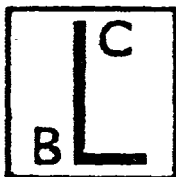


# KAFFIRS ARE LIVELY

by

OLIVER WALKER



LEFT BOOK CLUB EDITION  
NOT FOR SALE TO THE PUBLIC

# KAFFIR AND THE LIVELY

Being some backstage impressions  
of the South African Democracy

by

OLIVER WALKER

"Kaffirs developed a firm trend on small local and some South African support, particularly for better-class dividend-payers."

—Any LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE report.

"There are certain things about which all South Africans are agreed, all parties and all sections, except those who are quite mad. The first is that it is a fixed policy to maintain white supremacy in South Africa."—GENERAL J. C. SMUTS, Prime Minister, speaking in the Union House of Assembly, Cape Town, March 13, 1945.

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BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

To  
the Kafferboeties,\* Liberals and  
other Christian gentlemen of  
Africa in whose applied humanity  
lies the only hope for the peaceful  
progress of a great Continent.

\* "Kafferboetie": Afrikaans word  
meaning literally "Kaffir-brother", a  
term of contempt for any white South  
African who acts as if Christianity meant  
something else to him besides going to  
church on Sundays.

## PREFACE

IN 1944 I was offered the biggest assignment ever handed to a newspaperman in South Africa. It came from the headquarters of the Native Affairs Department in Pretoria, the administrative capital where at that time I was doing a war-time propaganda job for the State Bureau of Information. Briefly the Department wanted a journalist seconded to it to make a comprehensive survey of all its work, practical and administrative, in the Reserves, in the towns and on the farms for the purpose of compiling a series of booklets. These booklets were intended chiefly for America and England. Their aim was "to present Native policy in South Africa in a true perspective".

"We have been getting a bad Press over there," I was told by the Department. "They are printing all sorts of rubbish and downright lies about how we treat our Natives. They reckon we keep the Native down with a *sjambok*, and tie him to the wagon-wheel, and nonsense like that. In America they even think we're all black here! It's time we told them what we're doing, and just how and why we're doing it."

I said it was a tall order. They said it was, but everything would be organised, and it shouldn't take more than six months. They had just appointed as publicity officer an agriculturist from the Department, and his main job would be to chaperone me round the Reserves (where white men require official sanction to loiter) and the urban locations. The idea of getting in an outsider experienced in publicity was that he would be able to glamourise their good deeds. They could have tackled the job themselves, they said, but they were not too certain that their bluebook prose had the right iridescent lure.

I said: "When do we start?"

After a certain amount of dignified safari-like preparations I headed north for the "Bundu" of the Transvaal with my chaperone. Periodically during the next fifteen months we—that is, an official from the Department and myself—surfaced in Pretoria between spells spent submerged in the Reserves of the four Provinces or slumming in the larger cities of Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town and Bloemfontein.

With six months' writing tagged on the end of the voyaging, the assignment took me twenty-one months. In that time I covered about 25,000 miles between the droughty, baobab-dotted veld beyond the Zoutpansberg in the north to the "sakkiedorps" or shanty-towns of the Cape Flats in the extreme south, from the waterless, empty, sandy wastes of the Mafeking-Kuruman zone fringing the Kalahari Desert in the west to the lush, green, cattle-studded glens of Zululand on the east.

I talked to magistrates, commissioners, agricultural officers and overseers, farmers, teachers, doctors, industrialists and churchmen. It was one of these last—a man I met in Umtata, the capital of the Transkeian Native Reserve—who gave me something to think about.

As we parted at his gate his last words were: "If you're going to write any books, please don't make them so much more window-dressing. I know you journalists. I'm tired—we're all tired—of such efforts, hiding the real tragedy below. Give the truth—just for once, please."

I gave some of the truth in the lengthy account I duly turned in to the Department of Native Affairs. And that was the last I heard of it. I do not think they published any of it. It is dangerous not only to see things, but to see through them.

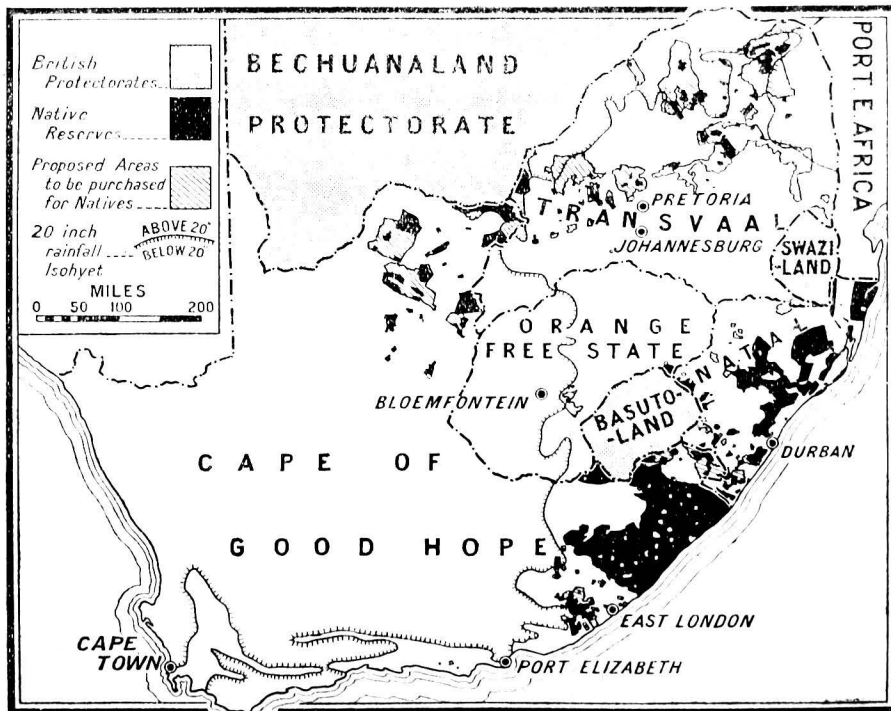
Officials of the Department assured me that as I travelled round I would get lots of stuff for books. I did. Here is one of them.

