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Reviews: The Eye of the Needle

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## EDITORIAL

In May 1972 REALITY published an editorial entitled "What Hope from the U.P." The editorial contained this paragraph;

**There is only one creative choice that the United Party can make, but if self-interest and self-maintenance are its main concerns, it will not make it. That would be to revise radically its federation policy, to bring back hope to millions of people who have so little, to fix a minimum wage based on the estimates of what is required for a family to live a decent and law-abiding life, and to announce that it will repeal or amend those apartheid laws which weigh down so heavily on voiceless people.**

I do not suppose that the United Party was influenced by this editorial, nor that its policy-makers even saw it. But I do suppose that the United Party was influenced by the growing feeling that the race federation policy was totally inadequate for the times in which we live. This growing feeling is not spectacular but it is there. It is a feeling that the slogan "White leadership with justice" just won't do any more, that if you arrogate to yourself the right of leadership you are unlikely to be just. There is also the strong suspicion that you intend your leadership to last for ever.

I wish to examine the new policy fairly and objectively. One must say at once that only South Africa could have produced such a policy. Only white South Africa – with its deep fear of the future – could conceive of the idea of having two parliaments, a white parliament and a federal one, the functions and powers of the federal parliament being decided by the white parliament, until the day comes when the white parliament says to the federal parliament, *today we hand over power to you.*

In other words the fear will have gone. One assumes – one must assume – that South Africans will have discovered a common loyalty. Therefore one assumes that poverty – the gross disparity between white wealth and other wealth – will to a large extent have disappeared. One assumes that racial discrimination will to a large extent have disappeared. *And this must all have happened while an all-white parliament was in control.* It takes a lot of believing

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It would be easy to pooh-pooh the whole thing, but I cannot bring myself to do that. I know from experience how difficult – almost impossible – it is to move white South Africa one

inch nearer the goal of the common society. Therefore I am compelled to say, however fantastic the policy may seem to be, that it seems to indicate that *for the first time in conventional white politics*, a number of representative white politicians have begun to grant the possibility of a common society, and have begun to grant the possibility of the creation of a parliament representative —whether by universal franchise or not — of all the people of South Africa.

I would expect to incur heavy criticisms from some quarters for imagining that there is anything hopeful about this. I realise that this is a forward policy with a thousand built-in safeguards. But up till now conventional white policy has been all safeguards. I realise that in terms of the new U.P. policy the white parliament need never cede sovereignty. But having lived my political life on small mercies, I count this another.

I may say that I disclaim any right to speak for REALITY' I am writing over my own name because I doubt if any member of our editorial board could write on this subject the kind of anonymous editorial that it is our practice to publish.

This new policy can obviously be used in two diametrically opposed ways. It can be argued on the platteland that the sovereign white parliament need never cede sovereignty if it does not wish to. It can be argued in the cities — some cities — or some parts of some cities — that at last some hope is being held out to the voiceless people of our country. One is quite aware of this ambivalence.

Why then should a person like myself not condemn utterly and outright this new policy as a subterfuge, a fantasy, a fraud, a dodge to get back into power? The reason is that though the policy may be these things to some members of the U.P., it is not so to all. I repeat that some have at last got the message that the days of white domination are drawing to an end. I concede the possibility that violence may recommend itself to many as the only possible solution of the white-domination impasse. But I myself am morally and temperamentally unable to take part in violence nor can I believe that it holds the solution to our difficulties. My hope — very deep — for the greater part of my life has been that white South Africans should be converted to righteousness. I can't give it up now. If a respectably large section of the electorate — with whom I have had so little in common — should at last concede the possibility of a common society, that is for me a small mercy.

**Let me conclude by repeating that this common society demands a common loyalty, and there can never be a common loyalty until there is a more equitable distribution of wealth, and a removal of unjust discriminations. Let the United Party make it abundantly and unequivocally clear that its white parliament will set about doing these very things, and that it is doing them in preparation for the common society. □**

Alan Paton

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# ODE TO THE NEW REALITY

A Journal of Liberal and Radical Opinion

Dedicated to  
Edgar Brookes —  
old champion of the right  
New champion of the left.

Sometimes I was a glad lib  
Sometimes I was a sad lib  
No more I'll be a bad lib  
For now I am a rad lib.

I never was a mad rad  
I would have made a bad rad  
Although I hate the glib rad  
Myself am now a lib rad.

Lib now takes its sabbatical  
But I'll not be fanatical  
I shall remain pragmatICAL  
Though I am now a radical.

No more I'll lie and fiberal  
Nor talk a lot of gibberal  
Nor will I quake and quiberal  
I now am a rad liberal.

I really now have had lib  
Now that I am a rad lib  
I pledge to the new REALITY  
My firm and true feality.

A.P.

# UNDERSTANDING BLACK AFRICA

The Maurice Webb Memorial Lecture 1972.

by Robin Hallett

**I am not altogether happy about the title, "Understanding Black Africa" which I have chosen for this lecture. In the first play by using the phrase "Black Africa" one seems to imply that there is some sort of cultural homogeneity linking together most of the peoples who live south of the Sahara. In fact, of course, this is far from being the case.**

Take, for example, such diverse peoples as the Hausa of Northern Nigeria, the Kikuyu of Kenya, the Bemba of Zambia and the Zulu of KwaZulu. They really have very little in common beyond the fact that they have all found themselves caught up, in recent times, though in very different ways, in what is loosely described as "the colonial situation". As for the alleged similarities of pigmentation implied by the term "black", this is a matter of such trivial significance when compared with the really profound differences between varying aspects of these peoples' culture that to a historian or an anthropologist, it is hardly worth mentioning. Who in his senses would get up and talk for an hour about "Understanding Europe" and hope to get beyond the range of platitudes in such a way as to embrace the immense variety of historical experience presented by such people as the Irish, the Portuguese, the Norwegians and the Greeks? In Black Africa where the area under consideration is so much larger, one is dealing with an even greater variety of cultural achievements. In these circumstances how can one really do anything but utter generalities and mouth platitudes?

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There is, as I see it, another objection to this title. It has something of a patronizing, a condescending, ring about it. I can well imagine a Nigerian or a Tanzanian groaning inwardly thinking to himself. "Oh Lord, here is another of those plushy white liberals, those phoney experts, who feels it is his appointed mission — at a good salary of course — to tell the rest of the world what we are like. What the hell does he really know? He has never been exposed to the pressures and the pleasures of a system of family relationship very different from his own. He does not know what it is like to grow up in a village in the bush, or on a mission station, or in a shanty town. He has never had to struggle hard for

an education or a job. He has never been exposed to the frustrations of being ruled by foreigners. He has never been insulted because of the accident of his physical appearance." To those who think like this all I can honestly do is to make a confession of my ignorance. Of course, there is a vast amount I do not know about Nigeria or Tanzania, of course there are many experiences I have never lived through. All I can claim is that I am slightly less ignorant in respect to these countries than the majority of my compatriots, that I have had the advantage and the intense pleasure of having lived and worked in different parts of Africa, that I have been engaged in the study of African affairs for a good many years now, that I have had African friends, that I have consciously tried to make the imaginative effort needed to see what the world looks like through the eyes of people whose culture and experiences are different from my own.

**Now it seems to me — and here I am taking up a theme made with great sensitivity and penetration in a lecture recently delivered by Professor Monica Wilson at Rhodes University — that those of us who have worked in Africa have one useful role to fulfil in the modern world, the role of the interpreter, the "between-man", the person who tries to explain the actions and thoughts of one people to another. It is not a particularly heroic role, though it may expose one to a certain amount of abuse from both sides, but it is certainly important. The interpreter has an essential part to play in the construction of a sane and just political and international order. Every country, every society needs its interpreters. But it seems to me that there is a particularly great need for them in White South Africa today.**

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It is a strange and in many ways deeply disturbing and distressing experience to find oneself more cut off from Black Africa when one is actually living in Africa than one ever was when one was in England. In the course of the last eight months I have had a chance of having a conversation with no more than a handful of Black South Africans. And I have had the benefit of hearing three distinguished Black South African speakers lecture at the University of Cape



Town. I imagine that, tenuous though these contacts with Black South Africa have been, they are probably slightly more wide ranging than the contact most white South Africans have had this year with their black compatriots. I cannot help comparing this situation with my experience over the last few years at Oxford. One of the glories of Oxford is that it is in many respects a profoundly cosmopolitan university. And so in the seminars which were held there in the field of African Studies it was possible regularly to meet people from many different parts of Africa, from Nigeria, or the Congo or the Sudan or Ethiopia, or Botswana. In my own case I remember with particular vividness a small group of students for whom I ran a course in African History. There were three West Indians among them, three Nigerians, a Kenyan Asian, a Black South African and an Englishman — all of them were mature students in their late twenties or thirties, most of whom had some connection with the Trades Union movement. We met in the bedroom of one of the students because there was no room for us anywhere else — and this was a great advantage because it gave a much greater sense of intimacy to our meetings. For an hour we would have a fairly relaxed seminar discussing some of the major themes of African history. Then we would break for coffee — I remember there never used to be enough cups to go round so someone always had to have his coffee in a jam jar — and inevitably the conversation would then switch to the problems of the present, to the needs of the Third World, to Capitalism and Maosm and racial prejudices and revolution. And in these, to me, unforgettable conversations all the barriers were down, the cultural differences disappeared, the constricting uniform of colour was stripped off — we knew each other as individual human beings. We teased each other, we abused each other, we sympathized with each other, we got bored on occasions with each other — yet however violent our arguments, the atmosphere was marvellously warm, gay, relaxed, affectionate — the “vibes”, one might say, were extremely good. We were, I am convinced, behaving in a deeply civilized manner. And this sort of encounter, these intimate relationships, these friendships struck between peoples from sharply contrasting backgrounds, are occurring all over the world where ever there is a truly cosmopolitan centre of learning.

