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LIBERAL OPINION

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AN INTRODUCTION

At its recent National Congress, held in Durban in early July this year, the Liberal Party of South Africa decided to produce a regular commentary on South African and African affairs. Here is the first issue. It is being sent to South African and oversea newspapers, to the representatives of foreign governments, to the United Nations, to senior members of the Liberal Party itself and to any individuals or organizations, in South Africa or oversea, who would like to receive it. The venture is being modestly launched but it is the editors' hope that they may be able to improve the quality of the production shortly, as well as to increase the frequency with which the journal is to appear.

For the benefit of those who receive this publication, but who are

unfamiliar with the Liberal Party and what it stands for, part of this first edition will be taken up with a brief recapitulation of the Party's history and a statement of its beliefs.

Discussion Groups

The Liberal Party of South Africa was established in 1953, soon after the Nationalist Government had won its second General Election. It grew out of a "Liberal Association" which had itself been formed from a number of inter-racial discussion groups scattered around South Africa. It was founded by a small body of people representing all the different groups which make up South Africa's multi-racial population, who saw the Nationalist victory leading South Africa inevitably and disastrously to complete racial irreconcilability. The Liberal Party was pledged, from the beginning, to end all race discrimination in South Africa - in contrast to the Nationalist Party, whose policy was to extend it, and the United Party, whose policy was to preserve the status quo.

Only Acceptable Policy

Eight years later, when Dr. Verwoerd walked out of the Prime Ministers' Conference, he publicly stated that there was only one political party in South Africa which offered a policy which would satisfy his fellow Commonwealth Prime Ministers - and that was the Liberal Party. He was quite right. The Liberal Party is the only South African political party which subscribes to the Uni-

versal Declaration of Human Rights. It is the only one pledged to do away with all statutory and conventional colour bars and to secure equal rights and opportunities for all South Africans in every field where freedom is at present limited.

The Liberal Party has grown steadily during its short life and in the process the composition of its membership has slowly changed. In the early days this membership was probably predominantly white, but over the years, while all membership has grown, it is its African membership which has grown particularly.

Extra-Parliamentary Role

Liberal Party activities are not confined to the conventional electoral field. The Party recognizes for itself an "extra-Parliamentary" as well as a "Parliamentary" political role. It is pledged to non-violence. It accepts that boycotts, strikes and other such peaceful, extra-Parliamentary methods are a valid form of political opposition in a country in which the vast majority of people are prevented from exercising normal democratic pressures through the vote.

The principles of the Liberal Party are quite straight-forward. It believes in respect for the integrity of the individual citizen, in the maintenance of the Rule of Law, in a democratic system of government and in the entrenchment in a rigid Bill of Rights of those fundamental human rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Party offers policies worked out in detail together by South Africans of all races. It stands for universal suffrage on a common roll, for an integrated school system, and for a comprehensive social welfare programme on the British model.

The Party's first aim is to do away with the Colour Bar but it recognizes that merely to remove existing barriers will not solve all South Africa's problems. Great differences in living standards and land-ownership will be only two of the legacies of years of white privilege which will still remain when the Colour Bar has gone. Economic status will still largely follow colour lines. The potential revolution latent in this situation will only be forestalled by radical policies aimed at redressing the balance of land-ownership and raising substantially the wages of semi-skilled and unskilled workers. The Liberal Party has a radical land-policy, based primarily on individual ownership, which would secure a substantial redistribution of land and increased productivity. It has a programme for a staged increase in wages, geared to the capacity of industry to absorb such increases, which would lift

workers above the breadline in the shortest time possible.

Anyone who has made even a superficial examination of present trends and developments in Africa knows that there is only a limited future on the continent for any society based on white privilege or white supremacy. Therefore there is only a limited future for apartheid. The question is: what will take its place? There are surely only three possible answers to this question? When apartheid goes it will be replaced either by extreme black racialism (the legitimate offspring of extreme white racialism), or by a communist totalitarianism, or by a non-racial democracy.