OLIVER WALKER

*Johannesburg, 1947.*

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UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA  
Distribution of Native Areas



## HISTORICAL PROLOGUE, 1652-1947

"Xa sikhangela emva kwel 'a xesha afika ngalo uMlungu wokuqala elunxwemeni lwelilizwe siphaula okokuba lingekatshoni ilanga ngalomini wase ukho umcimbi wokuphathwa komntu ontsundu."<sup>1</sup>—XHOSA-SPEAKING SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVE COUNCILLOR, 1945.

"South Africa is a land of black men—and not of white men. It has been so; it is so; and it will be so."—ANTHONY TROLLOPE, 1877.

IN THE year 1652, when Oliver Cromwell was proclaiming his creed of "liberty of conscience" and the Maryland ancestors of George Washington were pushing cautiously across the Potomac in search of new lands, a band of some thirty white colonists, under Jan van Riebeeck, employees of the powerful Dutch East India Company, came ashore below the 4,000-foot shadow of Table Mountain to establish the Cape Colony at the southernmost tip of the horn of Africa.

Their first encounters with the aborigines were with cattle-owning, yellow-skinned Hottentots and squat, Stone Age bow-and-arrow Bushmen.

The Hottentots they enslaved or deprived of their cattle. The Bushmen they hunted like game. Outposts of the tiny settlement of De Kaap, as it was then known, took on the habits of the aborigines. They were called "Boers" or farmers. They acquired herds of cattle. They became nomadic, land-hungry white Africans, mighty hunters and laws unto themselves.

The settlement grew with infusions of slaves from the East, from Mozambique, from Angola and with small intrusions from the religion-persecuted Huguenots of France.

A new race was born of the mixed marriages countenanced, and even encouraged, by the Dutch East India Company. They were the forefathers of the Cape Coloured, who to-day number 900,000.

The real dynamics of the white-black struggle in South Africa did not reveal themselves until after the occupation of the Cape by the British in 1795.

By that time the white frontiersmen had pushed their authority north-eastwards and were in contact with the downward-pressing Bantu tribes—"Kaffirs" or "unbelievers", as

<sup>1</sup> "When we look back to the time when the first European set foot on the coast of this country we notice that before the sun had set that day the Native problem existed."

they were called—the naked, brown, spear-throwing men of Palo, Galeika, Rarabe and lesser chiefs of the great Xhosa-speaking nation.

British occupation early in the nineteenth century brought about the abolition of slavery. And it precluded the arrival of many missionaries of different sects and lands, eager to carry the torch of Christianity through heathen Africa.

There came, too, another infusion of white stock—a mere 5,000 settlers from Britain, who were dumped mostly on the east coast, in the region of that “Kaffirland” which was already in process of becoming a familiar battle-ground between Boers and Bantu.

British rule—the rule of law—and the humanities preached by the missionaries were repugnant to the Boers. The Africa they demanded was an eternity of grazing, a land of Canaan with ample supplies of sons of Ham who, if they could not be enslaved, could be reduced to serfdom by land-squeezing, the power of weapons and the lash.

The Boers trekked away from the Cape. Their tented wagons stole into the great, game-gay uplands of the central High Veld. They creaked down the narrow passes of the spinal Drakensburg Mountains into the lush, semi-tropic emptiness of Natal.

But they could not escape the twin ghosts of Bantu and British. At Port Natal, later to become Durban, a little party of English hunters and traders had settled in the 1820's. And they were on friendly terms with Tchaka, the mightiest of African chiefs, whose Zulu hordes of fighting men were a matter of trembling and flight among tribes from the Limpopo River in the north to the Kei River in “Kaffirland”.

The Boers fought the British in Natal. They fought the Zulus and beat them in revenge for the massacre of one of their leaders, Piet Retief, and sixty followers.

They trekked away again, many of them, up on to the High Veld, with a hymn on their lips and hate in their hearts, to found the Dutch or Afrikaans-speaking Republics of the Orange River and the Transvaal.

All this time the coastal belt was opening up to the world beyond the seas. Ports were growing. A handful of cities were taking on a semblance of maturity.

The white stock was being built up, but slowly—too slowly—for the Bantu that remained within the orbit of Christian influence were yielding to the new teachings of civilisation.

Then came the new impulse—the discovery in 1868 of diamonds near the borders of the Transvaal Republic. From the four corners came the adventurers and the prospectors in feverish search for the little white stones.

The cry for African labour became strident. The African had no more land to give, no wealth to filch, but he had his labour.

His old gods of land and cattle were already passing. The discovery of gold in the Transvaal late in the nineteenth century was the death-knell of his pastoral past—the age-old life of a drifting subsistence through untrammelled Africa of which he could preserve only the shadow in the small Reserves and locations set apart for him by the all-pervading white man.

Twentieth-century South Africa began in bloodshed. The Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 saw the humbling of the Republics but not their creed of white *baaskop* (masterhood). Hatred burned only deeper—hatred of the *uillander* (foreigner) hatred of the oncoming blacks, hatred of the British, and, above all, hatred of the liberal spirit which threatened to unseat their ingrained white African Herrenvolkism.

But they masked their venom for the sake of political advantage, and in 1910 the Act of Union was signed, giving birth to the self-governing Dominion of South Africa, a partner in the British Commonwealth, made up of the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal.

The historical issues of white *versus* black and European Liberalism *versus* Afrikaner domination were side-tracked and shelved.

But they were not dormant. Now these issues were translated into the economic as well as the political spheres, and South Africa between 1910 and the 1940's has become a forum in which the fundamental right of white settlement in Africa has been put into the witness-box.

South Africa is the oldest of such settlements, the largest and most developed industrially. But with a white population of 2,300,000 amid 9,000,000 non-whites, of whom 7,750,000 are Africans, it still remains a small white spot on a vast black continent of more than 130,000,000 Africans. And no belated and reluctant efforts to promote fresh immigration from Europe can materially alter that disproportion.

So far it has managed to retain all effective power exclusively in white hands. But only at the cost of piling repressive legislation upon repressive legislation to a degree that has

dangerously, if not irretrievably, forfeited the goodwill of an awakened black majority.