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So living in England and working in the field of African studies, one had this advantage of first-hand contact with people from the Third World. One had other advantages. One was always running into people who had just come back from doing something interesting in one part of Africa or another — I remember a girl, a student at London University, who had spent a term at the University of Khartoum and hitchhiked from there to Addis Ababa. I have a friend, an officer in the Royal Engineers, who while he was an instructor at Sandhurst, used regularly to lead exploring expeditions made up of officer cadets into the Central Sahara. But there were so many people one met who had just come back from somewhere in Africa, journalists, anthropologists, engineers, diplomats, economic advisers, teachers — and by drawing on their experiences one was constantly enlarging one's own knowledge of contemporary Africa. In South Africa I find this stream of travellers from Black Africa reduced to a very modest trickle.

Then again one had the advantage of having the B.B.C. on tap. I think the B.B.C. through the medium both of sound radio and of television, can be regarded as one of the great agencies of interpretation in the modern world. Take one important aspect of its work — the platform it has provided for many of the leaders of Black Africa. Among the latest of

these leaders to make their mark on British television is Chief Gatsha Buthelezi. I find it a sadly ironical feature of the present South African situation that Chief Buthelezi should be better known to many people in Britain than to many White South Africans. I know that Chief Buthelezi has had the opportunity to talk to a number of white groups in this country, but through the medium of television he has been able to make a much wider impact in Britain. It seems to me that the experience of hearing an African leader talking vigorously about his own problems, and about the aspirations of his people is one of the most effective solvents of racial prejudice. Add to the information one gains from the B.B.C. the mass of material relating to Africa produced by the British press. I do not wish to imply by contrast that the coverage of African affairs by the South African press is sadly deficient. On the contrary, it seems to me that that section of the South African press with which I am familiar — the English-language papers published in Cape Town — is commendably outward-looking. But for obvious reasons South African newspapers or periodicals cannot hope to rival the international coverage of their English contemporaries such as *The Times* or *The Guardian*. So the actual flow of news from Black Africa is more modest here than it is in England, although I should add that I have found, at least in Cape Town, that with the resources of a good university library at one's disposal, one can get round this difficulty.

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There is one other contrast in the contacts with Black Africa which I must mention. In England we have no restrictions on what we are allowed to read. Go to the British Museum, for example, and you will find a rich collection of what would be described here as “subversive literature.” You in South Africa have accepted a system of censorship which seems to an insult and an affront to any intelligent man. I find it preposterous that the work of some of the most distinguished South African writers is not legally allowed to be read by their compatriots. I find it aggravating in the extreme that in teaching African Affairs I am not allowed to recommend to my students the handiest reference book that I know — *The Penguin Africa Handbook*. I do not know exactly why this book has been banned. I suppose, it contains a quotation from Luthuli or Mandela or else its editor, a distinguished English journalist of South African origin, has fallen foul of your government for one reason or another.

Now the point I want to make with all seriousness is that you must never let these restrictions — the lack of personal contact with Africans, with people working in the independent African states, the absence of television, the more modest press coverage, the censorship — provide you with an alibi. So often one hears people in white South Africa saying, “We don't know what Africans really think” or “Those independent countries are really all in a bit of a mess aren't they?” I believe that there is no justification for such professions of ignorance or for such facile and trivial generalizations. I believe it is perfectly possible to come to grips with Black Africa by using the resources that are available in any good university library. But I think that as a South African, one ought to begin by starting at home, by looking at what Black South Africans are thinking and saying, by understanding what African nationalism means in the South African context. The material you need for such an enquiry is really not all that difficult to find. Let me suggest a few examples.

Take first the survey of the attitudes of high school students in Soweto to a variety of important social issues carried out by M.L. Edelstein, an official of the Johannesburg City

Council and submitted as an M.A. thesis to the University of Pretoria. The results of this survey were given a good deal of publicity in the *Argus* in October 1971. This is how the *Argus* summarized Mr. Edelstein's conclusion on the attitude of the average high school student in Soweto.

'He is proud of being Black, he believes that black South Africans form one nation irrespective of tribal origin. . . . Overwhelmingly he would like more social intercourse with the Whites. He is bitterly conscious of his disabilities – his "inadequate" political rights, the burden of influx control, and inadequate incomes, educational facilities and opportunities for employment. . . . He wants a Western way of life. . . . he wants to be called an African.'

Turn next to a document of a different nature. You will find it easily enough in that excellent anthology, the Penguin *Book of South African Verse*. It is an extract from a long poem, 'On the Gold Mines' by the Zulu poet, B.W: Vilakazi. (Vilakazi died at the early age of forty-one in 1947; for the last ten years of his life he was a lecturer in African Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand). The poem is in the form of a soliloquy by a Zulu gold miner. These extras are taken from the last few stanzas.

'Be careful, though I go unarmed today.  
There was a time when from these worn-out arms  
Long-bladed spears were flung far and wide  
Whose whirling dimmed the whole earth. . . .  
Now I am forever dreaming, child of iron.  
That this earth of my forefathers once again  
Will be restored to the rightful Black hands. . . .

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Grown rich on the spoil of nation on nation  
Yet I and this whole line of ours  
Who are black are left with nothing of nothing. . . .

Thunder on engines of the gold mines. . . .  
Roar on, only stop jarring on my ears,  
I have served the white employers well,  
And now my soul weighs heavily in me. . . .  
Come, release me, sleep, to rise far off  
Far in the ancient birthplace of my race:  
Sleep and dreams from which there is no waking,  
Clasped in my vanished people's arms  
Under the green hills of the sky.'

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My third extract is taken from a speech made by Mr. Toivo Herman Ja Toivo who was charged under the Terrorism Act of 1967 and sentenced to twenty years imprisonment. Before leaving the dock he made this statement which was reported in the press and later published in full in *The South African Outlook* of April, 1968. Mr. Toivo came from South West Africa; he was an old soldier who saw service in the Second World War. He became an active member of S.W.A.P.O., the largest nationalist party in South West Africa. In the mid-1960's the members of the party, bitterly frustrated by their failure to achieve their aims by constitutional means, turned to armed rebellion. Mr. Toivo believed that his friends had made a tactical error in resorting to violence, but he felt he could not possibly refrain from helping them, when some of the S.W.A.P.O. guerillas asked him for help. For this he was arrested and condemned. His statement is an intensely moving one which deserves, like Vilakazi's poem to be read in its entirety. Here I can only pick out a few extracts.

'We know that Whites do not think of Black as politicians – only as agitators. Many of our people through no fault of their own, have had no education at all. This does not mean that they do not know what they want. A man does not have to be formally educated to know that he wants to live with his family where he wants to live, and not where an official chooses to tell him to live; to move about freely and not require a pass; to earn a decent wage; to be free to work for the person of his choice for as long as he wants. and finally, to be ruled by the people that he wants to be ruled by; and not those who rule him because they have more guns than he has, . . . . Violence is truly fearsome, but who would not defend his property and himself against a robber? And we believe that South Africa has robbed us of our country. . . . I do not claim that it is easy for men of different races to live at peace with one another. I myself had no experience of this in my youth, and at first it surprised me that men of different races could live together in peace. But now I know it to be true and to be something for which we must strive. The South African Government creates hostility by separating people and emphasizing their differences. We believe that by living together people will learn to lose their fear of each other.'

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Finally, one last quotation taken from the speech delivered by Mr. Abraham Tiro, onetime president of the S.R.C. of the University of the North (Turfloop) in April 1972, the speech for which he was afterwards expelled.



'Times are changing and we must change with them. The magic story of human achievement gives irrefutable proof that as soon as nationalism is awakened among the intelligentsia, it becomes the vanguard in the struggle against alien rule. Of what use will be your education if you cannot help your country in her hour of need? If your education is not linked with the entire continent of Africa, it is meaningless.'

