some African residents may certainly benefit by movement from overcrowded slums to well-planned townships, but many are likely to be accommodated under schemes where the Municipality supplies only sites and services, not housing.

Most relevant for this discussion is the Government policy of destroying urban African freehold. The African National Congress, in a memorandum to the Group Areas Board during the sittings in Durban, declared that the sole purpose of the Group Areas Act, in relation to the African people, is to deprive them of the free occupation and ownership of land, so as to ensure that they will be Government tenants at all times and hence a source of cheap labour. The main political organization of the African people thus interpreted the Group Areas Act as a technique for creating and exploiting a propertyless proletariat. It saw no benefits to the African people from the Government's dispensation of Group Areas. Nor is there any possibility that these benefits will be perceived by Indians denied the legitimate fruits of their labour, Africans deprived of freehold, and a large urban African proletariat, denied the opportunity to acquire stable property rights in urban areas. Against this background, it is difficult to believe that the Government is seriously concerned to offer non-Whites an alternative to Communism.

The contradiction between theory and practice is equally marked when we look at the explicit immediate objective of the Group Areas Act. This objective, according to the Minister of the Interior when introducing the second reading in Parliament, was to promote harmony, by the avoidance of contact between people of different race. Drawing his model for human relations from pyrotechnics, the Minister declared that points of contact inevitably produce friction, and friction generates heat which may lead to a conflagration. The basic assumption here is the irreconcilability of races, their innate tendency to conflict when in contact. But why does the Minister emphasize conflict as a product of contact, when there is a good deal of evidence that contact promotes harmony under certain conditions? Is he not projecting his feelings of antipathy for other races? And does the Government in fact desire racial harmony?

This raises the problem of the inner dynamic of Afrikaner Nationalism. Its strength and solidarity rest on an image of the

Afrikaner besieged by the non-European majority inside South Africa, and the hostile forces of the world outside South Africa. Survival itself is at stake, and apartheid is represented as the only defence in a primeval conflict for domination. If we change the world image, and substitute instead a belief in the brotherhood of man, we destroy the incentive to an exclusive and rewarding nationalism. Living in racial harmony, the boundaries between one race and another would be blurred. Conflict is necessary for Afrikaner Nationalists in order to define the group to which they owe an exclusive loyalty. It is also necessary to engender the feeling of hatred for other groups, without which they would find it impossible to uproot entire communities under the Group Areas Act, or to impose the many brutalities of apartheid on a resisting and unhappy population. And obviously to compel the removal of non-Europeans from the homes in which they want to live, or the businesses they have built up, is no formula for harmony. On the contrary, it is the most efficient recipe for conflict, striking as it does at fundamental human values.

Nor can we really believe that members of the Government accept unequivocally the theory that harmony is promoted by avoidance of contact. Indeed, one of the recurrent themes of Afrikaner Nationalism is precisely the reverse. The main attack on contact between the races is that it will lead to biological amalgamation—to “bastardization” as it is so often called. The former Prime Minister asked in Parliament what was the use of having a law to prevent mixed marriages when we have conditions under which Europeans and non-Europeans live alongside each other and associate with each other, where the children play together in the streets and where the colour feelings of the Europeans are becoming dulled, and where the colour sense, which is the white man’s protection, disappears completely. The present Prime Minister was equally concerned that on the basis of equality, if there was no apartheid in everyday social life, in the political sphere or whatever sphere it might be, and if there was no residential separation, Europeans would lose their sense of colour.

The Minister of Health, now Minister of Economic Affairs, discussed the three ways in which a White race and a Coloured race might live together. There was, he said, intermingling as in Brazil, which was a “hopeless failure” with the “bastardization” of the people. Then there was living together as in

America, with social apartheid and prevention of blood admixture, which was also a "hopeless failure". Some parts of America were looking to South Africa for guidance in this respect, the Americans being at their wit's end, with no less than two hundred Commissions working on the problem. "Do you know that in America they are beginning to talk of solving the whole question by removing all the Negroes, but they say that they lack sufficient ships to transport the Negro children?" And the third method was territorial separation under the Group Areas Act, which was just and provided opportunity to all sections. It was impossible, he declared, to enforce laws against mixed marriage and illicit intercourse when people lived in mixed residential areas, since the human being is only a human being.

Thus, left to themselves, left in contact, people of different race would intermingle, lose their racial exclusiveness and, with it, their racial antipathies. There are therefore two routes to harmony in Government theory—the avoidance of points of contact and the multiplying of points of contact. And the most powerful argument for avoiding contact is the harmony which would result from contact, by fusion and equality.

The theory that the purpose of the Group Areas Act is to promote harmony by the avoidance of contact may therefore be rejected. The Act expresses the antipathy of many Europeans to living in the same areas as non-Europeans and is designed to secure total segregation. It is an attempt to maintain domination by avoiding contact on a basis of equality and intimacy, and a technique for preventing non-Europeans coming together in a united front against Europeans. For this reason, the Act permits the sub-division of Coloureds and Africans, but not the Whites, into smaller groups, thus providing a theoretical answer to the numerical preponderance of non-Whites. Whether it was the intention of the Group Areas legislation to redistribute resources, land, homes and business, in favour of the White group, cannot be stated with certainty, but this will be the effect of the administration of the Act. It is the purest fantasy to suppose that a group with a complete monopoly of power will impose sacrifices on itself.

But the final mystery of the retreat into Cloud Cuckoo Land is the Government's belief that it is creating racial separation. The more the Government seeks to separate the non-Whites, the more they come together, because they suffer under a

common discrimination. Moreover, in these futile attempts to separate the racial groups, the Whites are obliged to enter increasingly into non-White affairs. Non-Whites will not move freely into their new racial zones. They will have to be moved or coaxed there by the Whites. Non-Whites do not have the appropriate sympathetic attitudes toward apartheid. They will need to be indoctrinated by increasing white participation in the appropriate educational and religious institutions. All this means an ever-extending web of social relationships, knitting White and non-White firmly together. Far from putting the clock back, the Afrikaner Nationalists are accelerating the pace of integration. Many of the conflicts of contemporary South African society arise from the fact that the Nationalists, under the guise of racial separation, are compressing into one generation the creation of a common society, which, by evolutionary means, would have taken three or four generations.