It still prefers proclamations to laws in its dealings with Africans. It still clings obstinately to a threadbare Colour-Bar system that, while it shuts out the non-white from all normal benefits of progress and civilisation, bogs down the national economy and domestic growth.

It still demands that the African consider himself an inferior being unworthy to share the same work-bench and the same conference table with the whites. It still believes in the baton and bullet to settle strikes and industrial unrest.

It still wishes to believe that it can conduct its policy of suppression of four-fifths of its population regardless of world opinion or of African opinion inside or outside its borders.

It refuses to face facts, except in their historical context. It has created a lop-sided racial pattern of living so selfishly exclusive that it is a negation of almost every human right as preached and practised in the democratic way of life. It is ready to flout, and has already flouted before the world, the doctrines of individual freedom, justice and humanity which have, in their time, split nations and families asunder.

It is hell-bent upon a policy which has spelt within our lifetime the debasement of Western civilisation because it has turned its back upon the reasonable demands of millions of thwarted non-whites to whom so much that the white man symbolises in Africa is now a stench in the nostrils.

## "CRUCIFIED ON A CROSS OF GOLD"

"They [the Africans] are unfortunately the worker, and in every country the future belongs to the worker."—J. X. MERRIMAN, ex-Premier of the Cape Colony, 1908.

THE ETERNALLY pounding stamp-batteries of the Johannesburg gold-mines, which have been called the heart-beat of the city and nation, missed a stroke or two in August 1946. On the 13th day of that month more than 50,000 African miners came out on strike. On ten of the forty-five gold-producing mines there was total stoppage; on eleven others there was a partial stoppage.

To the South African public the strike came as a shock and a surprise. The Chamber of Mines, which is the nerve-centre of the whole gold-mining industry, could not claim to share that surprise. As far back as April they had received a letter from the African Mine Workers' Union outlining, among other things, a demand for 10s. a day instead of the existing rate of 2s. 8d. No reply was received to that letter. Other reminders had followed, but had been ignored. In evidence given in court later the secretary of the Chamber said that his organisation was not anxious to recognise the Union. The Committee of the Chamber had decided that the Union had no right whatever to act on behalf of the African mine-workers. The Chamber, guided to a large extent by Native Affairs Department officials, was of the opinion that the Africans were not sufficiently intelligent to belong to a Union.

The first day of the strike was not bloodless. Police escorting Africans to work at the Sub Nigel Mine were reported to have been attacked by 1,500 strikers and had opened fire. Six Africans were wounded. Another six were crushed to death in the panic which ensued.<sup>1</sup>

By the next day the strikers' ranks had risen to nearer 73,000 (the figure in the Press was never higher than 50,000), and the number of police drafted in lorry-loads to deal with them was around 1,600. These were used to break up a demonstration march of 4,000 to 5,000 strikers, who, carrying

<sup>1</sup> Official figures released some time later revealed that during the strike nine Africans were killed and 1,248 injured.

pick-handles, sticks and stones, were heading for the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association in Johannesburg to make their demands known. However slow the Chamber of Mines might have been in taking notice of the miners' grievances, there was nothing sluggish about the action of the police. Within twenty-four hours of the beginning of the strike the leading officials of the union were before a magistrate on charges of incitement in terms of War Measure 145 and the Riotous Assemblies Act.

Outer ripples of the disturbance had their effect in Pretoria, the administrative capital, 35 miles to the north. From the vast brown block of the Union Buildings and the office of the Prime Minister, General Smuts, came an official statement that

“he was not unduly concerned over what was happening on the Witwatersrand mines because the Native strike was not caused by legitimate grievances but by agitators. . . . The Government would take steps to see that these matters were put right. The agitators were trying to lead the Natives and the country to destruction. The agitators secretly distributed pamphlets and incited the Natives. The native had to be protected from these people.”

If General Smuts was not unduly concerned, the Natives Representative Council—the official body created by the Government in 1936 to interpret and express the views of the African people—was. It happened to be in session that week in Pretoria, and one speaker after another requested that business be suspended until more information was forthcoming about the strike and the means by which it was being crushed. That information was not available, and the Council adjourned.

The strike was over within two more days. The steps taken by the Government were swift and ruthless. There were good precedents for their methods. General Smuts' experience of strikes on the gold-mines went back to the bloody days of 1913-14, and the even bloodier clash of 1922. Then he was prepared to “see things develop” before stepping in. This time he did not wait. This time it was not a strike of white and black miners, but only black—and “agitators”. The agitators were clapped into gaol. The strikers were shown bayonets and batons and bullets.

Not everybody was happy about the State's technique of strike-breaking. The National Executive of the white Labour Party (a party whose interest in black workers is largely theoretical) protested to General Smuts against the "brutal methods which the Government adopted to deal with the strikers". They protested, too, against "the manner in which certain influential sections of the daily Press presented the strike news".

From Mrs. Margaret Ballinger, one of the three representatives of 7,750,000 Africans in the House of Assembly, came a telegram to General Smuts expressing amazement that the Government could claim that the recommendations of the 1943 Lansdown Commission on mine Natives' wages and conditions of employment had been practically carried out in full.

"Only roughly half of the Commission's modest recommendations in respect of the mass of mine-workers have been implemented despite the Commission's revelations of dire poverty among mine-workers' families. I sincerely trust that your impending departure to the Peace Conference will not prevent a further statement rectifying the obvious error in the report. I also urge the immediate appointment of an arbitration board to consider mine-workers' serious economic grievances."

Senator H. Basner, who represented 3,500,000 natives in the Upper House, also wired General Smuts in more vigorous terms. He accused the Prime Minister of repeating his methods of 1922, and said that he would be charged before Parliament and world opinion with the responsibility for the Natives killed and injured in the strike "through a policy of drift and neglect".

In evidence as a witness for the defence in the court the following month, when fifty-two men and women were charged with aiding and abetting the strike, Senator Basner amplified his views.