**From this brief anthology I think it is possible to deduce some of the main characteristics of nationalism as it manifests itself among Black South Africans. There is first an intense pride in the cultural heritage of one's people, a deep sense of patriotism. There is a passionate desire for freedom: put at its simplest, this might be defined as a determination not to permit oneself to be mucked around by strangers any longer. Expressed in more elevated language, freedom can be described as the necessary precondition for a man to achieve his full stature, to fulfil himself as a human being. There is also, I think, in all these pronouncements a toughness, a defiant conviction of the rightness of their cause. And there is a belief, too, that it is the duty of the most educated people in the society to act as the vanguard, to take the lead in the nationalist struggle.**

To people from other parts of the world all this must have a very familiar ring about it. An Englishman will surely find himself recalling the words of his country's orators in the struggle with Philip II of Spain, with Napoleon or with Hitler or the speeches of the parliamentarians in their running battle with royal autocracy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. An American will be reminded of his forebear's struggle against British supremacy in the 1770's, an Indian of the great days of Congress militancy in the

1930's and '40's, a Greek of his countrymen's struggle against the Turks, a Frenchman of 1789 and the declaration of the rights of man. And coming near home, it seems to me that if one is an Afrikaner, then one should find it easy enough to make an imaginative grasp of African nationalism. For Afrikaners, too, have known the bitter experience of being a conquered people, have fought with gallantry and tenacity their own war against the apparently overwhelming might of a foreign imperialism, have become expert in all the tactics needed to develop a nationalist sentiment among their own kith and kin. Indeed few people anywhere in the world can compare with the Afrikaners in their record of protest, in their highly individualistic love of freedom, in their skill as guerilla fighters. In the context of African history Afrikaner nationalism should be regarded as the first modern African nationalism.

Nationalism can of course degenerate into chauvinism, and become intensely tedious, restrictive and ultimately self-destructive. But at its best, linked with the great revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, nationalism is surely an immensely dynamic, creative and life-enhancing movement. Nearly all the nationalist movements that have appeared in Black Africa in the course of the past thirty years have accepted this liberal, revolutionary line of thought. The Lusaka Manifesto of 1969, one of the major documents of modern African nationalism, brings out this point very clearly. The thirteen Heads of State who signed the Manifesto stated unequivocally:

'We wish to make clear beyond all shadow of doubt our acceptance of the belief that all men are equal, and have equal rights to human dignity and respect, regardless of colour, race, or sex. We believe that all men have the



*Preparing themselves to help the farmer, Ugandan students give a practical demonstration in a pest-control class.*

right to participate as equal members of the society in their own government. We do not accept that any individual or group has any right to govern any other group of sane adults, without their consent and we affirm that only the people of a society acting together as equals can determine what is for them a good society and a good social, economic and political organization.'

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I believe that it is quite impossible to understand what is happening in Africa today, to achieve a sympathetic *rapprochement* with the aspirations of African peoples, if one has not first made the effort to grasp the essential meaning of nationalism. But once one has learned to attune oneself to nationalism's characteristic rhythm, then I think one finds oneself almost instinctively identifying the problems that face the independent states of Africa. Looking at the matter analytically, one may say that all states, indeed all human communities, are confronted with three basic tasks. In the first place there is the need to establish within the confines of the state a harmonious set of human relationships, an acceptable political order. Then all the members of the state should be provided with the basic material necessities required for living a good life. And thirdly, since man does not live by bread alone, there should be a conscious effort to improve the quality of living, to make it possible for all members of the state to fulfil themselves to the full extent of their capabilities.

**Now if one looks at the record of the newly independent states of Africa certain facts emerge very clearly. In the first place, contrary to what is often thought to be the case, there has been a remarkable degree of political stability.**

Having said this I know that somebody will want to get up and exclaim, "What about Burundi? What about Nigeria or the Congo? What about all those military coups we are always reading about in the newspapers?" To those who would bring up these specific cases, I would say, first, "Look around Africa and count the number of states which are still ruled by the same men who brought them to independence ten or fifteen years ago. Among them you will find Tunisia, Senegal, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Niger, Chad, Cameroun, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi. Egypt has been ruled by the same regime for twenty years. Morocco and Ethiopia are governed by ancient dynasties." I would go on to add that it is very easy to exaggerate the extent of political instability in those countries which have had a more eventful history. Ghana has known four changes of regime in the last seven years, yet with an extremely competent civil service to hold things together the country still gives the impression of an immensely solid basic stability. The Congo seemed to be on the verge of total anarchy in the early 1960's; it has been pulled together in a highly effective manner by General Mobutu and his associates. Nigeria suffered the ravages of a terrible civil war; yet one of the most striking features of contemporary Nigeria has been the spirit of reconciliation deliberately fostered by the victorious federal government. Does this sound like special pleading? If it does, then all I can say is "Look to the recent history of other continents. Reflect on Europe's bloody record in the first half of the twentieth century. Count up the number of wars that have ravaged Asia in the last thirty years. Africa's record certainly does not compare badly with that of Europe or Asia." But I would prefer to put things more positively, to say that Africa has produced in this generation a remarkable number of outstanding

political leaders — I would count Nasser, Bourguiba, Haile Selassie, Senghor, Houphouet-Boigny, Tubman, Sekou Toure, Nkrumah, Kenyatta, Nyerere, Kaunda and Banda among them — men who have tackled the immensely difficult tasks of creating new or reviving old nations with vigour and statesmanlike vision, welding together populations of an extremely heterogeneous nature and giving them a sense of dynamic purpose.

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Turn to the second great task — the task of producing more wealth. Here one must begin by familiarizing oneself with the African environment, and so come to realize how a combination of natural causes — endemic diseases, poor soil, irregular rainfall and so on — serve to produce that downdrag of poverty which so many African communities have to cope with. One needs too to appreciate the practical difficulties faced by those countries whose overseas trade is dependent on a very limited number of commodities — cocoa, groundnuts, cotton, coffee, sisal and so on — the price of which is subject to constant fluctuations on the world market. Certainly one cannot talk about any major economic revolution having taken place in any of the newly independent states. What does impress one is the readiness which many African peoples have shown to acquire new techniques or adopt new agricultural crops. The history of cocoa in Ghana, of groundnuts in Senegal or Northern Nigeria, of coffee in the Ivory Coast or Tanzania can truly be presented as a record of the enterprise, the pioneering skill of African peasant farmers. All over modern Africa thousands of men and women have accustomed themselves to handling the machines of an industrialized society — from typewriters and telephone exchanges to petrol tankers and X-ray equipment — with as much efficiency as their contemporaries in other parts of the world. And now, as a result of the mineral discoveries made in the course of the past two decades — oil in Nigeria, Algeria and Libya, iron ore in Mauritania and Liberia, copper in Zaire and Zambia — a number of African countries are beginning to find themselves in a somewhat similar position to that of South Africa at the end of the nineteenth century when the marvellous bonanzas produced by diamonds and gold created the preconditions necessary for reaching the stage of economic take-off, of largely self-sustained economic growth.

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The third broad line of activity is to be found in the field of cultural development. One of the outstanding achievements of the years since independence has been the spectacular advances made in almost every African state in the provision of a western type of education. This can be illustrated in one way by simple statistics. In Nigeria, for example, there were in 1956 no more than six hundred students attending the country's only University. By 1970 Nigeria contained five universities with an enrolment of ten thousand students, to which should be added several thousand other students receiving their higher education overseas. Or take the case of Zaire, the former Belgian Congo. In 1958 there were thirty thousand students attending secondary school. By 1970, in spite of all the tribulations the country had undergone in the intervening years, secondary school enrolment had risen to 270,000. Figures alone can give more than a skeleton impression of the extent of these educational revolution. As a result of these educational developments, the



social and cultural patterns of most African countries are being profoundly altered. Every school, every university can be regarded as a growing point, generating new ideas, introducing new techniques, creating the necessary preconditions for a new cultural synthesis. Or look at that immensely exciting phenomenon — the emergence of a constantly expanding corpus of African literature, of novels, poems and plays written in European languages but devoted to themes that are exclusively African. Irrespective of its literary merit — and at its best the work produced by African writers is among the most exciting being produced anywhere in the world today — these novels and poems make it a great deal easier for us as outsiders to understand the various strands of thought and emotion that make up the fabric of modern African life.

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I have talked unashamedly about African achievements. No doubt some people will say that I am adopting a starry-eyed approach, that I have shown myself insufficiently aware of the darker side of the contemporary African scene — the corruption, the unemployment, the inefficiency, the brutality, the superstition, the tribal tensions and so on. But of course one is aware of all these things. What one needs to do is to see them in perspective. It would not be difficult to take any society that has ever existed and, by picking on its faults and weaknesses, present a picture of it in highly sombre and depressing tones. We all know — South Africans, perhaps, more than most people — that there are few experiences more irritating than hearing an outsider expound on the weakness of our own society in narrowly critical terms. We resent this because we know our own society better than any outsider can ever do, and therefore we know that a highly critical view is also a partial view, presenting not the whole truth but half-truths. I think we should learn to judge other societies in the way we would wish our own to be judged.