As far as the Liberals are concerned, there is no choice here. Only the third alternative is worth contemplating and the Liberal Party regards it as its task to see that that is the direction South Africa takes. It will only succeed in this task if it can convince enough South Africans of all kinds that the Liberal solution is the best solution for South Africa and by demonstrating in its own ranks that non-racialism can really work.

Non-Racialism at Work

As far as concerns demonstrating that non-racialism can work, the Liberal Party believes that it has already done so. Since 1953, from branch level to National level, its members have shown conclusively that, even in South Africa's highly-charged racial atmosphere, it is possible - and easy - for people to work together unconscious of their colour. And who are these members? They are a true cross-section of South Africa, not only of all races and religions, but of every possible background - lawyers and lecturers, journalists and artisans, doctors and students, businessmen and factory workers, farmers and farm labourers, chiefs and tribesmen.

How will the Liberal Party persuade opponents of apartheid that its way is the best way out of the South African impasse? The Republican Referendum of late 1960 showed that white voters alone will never out-vote Dr. Verwoerd. The failure of the stay-at-home strike in late May showed that peaceful demonstrations of that sort, carried out by non-white South Africans alone, will not shake him either. But together South Africans of all groups can build a non-racial opposition against which the Nationalist Government cannot possibly stand and which will ensure for South Africa a shared and stable non-racial future. This is the opposition the Liberal Party is building.

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THE UNITED NATIONS IN AFRICA Even when the Congo news was blackest and the United Nations was being assailed by criticism from all sides for its handling of an almost impossible situation, the Liberal Party was its staunch supporter. It is still so, in spite of the obvious weaknesses in UNO which the Congo has revealed. For without UNO where would the Congo, and perhaps Africa, now be?

If the present attempt to "re-integrate" Katanga into a re-united Congo is successful, the most difficult phase of the UNO task there may be over. The Congo may have done something for the United Nations which seemed impossible six months ago - given it enhanced prestige where it threatened to destroy it.

But while an optimist may see new hope for UNO rising from the settling dust of the Congo, there are other situations in Africa where its deficiencies are blatantly exposed. Angola is the worst of them.

It is almost impossible to obtain a clear picture of what is happening in Angola. The revolt against the Salazar regime seems to have opened with atrocities by some African "rebels" against the Portuguese settlers. The Portuguese seem to have responded by committing their own atrocities against the Angolans, but on the grand scale. Evidence against the Portuguese does not rest on the word of "rebel" refugees, who might be expected to be prejudiced in their own cause, but mainly on that of British missionaries, who have been expelled from the territory. It is supported by reports from the international body of missionaries, desperately trying to cope with the Angolan refugee problem on the Congo side of the border. It has been conservatively estimated that 150,000 refugees have fled to the Congo. Estimates of Angolans killed range from 30,000 to 50,000, and of Portuguese from 1,000 upwards. Yet, in the face of this slaughter, the United Nations seems quite powerless to do anything.

Intervention at Diplomatic Level

Whatever happens now, Angola will never be the same again. The Salazar Government may succeed in re-establishing itself temporarily, but its days are numbered. Hope for the future lies in bringing the Portuguese authorities and the Angolan leaders together to negotiate. Agreement will be difficult after recent events, but will have to come. Somehow the scope of the United Nations must be widened so that it can intervene effectively at diplomatic level in a situation like that in Angola.

Next door to Angola lies South West Africa. The behaviour of the UNO Committee on South West Africa has not enhanced its prestige in Southern Africa. But soon it will be called upon to play a vital role here. If the International Court of Justice judgment goes against South Africa, what will the UN do to enforce it? If Angola obtains its independence and border incident along the S.W.A. frontier flare up, what will the UN do?

(Contd. page 7)

THE NEW FACE OF APARTHEID

In any speech of Dr. Verwoerd, one can usually find apparently contradictory statements about apartheid. His recent address to the Nationalist Party Congress was no exception. On the one hand, he presented his party as the white front against African advancement. On the other hand, he claimed that apartheid would eventually put an end to discrimination.