This was a case unique in the South African legal calendar. The accused in the dock presented a remarkable cross-section of South Africa's remarkably mixed racial society. There were South Africans from each race-group—Dutch, English, Jew, African, and Coloured or mixed blood.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unlike America, in South Africa a "Coloured" man is not a black man, but a man of mixed blood. The Cape Coloured people of 900,000 make up a distinct race-group and have higher status than the black man in political life and socially.

Senator Basner reviewed the history of unrest which had led to the strike. In 1943 there had been bad feeling among Native mine-workers, and in other industries there had been no fewer than thirty-six strikes. The African Mine Workers' Union had presented a memorandum to the Lansdown Commission in 1943 confirming other evidence presented that the wages paid to Natives on the mines were "absolutely inadequate". Among the Natives there had been terrible disappointment, a sense of uneasiness and betrayal, when only some of the recommendations of the Commission had been carried out.

Because the mine-workers were primitive and uneducated, that did not mean they were not fit for trade unionism. He realised that it was not possible to pay the Native workers 10s. a day. But they could not be expected to ask for less. Even 3d. a day increase would have had the effect of quietening them for the time being.

The Crown allegations were withdrawn against six of the fifty-two accused. The rest of them were sentenced to pay fines varying between £15 and £50 or gaol with hard labour, part of the sentences being suspended for twelve months on condition of good behaviour, and that they did not take part in a strike during that period.

The situation was not all one of gloom. The Stock Market in gold shares was barely ruffled and "Kaffirs ruled very firm and fairly active, the labour situation being disregarded. . . ."

And General Smuts was able to keep to his schedule, and fly to Europe and America to tell the councils of the world how to live in peace and harmony as one great brotherhood.

Not all South Africa's millions of non-white working classes earn 2s. 8d. a day—with food rations and health services free. Not all of them have to travel up to 1,000 or 2,000 miles, leaving their wives and families behind for thirteen months or so at a time, as do the African gold-miners. The proportion that does migrate, however, is remarkably high, and was not less than 53 per cent of the able-bodied man-power, or nearly 400,000 according to the 1936 census.

"The migration of large numbers of the male population from their homes to distant places of work," says Lord Hailey in his monumental *African Survey*, "is one of the characteristic features of the labour question in Africa."

In 1943 the following figures of Native labour on the gold-mines are given:—



Union Natives	101,200
United Kingdom High Commission Territories (Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland)	53,206
Portuguese East African and Tropical Natives	147,413
	<hr/>
	301,819

The gold-mines of the Rand, then, are the biggest single employers of African labour in Africa. They it is which have made Johannesburg "the Gibraltar of South Africa's finance". And the first tenet in the creed of the mines is: "Thou shalt employ only cheap migrant labour". No understanding of South Africa's tortured and seething labour and race problems is possible without a firm grasp of this first commandment.

If you wish to know how Johannesburg's sky-scrapers came so swiftly into being—all in a matter of sixty years—you must investigate the meaning of that phrase "cheap migrant labour". If you have time to pause and marvel at the magnificence of the Golden City's northern suburbs, with their mansion-crowned kopjes (hills) where the magnates of the industry live, you should also find time to cogitate the words "cheap migrant labour". If you should wander away from the Rand into the areas where Native settlement is permitted—to the Ciskei, the Transkei and other Reserves—and be downcast at their barrenness, their poverty and their primitiveness, you come back again to the first tenet. If you wish to query the labour and wage conditions of thousands of natives employed in a score of essential services and secondary industries, you will arrive back by degrees to the immortal phrase.

Gold is the lure that turned South Africa from a pastoral feudalism into an industrial feudalism. Diamonds and gold, in that order. And it is on a cross of gold that the African peasant emerging as a labourer in industry has been crucified.

It began in the 1870's, in the jolly, rough-and-tumble Bret Harte atmosphere of the Kimberley diamond-fields. It was consecrated into a national policy within a few years of that momentous day in 1885 when George Walker, a roving handyman, stubbed his toe on an outcrop of the Main Reef. Those were the brave old days of the lonely prospector with his "pick and piccanin". The pick to-day is represented by skeleton lines of pithead machinery which lower miners 9,000 feet down into the bowels of the Reef. The piccanin has been replaced by 350,000 muscular, able-bodied adults who, as is the South African way with Africans, are all called "boys".

Between them, machinery and muscle, they have unearthed over £2,000,000,000 worth of the precious metal.

Let others sing the praises of the white man's energy, his enterprise, his ingenuity, his business acumen, his financial genius, which have made the Rand gold-mines what they are in the economy of the country and in the minds of the "Kaffir" share-buying public of Europe and America. I am concerned here with the human factor: the myriad unnamed, unknown "boys" of a score of great African tribes—the Xhosa, Basuto, Pondo, Bapedi, Shangaan, Zulu, Bechuana, Matabele, Mashona, Barotse, and Bachopi—who have made this great industry possible, and in the making of it have destroyed themselves and the social structure of family life which is the foundation of African life as much as it is of any society, white, yellow, brown or black.

Not always have these men of Africa listened and responded to the siren call of the gold-mines. There was a period, early in the century, when their indifference led to the importation of many thousands of Chinese, a measure which shook the Liberal-minded electorate of England to the core. But economic pressure, aided by a policy of taxation and land-squeezing, in time wrought the necessary change of heart. Organised recruitment inside South Africa and in the backward surrounding territories by co-ordinated effort of the Chamber of Mines has done the rest.

In Livingstone's day it was the slave-trails of the Arab traders which seamed the hot and dusty face of southern Africa. To-day along the same routes, and some new ones, the two Corporations managed by the mines—the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association and the Native Recruiting Corporation—each operating in different geographic areas, have joined the remotest rural parts with what are called the centres of white civilisation. They run barges on the River Zambesi to tap the Central African zone. They have their fleets of lorries, vans and coasters, too, transporting the burnt-brown offerings to the golden Moloch.

From the swamps of the Zambesi basin, from the thirsty wastes of Bechuanaland, from the steaming lowlands of the Portuguese East African coast, from the aloe-bright hillsides of the Transkei, from the tawny lion country of the lower Limpopo, from the splintered mountain-tops of Basutoland, the men of Africa converge on one point in Johannesburg—the asphalt compound of "Wenela", as the central depot and

filter of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association is known.