**Let me end by trying to feed back what I have been saying into the South African context. I wonder whether White South Africans have ever really made the attempt fully to appreciate the achievements of their Black compatriots. There is surely a heroic dimension in the careers of the outstanding leaders of the African Nationalist Congress.** There is much that is deeply impressive in the work of African writers and scholars. But above all one is struck by the human achievement of the many tens of thousands of individual men and women who stand up with courage and perseverance, dignity and good humour against the pressure of a harsh, exhausting, often oppressive environment. It is easy for those of us who are Europeans to be aware of our own people's achievements. And certainly the achievements of people of European origin in South Africa — the cities, the farms, the industries, the universities, the literature and so on — serve as imposing monuments to European enterprise. But the unique characteristic of South Africa lies surely in the fact that it contains two such diverse streams of achievement, one African, the other European — to which should be added, particularly in Natal, a third strand represented by the many contributions of people of Asian origin. I am not a South African, but if I were a South African born, I hope I would find it possible to feel myself as being in some way the heir of a marvellously rich historical heritage, that Shaka and Moshesh and Kruger and Rhodes and Gandhi had all in some ways contributed to my birthright. And I hope too that were I a South African I would hold before me, in spite of all the tensions, the fears, the injustices, the tribal feuds of the present, a vision of what my country might someday become, one of the most exhilarating and creatively exciting nations in the world, a nation whose diverse peoples would constantly find themselves stimulated and enriched by contact one with another, a nation engaged in the creation of a wonderfully rich and cosmopolitan culture to which Africa, Europe and Asia would all contribute. Here surely is the possibility of a marvellous destiny. □

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# IN THE INTERESTS OF NATIONAL MORALITY

## OPEN LETTER TO ALL FIRST CLASS MALE CITIZENS

Brethren,  
As a self-appointed private investigator for the PCB, I have taken upon myself the onerous task of reading foreign newspapers. And I don't just mean newspapers like the Rand Daily Mail and the Sunday Times, but genuine foreign newspapers from overseas.

When one gets used to all the smut and filth, what one notices about these papers is their failure to apply the two great principles of loyal reportage known as Trailing the Red Herring and Keeping the Facts from the Public. One good result, however, is that by reading these papers one can really get to know what's going on in the countries

they come from. Naturally I can't tell you everything, because it's my duty, as an unofficio member of the Board, to protect your morals. But none-the-less I can tell you some very shocking things which will make you thankful that we in South Africa have men like Dr. Connie Mulder who are determined to keep our nation pure.

\* \* \* \* \*

We all know how permissive England is. And we all know that, because of the lack of influx control, the Irish have moved in and there is now an Irish-gevaar of colossal proportions. Recently, to safeguard what's left of the purity of the English race, they had to pass a law forbidding all sexual intercourse with the Irish. But it was like shutting the stable door after the stallion had got in. Anyway, in order to evade the new law the English males now make journeys just over the border to the Channel Islands where there are literally thousands of beautiful Irish women. Even M.P.'s, ministers of religion and aged senators are involved. And recently a most dreadful case came to light. I read about it in the Manchester Telegraph, which, let me tell you, is one of the most liberalisto-communistic papers in England. In the well-known London business suburb of Excelsior the police laid charges against a whole nest of English bosses who were having illicit relations with their Irish typists. The news flashed across the world (except to South Africa, where such news is not allowed) and soon thousands of men armed with TV cameras arrived on the scene. It was clear that the last vestiges of English decency were about to be exposed and that the country would not be able to survive such a holocaust of bad publicity so the charges were quietly dropped.

How thankful we all are in South Africa that we haven't got any such skeletons in our national cupboard!

\* \* \* \* \*

Or take another story. This time from La Garotte, the famous French newspaper. Now in Paris, as you all know, there's a community called the Songs, who have

lived there for six generations, but who have no rights because their homeland is on a Pacific island, where they can enjoy all the rights they want. Anyway these Songs are shut off in a cramped, dingy part of Paris, surrounded by a high barbed-wire fence. The authorities say they are kept apart for their own good, to preserve their own national culture, but we know this to be a pack of lies and that the permissive French treat them abominably, believing that, as a superior race, this is their natural right. And only the other day La Garotte carried this typically lurid headline: Gendarme Rapes Song in Back of Police Van. I shan't go into details, they are too shameful. But, needless to say, as a pious man, I knelt down on the spot and said thanks to God and His right-hand man, Dr. Connie Mulder, for sparing our beloved South Africa from this most shocking kind of permissiveness.

\* \* \* \* \*

Last of all let me tell you a story from Denmark, the most promiscuous country in the world. I read it in the Copenhagen Chronicle under yet another typically permissive headline: Pojak Beaten To Death With Rubber Hose. Now, as you all know, the Pojaks are a lower type of people who are imported into Denmark to do manual labour. The Danes are so permissive that they themselves do little work but they roundly condemn the Pojaks as lazy, dishonest, stupid etc. In fact the Danish national sense of morality is so low that they have even coined phrases like 'The only good Pojak is a dead Pojak' and 'Give a Pojak an orange and he'll take your whole farm'. Well, to get back to the story, this Danish farmer caught one of his Pojak labourers red-handed in the act of allegedly stealing, so he took the law into his own hands, tied the Pojak to a cartwheel and beat him to death with a length of rubber hose.

Let us thank God and our lucky stars that we have Dr. Connie Mulder to prevent this kind of permissive behaviour from ever infiltrating into South Africa.□

P.C.B. Snooper

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# THE AFRICAN WOMAN

by Deborah Mabiletsa

The African woman plays a significant role as a mother, wife and housekeeper. Outside her home she is a worker and a wage earner in an effort to supplement the family income to meet its minimum demands. To this end she finds employment as a domestic servant or an unskilled labourer in industry. Some take up a profession; the statistics on African women in professions reflect a commendable progress on their part. But, in spite of their struggle to improve themselves intellectually and socially, the African women find themselves relegated to a minority status in their community. Their chances of emancipation are consistently retarded by a number of factors that impose various restraints on them. The

African women are subjected to disabilities arising from various laws, and administrative practices. Julius Lewin in the 'Legal status of the African Woman' gives a comprehensive exposition of the various laws that retard the emancipation of African women and tend to keep their status low. Unfortunately the African woman is still heavily penalised both as a member of a race against which South African legislation discriminates and through falling under a non-progressive system of laws. Either Roman Dutch law, or Common or Customary law may be applied to an African woman. The Matrimonial Affairs Act 37 of 1953 which is regarded as the 'Magna Carta' of the Married European Women and which has enhanced

their status considerably, and the Children's Act 39 of 1937 which gives security and protection for their children, apply to the African woman in legal theory though seldom in administration practices.

**The story of the African woman enduring economic disabilities because she has commonly to support her children without financial assistance from the father of the children is too familiar to us all, in fact it has become an accepted feature of life in the African Community.**

The present variety of practices relating to accepting African women as tenants in municipal Townships cause insecurity and confusion.

An African woman can be a municipal tenant only at the discretion of the Superintendent. Very often on the death of a man, his widow is in danger of ejection. It is true that under customary law a woman has no right of inheritance. In a tribal system women could not own other than personal belongings. But no woman was ever thrown out of the home because of the death of the husband. There was the extended family unit with its numerous male members who are always ready to take over all the assets and responsibilities of the household.

Further there was no problem of neglected children. All the children in the extended family were always looked after. To-day, the instance of widows and orphans ejected from homes on the death of the husbands is a familiar pattern in our Townships.

This has brought untold hardship and suffering to these women and their children. It is a matter of great concern that the African woman in South Africa is not given the status which accords with her influence and responsible participation in Community life. Several organizations including the National Council of Women, The Y.W.C.A.,



The South African Institute of Race Relations, The Black Sash, The South African Council of Churches, have tried to exert pressure to have this position improved and have emphasised that it is important that the legal status of African women be brought into line with that of other women in the country. They have pointed out that this is not a mere matter of justice but is the only way of establishing for the African woman the place in her family and community from which she can, with security, continue to perform her dual function of guardian of traditional values, and the cherisher of new life. In conclusion, to my mind, the African women are showing their capacity to adjust to fundamental changes which are taking place about them with startling rapidity; there is no reason, why they should not be afforded the same legal status as that afforded to European women in this country.□

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# MARQUARD ON FEDERALISM

by Edgar Brookes

**A new book by Leo Marquard is always an important event to Liberals in South Africa and indeed to all who value first rate academic research. There are certain things that we have come to expect from a book by Leo Marquard, such as honesty, reasonableness, lucidity and factual accuracy. These expectations are again fully realised in "A Federation of Southern Africa".**

One might perhaps be tempted to assume that Leo Marquard, like some other Liberals, has given up hope that the full Liberal programme will ever be realised and has tried to find a way round it. That this is not so is illustrated by quotations such as the following.

"The results of apartheid are devastating" (page 115). Again, "Racial separation as practised in the R.S.A. will have to go if Federation is to come about" (page 103).