These contradictions in words are matched by actions which seem on the face of them to point in different directions. On the one hand, there is the Bantu in Urban Areas Bill, which will consolidate and aggravate all the restrictions and discriminations to which Africans in the cities have been subject over the years. On the other hand, there is a liberalizing measure such as the new Liquor Act and there is a continual trickle of measures which could be described as "positive apartheid". There are to be "Bantu Urban Councils" which, though far from independent, will have more powers than the old location Advisory Boards. Money is being spent on tribal universities and well paid jobs on their staffs are being offered to Africans. The same applies to the projected "Bantu Service" of the S.A.B.C. Housing development continues and the new schemes are often an improvement on the old.

Opponents of the Government are inclined, if they are conservatives, to use all this as evidence that the Government does not really know its own mind and is not as "firm with the natives" as it claims to be. If they are liberals, they dismiss "positive apartheid" as mere window-dressing and propaganda material.

No Contradiction

Both explanations are facile. There is no contradiction between "negative" and "positive" apartheid and the Government is not spending its time and money merely to create propaganda effects. The Government has a very thoroughly worked-out plan for creating a new economy and a new society for the African population. This new society, astonishing though it may seem, will more closely resemble a communist society than any other existing precedent.

The sting in the tail of all "positive apartheid" measures is, of course, absolute Government control. Under the Bantu Authorities and Bantu Urban Councils schemes, an African can have a position of some power and influence - on condition that he renders absolute obedience to the Government. In the tribal colleges or "Bantu Radio", he can have a well-paid and interesting job - on condition that he renders absolute obedience to the Government. New opportunities for trade, skilled and professional work are being opened up - under Government control. The

peasants of the Reserves are offered soil reclamation and betterment schemes - under Government control.

At the same time, opportunities for African advancement outside the state-controlled economy are being steadily whittled down. Independent African traders and professional men have already been squeezed out of the city centres. The barriers to African employment as skilled artisans in private enterprises have been re-reinforced. Private schools for Africans have been virtually abolished. Freehold tenure of land by Africans exists only in a few isolated areas. In the so-called "Bantu Homelands", land tenure is for all practical purposes at the discretion of the Government. If white private enterprises should conceive the idea of advancing Africans to senior clerical or administrative posts, it will find that the Government has power under the Group Areas Act to make that practically impossible, and that power will certainly be used.

State-Controlled Society

As the process continues, the Africans, and more especially their leaders and their intelligentsia, will be faced with the following choice: to enjoy a measure of prosperity and opportunity in the new state-controlled society, or to face a future outside it which offers harassed poverty at best and imprisonment, exile or death as the consequence of any attempt to change the situation.

That is the plan. Its prospects of working should not be underestimated. A state which on the one hand has all the economic, political and social advancement in its gift; and on the other hand will stop at nothing to crush opposition, is a machine of terrible power. Such machines are operating smoothly over a quarter of the world's surface and, with one exception, show no sign of breaking down.

Contact with Free Society

The one exception is important. East Germany has proved that totalitarianism cannot exist without an iron curtain - cannot exist in daily contact with a free society. Now the Nationalist Party purports to hope that its new African society will exist side by side in one territory with a white society based on Parliamentary democracy and free enterprise. That certainly cannot be. As long as a free society exists in South Africa, it will be the West Berlin of Bantustan. More laws and decrees will not suffice to prevent that. The Nationalist Party has already made up its mind that its solution to such a difficulty will be no different from Herr Ulbricht's. If democracy for white South Africa conflicts with dictatorship for black South Africa, it is democracy which must give way. This was the message which Mr. John Vorster conveyed in his first speech as Minister.

Apartheid, then, is no longer old-style tyranny which rests merely on bullets and bayonets. It is becoming a new-style tyranny in which all the forces of the economy are used to bend the people to the will of

New Face of Apartheid (from page 9)

the state. This is Verwoerd's distinctive contribution to Afrikaner Nationalism. Few of his followers understand what he is doing. It is high time that his opponents should.

UNO in Africa (from page 4)

These are vital questions which the UNO should be getting ready to answer. For it is true that, however remote Angola and South West Africa may be from the power centres of the world, in the mood of modern Africa they can present a threat to world peace, as much as the Congo did.

Like the people of Angola and South West Africa, we look forward to the day when UNO will have the power to intervene effectively to ensure that the just aspirations of a subject people can be achieved - but by negotiation, not violence.