And it was towards "Wenela", as I have mentioned, that a large body of strikers headed that August morning in 1946, seeking to make known their grievances.

Before coming to closer quarters with these men of Africa, a few questions require answering. How, aside from its "cheap migrant labour" shibboleth, does the Chamber of Mines defend itself against charges of under-payment and the like? Why do men migrate thousands of miles for 2s. 8d. a day? Why has organisation along trade union lines been declared taboo to them?

During his average spell of thirteen months in the mines the Native migrant earns around £36 to £40. As a married man with a family of five and a plot of land, say, in the Transkei Native Reserve, his family produces an annual income estimated at £17 15s., and actually requires £58 5s. to cover its minimum expenditure. This last figure is for 1943, but the Chamber of Mines, in arguing its case before the Lansdown Mine Wage Commission of that year, used the 1939 figure of £21 for annual expenditure. Their case was that, according to their figures, the miner earning £36 not merely earned enough to keep his family going, but actually made a surplus which would sustain him in idleness for a further period of twelve months after he had returned home, and even provide a margin for buying stock and improving his standard of living.

The Commission was unable to swallow this, and recommended a small increase in wages and allowances amounting to 16s. a month. Only part of this was implemented.

While the price of gold has more than doubled in the last two decades, African miners' real wages are actually lower than they were thirty-two years ago. When the more than 50 per cent rise in cost of living over the past eight years is taken into account, then the ridiculous inadequacy of even the Commission's recommended increase is manifest. The Chamber pleaded other reasons for making no advancement. There was the shortening life of the industry, for example, and the low payability of a number of mines. It made a great deal of play with the fact that the miner had a stake in the Reserves which gave him a livelihood. The position of the tribal Native, in enjoyment of a Reserve subsistence income from his lands, was compared with that of a European who had a private income

in addition to his earnings. (How hollow is this claim will be shown in full detail when I take you into the Reserves.)

If there exists any doubt about the connivance of the gold-mining industry and the Government in making labour reservoirs of the Native Reserves, this passage from the Chamber's evidence should dissolve it.

"The basis of the employment of Native labour by the mines," says the Chamber, "is in complete accord with the balanced South African Native policy laid down practically unanimously by Parliament after thorough investigation and discussion in 1936-37, and embodied in legislation (in particular the Native Trust and Land Act, 1936, and the 1937 amendment to the Urban Areas Act) and re-affirmed by the Minister of Native Affairs in the House of Assembly in February 1943. In brief, that policy is the enlargement and planned development and improvement of the Native Reserves and the concurrent restriction on the number of Natives permitted in the towns, coupled with the proper housing of those so permitted. It aims at the preservation of the economic and social structure of the Native people in the Native areas where that structure can be sheltered and developed. The policy is a coherent whole, and is the antithesis of the policy of assimilation and the encouragement of a black proletariat in the towns, divorced from its tribal heritage. The ability of the mines to maintain their Native labour force by means of tribal Natives from the reserves at rates of pay which are adequate for this migratory class of Native but inadequate in practice for the detribalised urban Native is a fundamental factor in the economy of the Gold Mining Industry."

If one accepts this as the theory of Native policy laid down by the State, then I can say there is hardly a single proposition set out in it which has not broken down in practice.

Half a dozen reasons can be given why tribal Natives become "join-boys", as recruited miners are called. In a period of more than forty years a certain rationalisation has grown up. Among a number of tribes like the Basuto, Bechuana and Xhosa, where recruiting has been intensive for many years, a period of service as a gold-miner has assumed a *rite de passage* significance, and become a passport to manhood. (So, too, has venereal disease—at least, with the Basuto, among

whom its incidence has been rated as high as 22 per cent.) Young men who stay at home are often reproached by the girls of the tribe because they have not been "blooded" by a visit to the Rand mines. A journey to "Goldieburg" or "Jonnisberg" has the attraction of a great adventure and an escape from the often cramping restrictions of tribal discipline and the drabness of living in a Reserve.

These are the more obvious and superficial overtones of large-scale migration.

More concretely, the Reserves of the Union are totally inadequate to support their populations. There are few, if any, opportunities in them for young men to earn money to pay their taxes and tribal levies. Many of the tribal families are chronically in debt to traders, a number of whom still function as labour-recruiting agents at so much a head. And there are, of course, rapidly changing standards of living which contact with and knowledge of the white man's ways inculcate, as well as the effects of smatterings of education gleaned at mission schools.

An increasing number of Africans, too, use the paid passage to the mines as a springboard into industry where the highest wages can be earned.

Having presented the arguments of the Chamber in defence of its "cheap migrant labour" policy, my third query—why trade union organisation is denied to the miners—requires little further answer. The Chamber is rightly afraid of the trade union movement. It can produce several good reasons why trade unionism is not suited to tribally mixed natives not in permanent employ. The overriding reason obviously is that if its 350,000 Native miners were banded together in one body, their power to demand higher wages and better conditions of employment and greater opportunity to exercise their skill would be irresistible.

The State itself is afraid of this power. So are industrial magnates and white trade unions, which operate more as guilds preserving craftsmanship and the apprenticeship required to obtain that skill as a private possession of white folk. For years the State has boggled at the recognition of Native trade unions, of which there are now more than one hundred. That recognition has been promised before each annual session of Parliament for several years past. At last, just before the close of the 1947 session, General Smuts announced that an Industrial Conciliation (Native) Bill was to be gazetted.

Presumably it will come up for debate in 1948. Meanwhile its terms have been made known, and have aroused instant opposition from Liberal opinion, progressive trade unionists and African spokesmen.

This Bill is worth looking at, because it illustrates perfectly just how far behind the needs of the hour the State thinks and operates *vis-à-vis* its non-white peoples. Ten years ago this Bill would have been hailed as a forward-thinking and statesman-like measure. To-day it is outmoded before it ever gets on the statute book. Ten years ago trade unionism was very much more in the embryo state than it is to-day. Ten years ago the African people lacked experience in the how-and-why of trade union machinery. Ten years ago there had been no war to defeat Fascism, and in which the Native peoples were summoned to throw their weight in order to make the world safe for democracy and the Four Freedoms.