"Federation is not a method of separating the races, of realising the ideals of some people for a partitioning of South Africa. But in no autonomous region could the interests of one group dominate over the rights of another" (page 113).

Generally speaking the argument of the book is that a racially dominated Federation is a contradiction in terms and not to be considered, and it is made clear that the Whites would have to agree to a non-racial Federal Parliament.

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Marquard claims that Federation would not solve magically all the problems of South African Whites. It looks, therefore, that Federation would have to be approved for



its own sake. But a paragraph on page 116 is very significant in this connection.

“There can be no doubt that apartheid has made South Africa internationally unpopular and that most White South Africans are aware of this. There is also little doubt that most of them would welcome a way out of their difficulties. It is facile, but not very helpful, to say that the matter is really quite simple: all that White South Africa has to do is to abandon apartheid forthwith. What has been said in this book points to the complexity of the situation and supports the view that it is naive to expect White South Africans to relinquish part of their power and privilege, unless alternative policies can be found that would guarantee – not power and privilege, for that would merely be fraud – but those very fundamental rights which they are themselves at present denying to others. It is submitted that this can never be done under present constitutional arrangements in Southern Africa and that a federal structure is a more hopeful alternative.”

The arguments put forward are largely economic. For example, Marquard says (page 99), “Commercial, industrial and mining enterprises in the R.S.A. can hardly but welcome federation.” The economic and some of the political arguments assume more rationality among South African Whites (who, alas, are not all Leo Marquards) than one perhaps has the right to expect.

But is he perhaps right? Is opinion changing? We shall try to answer these questions at the end of our survey.

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**One reads the book not without some criticisms. One of the most important of these is the absence of a map.** Nearly a quarter of a century ago Professor A.M. Keppel-Jones wrote a book called “Friends or Foes” which might be regarded as a first rough draft of Marquard’s present book. He had the courage to publish a map which shows ten areas within a federation, instead of Marquard’s eleven, and the book is none the worse for that. Marquard makes an impassioned defence for not having published a map. He says (page 127), “The usual trap set for anyone who suggests the partition of a country is to be asked to produce a map. The unwary fall into the trap and then have their map as well as their arguments demolished.” This does not convince the present reviewer: a map would have been a very valuable addition to the book.

**In the second place, Marquard’s historical background is open to criticism. He attributes the unitary character of South Africa’s constitution to the hurried impression of Sir Henry de Villiers after a week’s visit to Canada. But this is surely to make General Smuts and John X. Merriman much more simple folk than they were. They were not the kind of people to be carried away by the hurried impressions of Sir Henry de Villiers or anyone else. The fact is that in 1908 attention was centred only on the two White races, who had recently been at war. Smuts, Merriman and Steyn felt that federation would accentuate the racial differences. The Union was entered into because the alternative might have been war. This is not an isolated phenomenon. The complete parliamentary union of England and Scotland in 1707 took place because union seemed the only alternative to violence.**

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In passing one must admit to some mental questioning as to whether Marquard’s advocacy of “de-reservation” (page 38) is justified. But this we can leave for the most important criticism, namely whether Marquard has not prescribed a mechanical medicine for a spiritual disease. Would English-speaking Durban welcome a federation scheme in which Indian voters might well be in a majority? Would English-speaking Cape Town welcome a Coloured majority? And as for Afrikaans-speaking South Africa, would not some kind of spiritual revolution in the Dutch Reformed Church do more than any constitution ever could?

These are natural and perhaps justifiable questions. But one feels that Marquard, who knows South Africa better than most people who write about it, has felt in the air that new dawn of hope which some of the rest of us have felt. More and more it becomes clear that young South Africa, whether in Durban or Stellenbosch, is not going to be tied down by the catch-words, facile emotions and fears of the older generation. It may be that in this awakening such a practical proposition as Leo Marquard puts before us may attract many young people. The book may well be a pledge of this new hope. **At any rate, like any book by Leo Marquard, it is to be read and studied carefully. It is a good case made by a good man with good arguments. Perhaps no more needs to be said.** □

# THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE

## TWO REVIEWS

In publishing these differing reactions to THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE by Richard Turner (a Spro-cas Publication: price R1-25) Reality does not necessarily identify itself with either.

### TURNING OF THE EYE

by Pascal Gwala

Turner's book is not Turner's book. It is a plea for change. A plea from a man who is voicing great concern over the need for some change. It is a voice of millions the world over. So the book even suggests the type of change needed. Further, one or two "positive aspects" in separate development are pointed out.

The author certainly had a mastery over his subject matter, which cannot be ignored. Where does one go from here? This is the question in the minds of most of the people of every shade of opinion, of every colour of skin.

**Nothing new. It has happened before. In every country that has had to undergo social and political change. Germany during the rise of Hitler: the "Night of the Long Knives" was concurrent with the "Moment of the Damned".**

"The necessity of Utopian thinking" (page 3) is therefore, in view of the drawn-out distance of white thinking in general, desirable. A practical necessity. But it would have been very much more appropriate if Turner had defined what adaptability he would expect of the white who is striving to get himself a second car. That, milled out, would have got us somewhere.

And the author's failure to define the split-level — home and two-car-garage reality reveals how close to political impotence the intelligentsia of this part of the continent is. And also, it exposes the sycophancy in assessments by liberal academics; white or black.

The present social structure is not static. It is not orderly. Turner tends to view it as being such. His pointing out the advantages in separate education within the different "stans" grossly overlooks the social chaos that is highly possible within the "homelands" reality. The author treats

the Black as if they could never at a future time develop militant anti-South Africanism or parochial nationalism, or possibly — narrow tribal exclusiveness. The author's only worry, or fear, is the possible clash between the land-starved peasants and the Black "middle class". The "keep this house in order" ethic gets loose and runs right through the book. Was the author perhaps too sensitively aware of the anti-thesis "set this house on fire"?

*The basic condition:*

The basic condition is how objective can one be? . Can someone who supports the Vietnam war honestly claim to be against environmental and air pollution? That is, when one has to think of the tons and tons of bombs that U.S. bombers have dropped in that war; and the resultant "scorched earth" effect those bombings have had? . Or, how could one make a really objective appraisal of America's "Hell's Angels" without going into the negative heroism so often expressed by the marines and as expressed by the "Green Berets"? . The far-fetched examples here are a confirmation of "the necessity for Utopian thinking".

The author blames the root cause of conflict in this country on the "consumer human model" (page 31). This conclusion by the author is not entirely true. Only partly. By drawing his assessment upon this premise the author has attempted to dismiss the real basic cause of conflict: the land question and race privilege. The historic context of "the consumer human model" is one of manipulation and affluence. There are real cases in history in which conquest and political coercion have included the "consumer human model" — post-war Europe and post-war Japan being taken as examples. Hence the lack of historic validity within the South

African context and social structure. The author's connivance at the basic factors is like the economist tendency of most European Communist Parties before the emergency of a Soviet regime in China. Or, to extend the context — before Dien Bien Phu. The European C.P.'s rode the colonial issue their way far too long. Explaining the colonial situation in terms of their entrenched economism; never saying openly that it was not just class interests that decided the motives of the white colonists. At the same time selling out to the colonial middle class in the name of common racial situation. Until the colonial people eventually lost all confidence in the two-timing theories of European C.P.'s as far as the colonial issue was concerned.

#### *Evolutionary Practicability.*

**The whole thesis of Turner's is suggestive of evolutionary practicability husked within revolutionary rhetoric. No one would really go against evolutionary progress and remain honest to his desires for change. But only if that evolutionary progress is real progress. That is, if its dynamic is genuine. Because the question is: is this evolutionary practical thinking, since it is progressive, worthy of genuine appreciation? Is it a smooth flow without counter-evolutionary hitbacks? Is its limited range beneficial to the unlimited humanistic interests of the Blacks? .**

Evolution is ever limited. Since it closes in upon itself through its various stages.

The Blacks are not equal to the Whites in many ways. Therefore their developments are largely unequal. However, developments do become equal in many other ways. In the midst of poverty the Black townships are able to produce some extremely rich Blacks. And the whole world knows there's been a Kgotso. And the Black ghettos are able to produce artists of the calibre of Dunnile, Sekoto, Julian Mstau who rival the cream of white society's artists. One need not go into the world of sport.

It must have come as a great shock to many cultural apologists to realise that in a relatively short span of historic time the third world has been able to produce thinkers like Gandhi, Mao, Fanon, Nyerere. Whose ideas have helped changeworld thinking. The author of "Eye of the Needle" seems to have thought only of unequal development:- social, economic and political. This premise is false.

By even going to the extent of saying the Coloureds and Indians may because of their higher level of technical know-how go against the aspirations of the Africans (page 78) the author reveals publicly the often hidden truth. That it is the interest of White manipulation and the survival of White supremacy that Coloureds and Indians would be a little "higher" than Africans.

#### *Feasibilities:*

It serves very little if any purpose to analyze the feasibilities in the future of South African Society without making definite mention of to-day's capitalist and neofascist developments.