Freedom of Expression (from page 8)

It is not simply in the light of law that we must consider Mr. Vorster's statement. Since he spoke there have been many instances of the now traditional intimidation of the opponents of the Government by the Special Branch. The methods of the Special Branch are well known and include attendance at lawful meetings of law-abiding citizens where notes of speeches are taken. Persons attending meetings have their car numbers taken and are often visited and interrogated by the Special Branch.

Since these activities are rarely followed by prosecutions, we can assume that the investigation of crime is a remote purpose, if it is a purpose at all.

The real purpose is, of course, to intimidate the opponents of the Government. As Brookes and McCauley remark in their book, "an aura of sinister plotting and crime against the security of the state is made by these attentions to hang over their discussions."

Punishment for Beliefs

Mr. Vorster clearly does not intend to abate the activities of the Special Branch. He will also, presumably, justify all other actions of his Government, such as the detention of Liberals during the Emergency, who, as we all know, were being punished for their beliefs, and the banning of the ANC and PAC although the law under which they were banned strikes at the heart of freedom to express opinions. Parallel notions are held in all totalitarian jurisdictions. Indeed it is becoming difficult to distinguish Nationalist and Communist power techniques.

The statement that freedom of expression must be exercised in accordance with the law is illuminating. As we have seen, there is no real freedom of expression under the law. In Nationalist thinking "law" and "right" are synonymous. People will not be allowed to protest in places inhabited by other races and "freedom of expression must not be abused". As we know, "abuse" to Nationalists does not mean contrary to conventional restraints on freedom, which they find hopelessly inadequate, but contrary to Nationalist notions.

Mr. Vorster, in short, believes in the right to protest, provided that content, place and person are approved by the Nationalist Party.

ACCORDING to recent reports, the new South African Minister of Justice has declared that he believes in freedom of expression and supports the right of people to protest. He must forgive us for not standing in awe of these fine words. In the first place, he is the new Nationalist Minister of Justice and the extent to which Nationalists have destroyed freedom during their short political rule, is well known. There has been no sign, not even since Mr. Vorster's accession, that the Nationalists intend to reform. On the contrary, we have been told that the English press is to be taken by the throat and that "White Civilization", which means white supremacy, is preferable to freedom of the freedom of the press. In the second place, Mr. Vorster's personal record does not offer the slightest hope that his conception of freedom is in any sense enlightened. It suggests that the "freedom" to which he subscribes would be totally unacceptable in any genuine Western democracy. (His words, uttered since his accession, have been even less reassuring.)

It is a matter for surprise, indeed astonishment, that Mr. Vorster's assurances have provoked no angry denials, no just indignation. We are, surely, a conditioned society with a minute degree of intellectual and moral awareness. A statement which should provoke a vigorous and choleric reaction seems to produce, at most, a sense of weariness and futility. In the absence of such a reaction it is necessary to examine the Minister's statement critically.

Inroads upon Freedom

The authors of Civil Liberties in South Africa, after a comprehensive review of Union Legislation, concluded that destruction of the freedom to express opinions is "substantial and perilous". Among the serious inroads upon this basic right are the Criminal Laws Amendment Act of 1953 and the Suppression of Communism Act. The latter Act does not deal exclusively with Communists because, as is well known, a Communist includes any person whom the Governor-General deems to be a Communist. These two laws, and a host of others, have eaten away at the freedom of expression. There can be no freedom to express opinions unless there is also freedom of movement and the right to associate. Again the legislative encroachment upon these rights has been substantial. To take but one instance from many which crowd the mind, in large areas of the Republic, meetings of more than ten Africans, without a permit, are illegal. The right to protest is both directly and indirectly destroyed by these laws - indirectly because they create a climate in which the individual is afraid to use the remaining legitimate channels of expression. The Minister of Justice must know those laws exist. In the light of these laws, is his statement of beliefs therefore anything other than a piece of political hypocrisy?