One fundamental defect of this Bill is that it provides only for the separate recognition of African trade unions. The governing body of the white trade unions—the Trades and Labour Council—split on this very issue at its annual conference, before the Bill was made public. A number of powerful unions who wanted separate black and white unions walked out. Those who remained did so because they rightly felt that “the economic interests of workers engaged in the same occupation are of greater importance than the differences in the pigmentation of their skins”.

The second major defect is that the Bill makes it illegal for African trade unionists to strike. Thirdly, the great mass of African mine-workers are excluded from the scope of the machinery of conciliation to be established. Their grievances are to be handled by inspectors appointed by the Native Affairs Department. Other aspects of the Bill which have been stigmatised are the fact that unions not registered under it will be illegal, and the functions and composition of the mediation boards which are supposed to settle workers' complaints are unacceptable to African leaders. Needless to say, this Bill was drawn up without consultation with those African leaders. That has been common practice for so many years that hardly any commentator studying the Bill thought it worth mentioning. I myself think it is quite a point.

Perhaps the clause banning the use of the strike weapon is the one which has aroused the greatest indignation. In 1942 an emergency statute, known as War Measure No. 145, was

passed prohibiting strikes and imposing heavy penalties. But it did not prevent strikes. Nor will the new Bill prevent them. If the workers' grievances are strong enough—and I make bold to say that the black workers of South Africa have more legitimate, if not always articulate complaints than almost any other group of workers in the world—then no legislation is going to stop them using the tried historic reprisal method of the working classes.

Strikes mean bloodshed. African blood has been spilt freely in the past because white society has not yet got accustomed (and will not for years to come) to negotiating with an African and discussing his complaints round a table. But African workers are not unaware that important gains have been made by striking. In 1942 the dairy, meat and milk and municipal employers of labour had to make concessions to their striking African workers.

Higher up Africa, in the Copper Belt of Northern Rhodesia, 15,000 African workers thought they would imitate their white colleagues and declare a strike in 1940. Troops shot seventeen and wounded sixty-five before the movement was quelled. The sequence of events had a familiar air to South Africans. Comparative wages on the copper-mines show that Europeans average £40 a month and can get up to £70; the Africans on surface work average 12s. 6d. a month and £1 7s. 6d. a month underground. A number of these black miners, moreover, hold blasting certificates, handle pneumatic drills, drive electric haulers, assist shaft-sinking, drive lorries and take charge of trucks. During the strike they challenged the mine management to allow them to work a competitive shift against the Europeans, in order to demonstrate who really produced the copper.

The challenge was not taken up. Most of the white supervisors on the Copper Belt are South Africans from the Rand. That helps to explain the reluctance of their union to identify themselves with the non-white working-man's complaints.

From that strike and the Commission which investigated its causes one clear logical general conclusion has been drawn. It is a conclusion which South African labour and the State which protects it with Colour-Bar legislation has tried in vain to side-step—namely, that the semi-skilled occupations in labour are constantly being encroached on by Africans, and that the time is overdue for a re-grading of what comprises skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled work, in order that the main

mass of workers can hope for some kind of advancement in their jobs.

Back in 1922 a special Mining Industry Board, which studied the civil war between Rand miners and the Government in which 230 people were killed, made this very point when it reported:—

“When, however, we come to the intermediate sphere of labour, to the so-called semi-skilled occupation, it is impossible to close one’s eyes to the fact that there is a real danger to the European of this field being more and more extensively encroached upon by the Native.”

What they spoke of as a danger twenty-five years ago has since become a fact, as it was bound to do the longer the African stayed in industry and became a stabilised urban-dweller. In the Native labour sphere the comment of a famous judge when he was speaking of general Native policy in South Africa holds good:—

“If you go down to Kowie Beach (in the Cape) and see a lot of children with sand castles you will realise our Native policy; little barriers to keep the sea out; and when the sea advances, down come the barriers, and you retreat a few yards inland and erect further barriers. That is our Native policy.”

I have talked enough about South African Natives as “labour”. It is time to look at them as individuals, as men, as people who, in their tribal way of life, had so many other and worthier abilities than those of being able to swing a hammer, a shovel, sing songs and wear cast-off clothes.

A footnote to the 1946 strike of black gold-miners: Soon after it was smashed white gold-miners went on strike at a Rand mine demanding higher pay; they got another 1s. 6d. on their cost-of-living, and nobody was hurt. “Africans who asked for bread, got lead,” was how Dr. Xuma, President-General of the African National Congress, summed up the different of treatment.



## NOT ALL NATIVES ARE ZULUS

"Nothing but forced Christianity or civilization will spoil the Zulus."—  
JOHN DUNN, White Zulu Chief, 1879.

NOT ALL South Africa's 7,750,000 Native peoples are Zulus. Not all of them like dancing half-naked, waving spears and chanting war-songs. Not all of them are strictly black, round-headed and answering to the generic names of "John", "Mary", "Jim" or "Annie". Newcomers to the country are apt to complain that the black people all look alike. Yet physically there is as much, if not more diversity among them as in the nations classed as European.

The larger section of South Africa's 2,300,000 white population—*i.e.*, the 1,500,000 who are Afrikaans-speaking and of mixed Holland-French-German stock, the balance being mainly English-descended—does not wish to call its black fellow-countrymen "Africans". It complains that when translated into Afrikaans the word "African" becomes "Afrikaner", and must lead to confusion with themselves. Officially, therefore, the black people are "Natives", the old label "Kaffir" having been discarded, although it is still commonly used in the "Bible Belt" or Platteland (Flat land) which is predominantly Afrikaans-speaking. "Kaffir" has too many contemptuous connotations for official use, despite its pseudo-historical background. It is, in fact, an adjective of contempt in ordinary speech of the South African when he speaks of a "Kaffir" trick, or "Kaffir" work. The Zulus themselves at the peak of their fighting greatness in the middle days of the last century used the word in this fashion to brand their black neighbours (many of them exiles from Zululand) on the other side of the Tugela River in Natal.