Israel's kibbutz is different from the communal development of Tanzania. Hitler's nationalization of services and industry in Germany was used with the directed aim of breaking the conscious will of the German working class. Not the case with say, Cuba's socialization process. So to lodge the two together would not only be

a violation of context but a grand slam intrusion of generalization upon historic situation. Israel's kibbutz is gearing towards a militarist societal context. Not the case with Tanzania's "commune"

Turner's logic is this: it doesn't matter within what context of White domination we find ourselves in. There can be room for progress. Brought to its simplest interpretation: it does not matter whether there are "stans" or no "stans"; there could still be progress, if the White could only drop his materialistic outlook.

What about the basic motive behind the concept of Bantustans? . Some Jews made the best of their lot in the ghettos. It still led them to the gas chambers. And somewhere. . . . the author finds justifiable the emergence of Black consciousness. (Page 76)

#### *Participatory Democracy:*

The theory of participatory democracy as expounded in "Eye of the Needle" is an opportunistic ideal. It seeks to accommodate the best in democracy with the most added in totalitarianism. Which overshadows the other? . Guns and police dogs argue better than the best of philosophical theories.

**Can we imagine the affectation of the ideology of Separate Development without having to imagine South Africa's militarism that is continually being structured by the designers of Separate Development? . Such an imagination could only come from a crabbed orientation in political thinking. Albert Camus said , as an aftermath of a devastated Europe, that, "when one has no character one has to apply a method". And method, once it becomes a failure, must have to bend to objective laws.**

White baaskap has lost its character. It is already on the prelude to its own destruction. Like a Godzilla it should have long gone extinct. It is extinct, basically. Yet it sticks in the minds of some die-hard Whites. And ironically Godzilla is now being matched against King Kong — the gigantic theme of Separate Development. It's a gamble. King Kong versus Godzilla. An insane prospect.

The virtue of liberal thinking at this historic juncture is that liberals are all too much aware of the fact that Separate Development is a gamble. A fascist gamble.

So that though "Utopian thinking", the author's notion is largely based in the status quo. The rehabilitation of people is to be developed — not within the negative realities of migratory labour, border industries and white economical aggression. "Not within" because the author ignores these factors. Although the truths of these realities are so obvious to any student of rural communities on Southern Africa.

Mention is made of "the possibility of a clash of interests between the peasants and a 'middle class' of traders, politicians and civil servants" (page 78). Of course one cannot really speak of peasant class in this country. There is no stable peasantry i.e. a class that lives off the land in the fullest sense; as can be found in other countries. The term rural worker is closer to the situation of the rural Black. More especially in those areas turned into rural ghettos by the rehabilitation schemes.

**Liberal thinking in this country runs broadly along two lines of approach. The Utopian line and the line of what I shall term practical realism. In the former, the theorist**



may set himself loose on the veld of the democratic imagination. He expounds theories that appear as the great answer to the "racial problem". In the latter the theorist wants to point out the impracticability of achieving equilibrium in a non-racial South Africa that has so small a White minority, which is the dominant sector.

Both lines of approach have one thing in common. Both are of an abstracted form; merely conceptual. Nothing beyond the existence of the concept.

"There is no reason why they (the churches) should not invest some money in the workers' controlled enterprises in the homelands or in the urban areas". Typical of practical realism – inverted. The worker must only "control" (page 72) and not own these factories. Some outside investment in them will also to a large degree determine policy making. Investment coming from without. The same thing is happening to the former colonial countries, most of them. The investors have a strong say in the policy matters of these countries. Neo-colonialism. Turner's variation is the domestic one. Where will the Black "middle class" be? . What of its negative wealth? Should that "middle class" invest in these so called workers' enterprises will there be no clash between it and the White churches? .

The inter-play of tendencies in the local spectrum wherever workers' control could be allowed to exist will obviate an open clash between the workers and the often so cosmopolitan "middle class". And middle class concepts, once they weaken, easily regress into fascism.

An interpretation of the author's thought suggests that the Black "middle class" may be overstepped or by-passed, with the outside investors dealing with the workers, in a homeland under whose political control? . Let us take Local Authority. Is the control of Local Authorities really, ever, sanctioned by the people involved: the workers (some of them bound to be migratory labour; or those mothers whose sons are in the towns (earning a low wage); or the religious leaders (whose spiritual folks have to endure the material debasements of labour regulations)? . What we find instead is a coercion implemented by the White ruling sector or – at times – manipulation by the Black "middle class". The author is dribbling the basic issue: self-determination.

How can anyone draw an objective assessment on the South African situation without going into the dialectics of self-determination? . The conspicuous disregard of

such factor in Turner's thesis has thus placed "Eye of the Needle" into and under the category of Thessianism, that ever inverted bowl in the cabinet of radical politics.

How do the White investors by-pass or overstep the Black "middle class" and get into a deal with worker controlled enterprises? . This is not only a remote possibility. It is a possibility that can only come through violent revolution within the homeland itself. Such upheaval would definitely upset the White sector. Even its own "stan"

Turner's choice of examples on communal development suggests that there is no monolithic solution to social problems, irrespective of common ideology. Which is quite true, somewhat. But going into the realities of the thesis does this conclusion not defeat the ends of man – ever seeking definite solution to his problems? . Contexts vary. So do the solutions.

But Turner goes on to say that those who do not really understand the socialist alternative base their "argument" on "the mistake" they make about "the nature of capitalist society and the mistake they make about the nature of power and constraint" (page 45) He goes on to call these mistakes illusions!

Power and the interests that are centred round it are a REALITY; and never an illusion. "Destroying these illusions will help us better to understand the politics of participatory democracy" (page 45). Context lost again.

And the underlying thought in Turner's thesis becomes clear. The White culturally, technologically and economically superior. But (according to Turner) the White's political outlook is outmoded; blunted by materialist greed. And therefore dangerous to his very survival. Why is he fearing the Black politically and making himself insecure when what he should do is to seek a better form of manipulation – even if that means socialist organisation of South African society? . Hence the varied socialist alternatives (page 37-40).

A "live on hay and you'll get pie in the sky" attitude is a thing the Black will no longer afford. As can be seen clearly in "Eye of the Needle". On the other hand it can be pointed out that for those who care to worry about immediate priorities, "Eye of the Needle" is a dangerously posed book. The ambiguous pose is typical of our very much ambiguous social structure. And of the ambiguous position many a person with radical inclination in political thinking has come to find himself in. □

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## IMAGINING A FUTURE

by Colin Gardner

The first and most important thing to be said about *The Eye of the Needle* is that it is certainly one of the most creative and fascinating books on South African society – and indeed on society in general – to have been published in this country in the last few years.

The book's primary aim is to provoke thought, or rather to provoke what is probably for many people a new mode of thinking:

"To understand a society, to understand what it is, where it is going, and where it could go, we cannot just

describe it. We need also to theorise about it. We need continually to refer back and forth between what we see in the society and what is essential to any society. When we look at a car we can distinguish easily between the chrome frills and that in the car which is essential to its functioning. This is an example of simple theorising, and we need to be able to do the same thing about society. Theory itself is not difficult. What is often difficult is *to shift oneself into a theoretical attitude* – that is, to realise what things in one's experience cannot be taken for granted. In the case of cars the problem is simplified by more or less annual changes in shape and in finish. It is easy to notice that they all have wheels, but don't all have fins. In the case of society it is much more difficult. Firstly, most people only experience one society in depth. Secondly, a society changes relatively slowly. The present nearly always at least seems to be fairly permanent. In order to theorise about society perhaps the first step (psychologically) we have to make is *to grasp the present as history*. History is not something that has just come to an end, and certainly not something that came to an end 50 years ago. Societies, including our own society, have been changing in many ways, great and small, throughout time, and there is no reason to believe that they have stopped now. . . ." (p. 7)

Pursuing this line of argument, Dr. Turner allows himself to move beyond the realm of the immediately real and the and the immediately realisable and to voyage into what he unashamedly calls "utopian thinking". But there is nothing arbitrary about the utopia that he constructs: it begins to take shape in the course of a penetrating and devastating analysis of some of the effects upon human beings of the capitalist system, and it is further elaborated as Dr. Turner explores some of the implications of Christian and humane social ideas.

The utopia, the ideal and yet (he insists) not impossible state of society that Dr. Turner invites us to contemplate, is participatory democracy. In this form of society the means of production are communally owned and are controlled by all those who work at them; many of the processes of government are decentralised so that everyone is able to participate to some extent in the conduct of the affairs of the state; all executive positions can be held for fairly brief periods only, so that there is little danger that new oligarchies or elites will come into existence; and all public institutions – the economy, education, etc. – are subject to a rational communal control which will prevent exploitation and gross inequality but promote true individuality and creativity.