THE GENERAL ELECTION

In the October General Election the Liberal Party will contest a limited number of white seats, in spite of its opposition to the communal system of voting on which the election will be based. Its reasons for contesting? The fact that the election will give its speakers and canvassers an opportunity to put across its non-racial ideas to white voters who would not normally listen to its views. It will present them with its non-racial programme from multi-racial platforms at multi-racial meetings. It will try to shake the stereotyped picture of non-white South Africans which exist in white minds. It will try to prepare white South Africans for the changes they must one day face. It will present its own fully non-racial policies as the only alternative to apartheid which offers hope, security and stability to all South Africans.

If these are some of the reasons for the Liberal Party's contesting the election, what can be Dr. Verwoerd's reason for holding it at all? After all, his Government has two more years to go, he holds two-thirds of the seats in Parliament and he has done rather well in recent by-elections. Why to go to the trouble and expense of holding an election now?

Verwoerd's Reasons

There may be some secondary reasons - to get rid of some of his own less sycophantic followers, to eliminate the Progressive party from Parliament, to embarrass further an already punch-drunk opposition - but there can only be one main reason. Dr. Verwoerd suspects that, if he does nothing now, in two years' time internal and external opposition to his regime will be much stronger than today. He reasons that he may be able to anticipate some of his difficulties if he has a full five years in which to entrench his position even more firmly than so far. There are many signs that this is his, and his party's, reason for this election; here are some of them:

In announcing the election, Dr. Verwoerd said: ". . . it is in the interests of the Republic of S.A. that all concerned . . . should know that a stable and strong Government will again be in power for the next five years". On August 11th he said "I am not going to allow the United Party to spread doubt for another year. We cannot allow people to continue sabotaging South Africa's interests." The goal of the Nationalist Party would be to develop the policy of separate development to the point where nobody could argue that there was an alternative; and again he spoke of the need for an unbroken five-year period of political calm with a strong government in power.

What does "strong government" mean in the Nationalist conception? In the past it has meant the elimination from Parliament of the voice of those who bear the full weight of the policy of apartheid. Indian and

African Parliamentary representation and the Coloured common roll vote have gone. It has also meant the attempt to crush the extra-Parliamentary expression of opposition to apartheid of those who have no vote. Political organizations have been outlawed, individuals banned or banished without trial, states of emergency declared and thousands of apartheid's opponents of all races detained for long periods without appearing in court.

Enormous Powers

The powers under which these steps have been taken, reside in the Minister of Justice. They are enormous and he does not hesitate to use them. In March 1960 Mr. F.C. Erasmus detained some 20,000 people. Later in the year he detained a further undisclosed number in Pondoland under an Emergency which still runs. In May of this year a virtual state of emergency was created at the time of the inauguration of the Republic and the threatened stay-at-home strike. Three times Mr. Erasmus used these powers in little over a year.

But now Mr. Erasmus has been axed - reputedly because he was too soft. In his place we have Mr. B.J. Vorster, wartime internee and Nazi-sympathiser, whose strange views on human rights and the rule of law are discussed elsewhere. In the only public statement made since his appointment Mr. Vorster warned that he intended to act firmly and to seek more powers if he needed them. Well, well.

That the Nationalists are indeed in the aggressive mood which flows from growing insecurity is clear from statements made at their recent Congresses. The Minister of Defence was particularly bellicose. He announced steps to train 15,000 white youths a year and to equip them with "many thousands" of automatic weapons. He spoke sentimentally of the (white) women working in the fields while the (white) men defended the frontiers, and assured his party members "that we shall ensure that it will not just be any baboon who will venture across our frontier".

Full-Scale Campaign

Apart from the doubtful diplomatic value of this last statement, no opponent of Nationalist policy can regard these views as anything but profoundly disturbing. Thirteen years of Nationalist rule have shown how hollow are its protestations of democratic principles. The next five years may see a full-scale Government campaign, not so much to put apartheid into practice as to put all those who oppose it out of business. If the United Party, which is moving steadily closer to the Nationalists, and is committed to the maintenance of white supremacy, is now to be accused of "sabotage", how much more so Liberals and others who really oppose apartheid and who believe in a common non-racial society?

The election result is not in doubt. It is what comes after that the world must watch.

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