The Native people refer to themselves as "aBantu" (literally "People", the plural form of "umuNtu", a person), and the shortened form of Bantu is generally accepted as a polite form of reference to them by white South Africans. But of late years there has been a general tendency among the growing race-conscious section of educated Natives to describe themselves as Africans. This is attributed by Afrikaner politicians to Communist influence. They see in it a sinister effort towards the

unification of black sentiment against white administrations up and down the African continent.

"Native" has, for white people, a pleasant impersonality. It helps, as one writer has pointed out, to merge the black people into the landscape and to cloud the need for regarding them as individuals, with all the quirks and temperamental vagaries of separate human personalities. White South Africa knows remarkably little about the human qualities of its Natives. It knows them as "boys" and "girls", by which are meant the men and women who do its chores, industrial and domestic. It is quite unaccustomed to giving consideration to them as persons. To-day it is having to do much more of that, and it is very uneasy about the implications of a new, more complex human relationship. Its normal reaction to this changing circumstance is impatience and aggrieved talk about the "cheeky Native" or the "cheeky Kaffir" who has the impertinence to speak about his "rights". "Give me the raw Native every time," says this vast body of public opinion. "This comes of educating the Native. He forgets his place."

In common with other South Africans, though for different reasons, I, too, like the "raw" Native. For one thing, he is very easy to "boss up". And South Africans are great believers in "bossing up" the Natives. The technique is simple. You are not required to reason, to explain overmuch, to consult. You deal mainly in imperatives. Fine shades of meaning you can waive. You say: "John, do this." Or "Mary, go fetch that." Elementary speech relationships are an index of the elementary human relationships. Thus was Afrikaans evolved by early settlers out of Nederlands. Thus has "Mine-Kaffir" or "Fanaga-lo" ("Like this") been evolved on the Rand gold-mines as a *lingua franca* for the transmission of commands between the white mine-captains and boss-boys and the broad, heterogeneous mass of many-tongued African labourers.

The raw Native has other characteristics besides responsiveness to authority which make him likeable. General Smuts once told an overseas audience: "The African is the only happy human I have ever come across. No other race is so easily satisfied, so good-tempered, so carefree. If this had not been the case, it could hardly have survived the intolerable evils which have weighed on it like a nightmare through the ages." (Less judiciously, to an American audience, General Smuts compared the black man to a patient ass.)

No doubt the absence of a money economy helps to explain

this "happiness". It was a kind of contentment based upon a rigid code of family and tribal rule under hereditary chiefs in whom was invested supreme authority and through whom the spirits of the ancestors spoke. Every boy and girl grew up in a set pattern. Conduct to parents, conduct to relatives and between wives and husbands, conduct to the chief, conduct to strangers, were all on framed lines.

In the Reserves that pattern of life still struggles to exist among some 3,000,000 and more Natives. But it is a dying struggle, for reasons some of which will be already obvious from the previous chapter. The Reserves were not created primarily for the preservation of such virtues as the white man could see in tribal life. They were an involuntary gesture which had to be made to hundreds of thousands of naked or half-naked heathen black folk who had been conquered by gun-powder or dispossessed of their lands by less creditable means, and who had to be accommodated, since they had not been exterminated.

To tourists and sightseers the Reserves are human menageries. To the Chamber of Mines they are handy labour-recruiting reservoirs. To the Native Affairs Department they are convenient back yards or glorified rural *kyas*,<sup>1</sup> in which can be preserved the zoological aspects of their work. Here, for visitors like myself, they parade the oddities of what remains of Bantu culture—polygamy, witch-doctoring and superstitions, combined with a healthy disregard for clothes. Here you have the remnants of once-barbarous chieftainships. See the way they cook their food! See the way they make their primitive huts! See the comical dances! See the quaint ornaments on their bodies!

That, without the "barkering", was underlying official feeling. It could not soil altogether my early impressions of the Zululand Reserve.

Zululand is the zoological show-place of the Department. I, for one, would not have it otherwise. A boyhood dose of Rider Haggard romances explains this. And enough remains of the peacockery of the past, broken, debased and dishevelled though tribal life now is there, for the Reserve to make picturesque "copy". My halo-ed idea of it was enhanced by the man chosen to accompany me on my first tour through.

<sup>1</sup> *kyā* literally "home", and always used of the single rooms or sheds at the bottom of a garden where domestic servants live.

He was MPika Zulu, a burly, bald-headed man well over sixty, dressed in pepper-and-salt tweeds and riding-breeches, with moustaches waxed to Victorian points and very long finger-nails (a sign of aristocracy, showing that he did not work with his hands). In manner he was respectful, but not servile, as befitting a grandson of the Zulu king MPande, himself a brother of Tchaka, the great tyrant who, in a ten-year reign from 1818 to 1828, is reckoned to have slaughtered more than 1,000,000 people. MPika's English was negligible, although he had worked for many years in the towns. So we borrowed interpreters as we went along.

Once we had crossed the Tugela River boundary 100 miles north of Durban, progress through Zululand with MPika at one's elbow was something in the nature of a royal tour.

For anyone with a taste for history Zululand can evoke many memories with battlefield names like Isandhlwane, Kembula, Rorke's Drift and Ulundi, on which thousands of Zulu braves charged to their deaths with short stabbing-spears aloft and their regimental war-cries on their lips. Here among the tumultuous green glens and hills the menfolk strike along bare-thighed, in swinging *umutshas* of monkey-tails and hide-strips instead of trousers. Here the beehive, wattle-plaited kraals circle the cattle-folds, and the old customs of *lobolo*,<sup>1</sup> polygamy and all the euphonious verbal glories of the chiefs and nation under its line of fighting kings—Tchaka, Dingane, MPande, Cetywayo, and Dinuzulu—are remembered and kept warm.