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Thus briefly summarised it may all seem far too good to be true – or (some might say) too true to be good. But Dr. Turner argues his case with intelligence and in considerable detail. He means to be taken seriously, and it is impossible for a serious reader not to take him seriously. In some respects his book is reminiscent of Thomas More's original *Utopia*. **The mere process of following Dr. Turner's argument (which incidentally is managed with great lucidity) and of confronting his vision of a properly human state of society provides an experience which no thinking South African should deprive himself of.**

Most black readers will find Dr. Turner's utopia exciting but sadly distant from the present state-of-affairs in this country. Most white readers (since in their irrational

way they associate white power and privilege with white survival) will find the vision appalling but *happily* distant. Liberals and even radicals – particularly if they are white – may find themselves questioning many of their "liberal" presuppositions. In what ways can *real* freedom of opportunity for all be achieved? What, in our heart of hearts, is our attitude towards wealth and its redistribution? ("It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." And what in the end *is* freedom? Here is a perceptive statement on that subject by Dr. Turner:

"In any society I have to adjust what I am doing to fit in with what other people are doing, and vice versa. To call a society in which I am told what to do, indirectly and invisibly, a 'free society', whilst calling a society in which the limitations operate directly an 'unfree society', is just nonsense." (p. 48)

*The Eye of the Needle* is indeed a remarkable little book. Within its 85 pages, it has an immense scope: Dr. Turner's challenging theme leads him through the overlapping fields of politics, economics, sociology, psychology, religion, history. And at very many points he offers us new or comparatively new insights or perspectives.

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This then is the main thing to be said about the book: it richly deserves to be read. But when it has been read and pondered – when the vision has been viewed and the impact has been taken – what is one's considered response? What are one's second and third thoughts about *The Eye of the Needle*?

Speaking for myself, I find it difficult to say: I have a large variety of thoughts, many of them tentative, some of them hardly more than the beginnings of thoughts. I don't find it at all easy to envisage a future ideal state of society or to imagine how human beings might act in circumstances very different from those that most of us have known. I am not saying this in order to subject Dr. Turner to a subtle form of one-upmanship; my comment is a sincere one. To show that I have (as far as I am aware) no unkind or destructive intentions, let me say at once that my second, third and fourth rethinkings bring me back to the view that *The Eye of the Needle* is a very valuable work.

But as my thoughts and further reactions are various and often tentative, I shall express myself in a series of loosely-connected observations.

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And to begin with the question of tentativeness. Dr. Turner's style is, on the whole, the reverse of tentative. Nothing but a direct, confident, incisive manner of expression could have carried him so interestingly through so much material in less than a hundred pages. Often the bluntness of Dr. Turner's formulations is wholly admirable: one has a sense that a great deal of thought, knowledge, experience and moral awareness has been crystallised into a crisp statement of conviction. At other times, however, one feels that complex questions, questions that have bothered some of the world's best minds, are being handled rather brusquely – for example:

"But what, it is asked, happens to motivation under such a system? Isn't private ownership the main factor which motivates people to work? Isn't unequal

reward necessary in order to release initiative, to stimulate people to work harder in order to benefit from the inequalities? This sort of argument as a defence of capitalism is based on three misunderstandings . . . ." (p. 57)

At this point in his argument — as indeed at very many points in his argument — I largely agree with what Dr. Turner goes on to say; but I can't help being aware that simplification and a certain downrightness are the other side of the coin of brevity and incisiveness.

Occasionally Dr. Turner's simplifying and clarifying tendency carries him in the direction even of caricature — as for example in his suggestion that capitalism blights *all* human relationships:

"Relations with other people are not sought as ends in themselves, but as means to other ends. People use other people, rather than love other people. Each tries to manipulate the other, using force or Dale Carnegie. Instead of communicating, of sharing experiences with the other, each individual either buys the other, or sells him/herself to the other. The commercial practice influences the private practice." (p. 16)

Again, I do not deny the validity of this analysis: I merely deny that it is applicable to all human beings in a particular condition of society. As many great novelists have shown, a wide variety of moral stances are likely to be found at any given moment, whatever the state of the society that is being pictured. And in fact as I was reading some of Dr. Turner's categorical statements I found myself remembering F.R. Leavis's classic formulation of one of the uses of literature:

"Without the sensitizing familiarity with the subtleties of language, and the insight into the relations between abstract or generalizing thought and the concrete of human experience, that the trained frequentation of literature alone can bring, the thinking that attends social and political studies will not have the edge and force it should." (*The Common Pursuit*, p. 194).

**For all this, however, Dr. Turner usually manages to make something of a virtue out of what is sometimes partly a vice: when they are provocative his direct statements seldom fail to be provocative of thought.**

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It is an easy jump from a glance at Dr. Turner's picture of human beings under capitalism to a consideration of his view of human nature in general.

I couldn't help being aware as I read the book that Dr. Turner is a student and follower of Sartre: he seems to believe profoundly in man's ability to exercise his freedom upon himself, to control his choices and his energies, but this belief appears to go hand-in-hand — paradoxically perhaps — with the notion that "human nature" is almost infinitely malleable and that people may be almost wholly conditioned by the structure of the society in which they find themselves. Thus he stresses (as we have seen) that in a bad state of society people are likely to act badly whereas in a good state of society people tend to behave well. A corollary of this is that perhaps "human nature", as a set of limitations upon human possibility, can be said hardly to exist at all.

Now is this implicit assumption of Dr. Turner's correct? I find it difficult to answer the question with perfect confidence; but I think I must say that the assumption

seems to me not wholly justified. It is clearly true that a radical change in the structure of a society must radically change the actions and the relationships of all people within that society. On the other hand our knowledge of people, of history, of literature, strongly suggest that there do exist certain constant human tendencies, certain irreducible and partly irrational elements in the human personality, that may indeed constitute something of a "nature". If human beings in the future — in *any* future — are likely to be in certain respects similar to the people we see around us (and in the looking-glass) in a corrupt capitalist society, then of course a utopia will be considerably less easy to come by, and even if it does in some sense arrive it will be less exciting, less of a millennium, than we might otherwise have hoped.

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To say all this, however, is not to invalidate Dr. Turner's speculations; it is simply to view them in a more realistic light. But at this point I must convict myself of the crime of simplifying: it would be quite wrong for me to convey the impression that Dr. Turner's sketch of participatory democracy is totally lacking in realism and human complexity.

**If a tendency towards optimism is the shortcoming of Dr. Turner's view of human beings, it is also its greatest virtue. The whole book is propelled forward by a bracing, animating certainty that if people will but shed their fatalistic passivity they can and must shape their own destinies:**

"There is an intimate relationship between change in consciousness and organisation. Consciousness develops along with organisation. To be effective, organisation must be related to the way in which people see the world, and must help them to see the world in a new way. There are three essential elements in this new way of seeing the world. I must come to see the world as able to be changed. I must come to see myself as having the capacity to play a part in changing it. And I must see that my capacity to do this can only be realised in co-operation with other people. To grasp these three facts involves a fundamental shift in psychological attitude towards the world, rather than a simple change of intellectual awareness. Such a shift only occurs once I find myself involved in action." (p. 74)

**One might summarise by saying that it is Dr. Turner's strength that he is able to offer us a utopian conception and his weakness that he puts a little too much trust in it. Utopianism has its uses and its abuses: it can inspire and it can break the heart. But it certainly has its point.**

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The book is so full of interest that one finds oneself "in dialogue" with it at almost every page. Here are a few of the jottings from the margins of my copy:

(i) Much that is valuable and practical is said on the subject of workers' control and participatory government; and the experience of Yugoslavia, China, Russia and Tanzania is discussed in a discriminating way. But there is rather too much stress upon the factory as a typical place of work and the village as a typical place of habitation. Many people live in environments that are more complex than villages are, and a good deal of the world's work is more complex than what is done in a factory.



(ii) The chapter on education, which seems greatly influenced by the work of Ivan Illich, is somewhat marred by an over-simple view of what conventional education entails (schoolchildren, apparently, "have learnt only two categories for teachers: efficient disciplinarians and inefficient disciplinarians" (p. 61)) and a perhaps over-confident assumption that all children, left largely to themselves, will pick up as much knowledge and skill as they will need in their adult lives. But the chapter is full of fertilizing hints and suggestions nevertheless.

(iii) Predictably perhaps, Dr. Turner lacks what might be called tragic awareness – a sense not only that some tasks may never be completed but also that one good quality may force out another. He quotes with approval Nyerere's comment on colonial education:

"Inevitably, too, it was based on the assumptions of a colonialist capitalist society. It emphasised and encouraged the individualistic instincts of manking, instead of his co-operative instincts. It led to the possession of individual material wealth being the major criterion of social merit and worth." (p. 66)

Now I agree with Nyerere and Dr. Turner that it is important to stress the co-operative instincts; but I cannot condemn all individualistic instincts, and I certainly cannot agree with the implication that individualism is simply a facet of the ethos of capitalism. But maybe the educationalists have to choose? Could it be that the full man – perfectly and uniquely himself and perfectly a part of his society – can never be aimed at by any educational system?

(iv) The whole book tingles with commitment and sincerity. A minor concrete instance of this is the way in which Dr. Turner insists, even at the expense of stylistic elegance, upon the equality of the sexes:

"Thus the social system required for the satisfaction of human needs must be one which (a) enables the individual to have the maximum control over her/his social and material environment, and (b) encourages her/him to interact creatively with other people" (p. 32)

But, one finds oneself asking, is this insistence really necessary? Perhaps it is.

(v) We read:

"It is relatively easy to sketch out the above picture of an ideal possible society in South Africa. It is, I must stress, a possible society, in that there are neither imperatives of organisation nor imperatives of human nature which would prevent such a society from operating once it came into existence. Moreover, it is the only form of society which would be compatible with the Christian human model, in which human beings would be free both in themselves and for other people, in which love and real communication would not be made impossible by prejudice, by hierarchies of authority and habits of obedience, or by relations of exploitation." (p. 73)

As I hope I have by now made clear, I feel a great deal of sympathy for the spirit that animates this statement. I would have preferred a more modest wording of the second sentence. The third sentence raises a query in my mind.

Obviously love and real communication are made impossible by prejudice and by exploitation; but is it true that "hierarchies of authority" are *inevitably* barriers to love? Are we to rule out every instance of "authority" gently and open-mindedly exercised?

(vi) Some of Dr. Turner's suggestions about the possible uses of the South African "homelands" are excellent:

"The forthcoming independence of the 'homelands' will of itself bring about no meaningful change in South Africa's power imbalance. Black workers will continue to create wealth in white-controlled areas for whites. Both their problems and the financial means for solving these problems will be in the white-controlled areas, beyond the jurisdiction of the 'homeland' governments. But there is one creative role the 'homelands' could play. By developing examples of communal work, through worker-controlled agricultural co-operatives, through credit unions and through communal education schemes, they could show the continuing possibility of work as 'men-in-community', develop communal solidarity and encourage the growth of organisational skills . . ." (p. 76)

(vii) The book is by no means wholly utopian in its thrust: it contains some important remarks upon the ways in which the South African status quo is even now beginning, just beginning, to crumble.

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I am conscious that Dr. Turner's criticism of my review might perhaps run something like this: "A typical 'liberal' response – a partial acceptance, but a watering-down, a coating of the stern facts with the sugar of comfortable complexity." But I am bound to say what I think and feel.

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The final point that I wish to make – a point that I have deliberately held back, partly because Dr. Turner himself holds it back – is that the book's value doesn't depend upon our unqualified belief in the utopia that it depicts. Above all *The Eye of the Needle* expresses and arouses a radical discontent. It indicates a direction. It is to Dr. Turner's credit that for all his creative insistence on the need for a fresh manner of thinking about society, he doesn't scorn those small steps by which in practice society normally progresses.

**Whether or not one is prepared to attempt or to accept a detailed sketch of the way things will go or the way things ought ultimately to be, there can be no doubt at all that South African society – all human societies – must move, in every respect in which movement is possible, along the road towards the possible end of which Dr. Turner so firmly points. What is more, those who see it as their task to make society move probably need to have some paradigm, some ideal such as the one Dr. Turner offers, in the backs of their minds.□**

# TRUTH IN A HOT CLIMATE

by David Welsh

To what extent do writers and scholars working in South Africa have to 'bend' their material to conform to society's pressures? I write primarily as an academic, but I suspect that our problems are similar to those which many writers experience. Scholars and writers are, after all, trying to discover the truth, to portray reality in their different ways; both seek to plumb the depth of human experience. The trouble is that the truth may be disquieting, or even downright painful. Pressures are therefore applied, directly or indirectly, either to suppress it or to ensure that future seekers after truth will present it in a light which is at least palatable to those groups who wield power of influence.

In his introduction to the Hogarth edition of William Plomer's *Turbott Wolfe* Laurens van der Post gives a vivid description of white South African reaction to the novel which, in an unprecedented way, had explored the theme of sexual attraction across the colour line. It caused an 'intellectual riot'. Van der Post uses the vivid analogy of the way in which baboons reacted to seeing their reflections in a mirror – they looked frantically at the back but always from the front there was 'an authentic baboon-person staring back at them'. They could never accept reality and finally they would smash the mirror to pieces. This, says van der Post, was a precise rendering of white reaction to *Turbott Wolfe*.

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In his autobiography *Double Lives* Plomer says that his novel 'had particularly stung the whites in that part of their psychological being where guilt and fear and self-deception in regard to the natives . . . had been wrapped away from the light of reason'. There is no doubt that similar factors led, partly at least, to the premature demise of *Voorslag* which, Plomer says, was intended 'to sting with satire the mental hindquarters . . . of the bovine citizenry of the Union'.

Reactions of this kind can still be evoked. Perhaps they are not so crude in some respects – we have become more 'sophisticated' – but the institutional apparatus for direct suppression has become much more substantial. The precise effect of censorship on the minds of creative writers is difficult to determine. Different authors react in different ways. Some deny that censorship worries them at all; others complain that it saps their creativity like a blight. As a *Sestiger* put it to me, 'I have a policeman in my head'.

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Formal and informal censorship operates differently for each group. The Afrikaans writer, for example, has to contend with the inherited incubus of conservatism and tradition. If he violates tradition the wrath of God, channelled perhaps through the Public Morals Commission of the NGK, will descend upon his head. Publishers will



William Plomer

be nervous of accepting manuscripts; booksellers may refuse to stock the book; and schools may not use it. The Afrikaans writer writes for a small market. It may be important to him financially and in terms of his own morale and self-esteem to have his work published and read by his fellow-Afrikaners. The temptation to violate intellectual integrity and tone down one's writing must be considerable.

To their credit the *Sestigers* pioneered new paths in Afrikaans literature. The storm which their work raises seems to me to derive from a fundamental ambivalence in Afrikaner society which is being modernized in spite of the entrenched forces of conservatism in powerful places. The *Sestigers* seek after universalistic values but the society of which they are part continues to espouse the particularistic values of traditionalism. This same conflict of values is being played out in many areas of Afrikaner society. It turns basically on the perception of truth – for the traditionalist proper the truth is already known and needs only to be maintained and expounded. The 'modernist' views truth as something open-ended, to be experimented with.

Writers in English are both white and black, what is most imposing and depressing is the list of names who now write in exile. For most blacks exile has not been voluntary; for at least some white writers the reason for exile must surely have been their inability to work in the South African climate.

**But this is facile. Works of genius have emerged from the most censor-ridden and authoritarian societies, as Solzhenitsyn shows.** A more complex reason seems to operate for many English-speaking intellectuals. In an interview with the *Guardian* this year Dan Jacobson said that he left South Africa because he wished to be nearer the cultural metropolis of English culture. Although he didn't say it the implication was that South Africa, in cultural terms, was a colonial outpost, a society, in Olive Schreiner's terms, of lower-middle class tastes.

This tension between metropolis and outpost has been a powerful factor in the make-up of white English-speaking intellectuals. It is separate from (though it may be combined with) pressure from society. It operates especially among writers and scholars. They feel that their development is being stunted by South African conditions.

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The academics' reaction to these pressures I have been describing is similar. There are many cases of lecturers who do not tell the truth as they see it because to do so would land them in serious trouble. There are all kinds of subterfuges to which one can resort: veiled analogies, dark hints and unspoken comparisons. More serious, however, is the effect which these pressures have had on the lines of scholarly research pursued in South Africa. There is a marked tendency to avoid research into contentious aspects of society. To produce even a scholarly exposé may result in retribution, either formal or informal. Even those

**hardy souls who plunge into the thorniest of thickets may be deterred by bureaucratic requirements (for example, the need to obtain permits before entering Africa) surveillance and secrecy.**

Many scholars have opted out. If not out of the country then out of the thorns and into the more tranquil reaches of pure theory which is far removed from the tensions and pressures of society. According to J.A. Hobson, writing in 1926, 'religion, group loyalty or patriotism, patriotism, the family, and certain concepts of personal morality, not merely surround themselves with taboos, but emit passionate fumes to blind the sight and confuse the brain of timorous scrutineers.'

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This is even more true of South Africa, where the problem is compounded by the fragmented and authoritarian nature of society. The basic difficulty with research in the social sciences in South Africa seems to be this: fragmentation leads to the hardening of group loyalties; groups become resistant to being examined by scholars through fear that their probings will uncover some dark secret or prove some of their dearest truths to be mere shibboleths. In our hierarchic society a group may extend a similar 'protection' to groups which it dominates, because the dangerous truths uncovered may be used against them. All of this must be seen in the context of the authoritarian climate in which individuals and institutions are fearful of giving information, especially to strangers.

These random thoughts have been inspired by many conversations with intellectuals in all parts of the country in the course of a book I am writing about South African universities. I would be most grateful to any readers of *Reality* who would be kind enough to let me have comments, based upon their own experiences or reflections on the problems I have tried to analyse. □

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