Life is much shabbier to-day. Tribal unity functions in a broken-backed fashion. White administration and town visits in search of work have completed the disintegration of a once-haughty people. But still, in a kind of fashion, the Zulu Royal House, embodied in the person of Cyprian Bhekuzulu ka Solomon ka Dinuzulu ka Cetywayo, a student at a Norwegian mission school, keeps the loyalties of many of the people. So do many hereditary chiefs. But they all function also as minor officials in the framework of white administration. For this the chiefs get about £3 a month. In power they are but pale shadows of their ancestors. The real rulers in their districts are the white Native Commissioners, however much the chiefs dissemble to their own people and try to make the most of such civil powers as are left to them.

I met, in the course of my travels up and down the Reserve,

<sup>1</sup> Bride-price paid in cattle.

half a dozen of the leading chiefs. They had, judged by their own once-puissant standards, an air of sorrowful and seedy dignity. There was Siposo MPungose, for instance, whom I talked to in his winter kraal not far from Eshowe, the capital of Zululand. His tribe had been "eaten up" by Tchaka, but restored by MPande. A tall, strapping man, he wore a grey tweed coat over his bare, muscular limbs and greeted us respectfully with right arm upraised: "*Amakosi Pargati!*" ("Chiefs on the Inside"). MPika he hailed as "*Indabazita*" ("Excellency" or "Terror of the King's Enemies"). The bare earth within the circle of the broken and trampled *utango*, or hedge, round the grouped huts was an untidy litter. The official with me commented on the amount of stercus around. Thin-ribbed, whippet-like hunting-dogs scavenged about the huts.

In the shade of one side of the central cattle kraal, which was big enough to take 500 head, squatted a handful of ragged *indunas*, or headmen, all old men. There were no young men about. They greeted us with arms aloft and index finger pointed skyward. One of them wore a head-ring—once a sign of manhood conferred only by the king, but now obsolete, as is the old kingly custom of forming young men into regiments, or *impis*.

Chairs were brought for us, while Siposo sat cross-legged on a goatskin facing us and a little in front of his line of decrepit henchmen. Flies sat on all impartially. The winter sun was hot overhead, and the distant lowing of the chief's cattle across the great, smooth sweep of downland below us had a soothing sound in the bright stillness.

A fat Native sergeant of police interpreted, and MPika transmitted the words and embroidered MPungose's replies. The interchanges were slow. Suspicion was not far from the surface, despite our honoured guide. Were we not from *Rumeni* (Government)? Officials did not drop in for a friendly chat. Not unless they had a motive. They listened to our questions, waiting for the motive to show itself.

How many wives had Siposo? He had had ten, but three had died. He could not count the number of his children. Not all his huts were occupied. Two of them, belonging to his mother and brother who were dead, were being left to rot. That was the custom. Why did he not keep his *utango* in good repair? It was MPika who produced the answer here, without waiting for the chief. This was a task properly for the young

men of the tribe, his regiments, but such things did not exist now. The young men went to the towns to earn money to pay their poll-tax and buy cattle for *lobolo*. Only the old men were left. (MPika never missed an opportunity of recalling the glory and freedom of past days.)

The official explained our purpose in coming. We were going to write about the Zulu people and show the people of other countries in word and picture how the Zulus lived. "Over there," chuckled the official, pointing vaguely to the horizon, "they think the Zulus are cannibals." I saw the interpreter boggle at this, and frowns darken the faces of the listeners at his words when they came. The official did not appear conscious that he could not have expressed a more nauseating idea, for I heard him use the same words to several other chiefs whom we met later. Their affront was even more visible. In the history of most nations there are traces of cannibalism. The few tribes of Natal and Zululand which succumbed to this practice did so in the period of great starvation and destitution following the slaughters wrought by Tchaka's *impis* more than one hundred years before.

Presently we asked to be shown round. Siposo took us to his own hut first. It contained the luxury of an iron bedstead. Goatskins lay on the beaten floor made from ant-heap earth, and a stack of dusty, unopened newspapers and circulars were tucked under the poles of the roof. Many caps, including a military one, hung from one side, and in a corner, neatly displayed, was the chief's tribal dress, his cowhide shield, armlets and anklets of cows' tails, head-dress of black *sakabula* feathers and leopard-skin collar. A few knobkerries made by himself, a horse-bridle and another tweed coat with a military discharge badge in the lapel completed the furnishing.

His chief wife's hut, into which we peeped, had a smoky fire burning in an enamel bowl and a plate of *maas*, or sour milk, lying nearby. Such food, with beer and meat, said MPika, was the food which had made the Zulu people strong. Before the white man had penetrated deep into Zulu country the young men could reach Durban, 100 miles away, on foot in a day. They had no tooth trouble, nor any with their eyes. Now they grew old fast. Why, he wished to know, did not the Government permit him and other chiefs to run butchers' shops near their kraals? The official said some such plan had been tried in the Transkei Reserve. MPika said that always when the Zulus raised doubts, questions or demands the Government said:

"Yes, in the Transkei that is being done. In the Transkei they do such-and-such a thing. In the Transkei they do another thing. . . ." He had been to the Transkei, but he had not seen these wonderful things.

Before we left the kraal some of the chief's cattle were being driven into the fold for milking. They were a nondescript bunch in the main, though here and there was a lyre-horned beast of the Black Nkone and White Nkone types, which are peculiar to Zululand, and reckoned hardy enough to breed as a selected type for Native areas.

The official delivered a homily on the dangers of *moffie* cattle—the Afrikaans word for soft breeds, unsuited to the tough African heat and veld, which derive from crossing with English stock. "Use an Afrikander bull," he said. "That's the best new blood you can introduce."

"Yes," said MPika; "in the old days the Zulus used to get new blood from other parts quite often."

"I know," said the official; "that was through 'eating up' other tribes and taking their cattle."

"This was only done," said MPika solemnly, "in order to obtain new blood."

Cattle was the grand theme-song throughout the Zululand travel. It was so in the other Reserves also. The cow may not be sacred in the Hindu sense. The Natives may not see in its eyes, as Gandhi has done, "a poem of pity". But spiritually and materially it occupies a unique place in the Bantu cosmos. In the numbers of a man's cattle and wives rests his wealth. There is hardly a phase of ritual, superstition and custom in which cattle do not play a part.

To limit this stock according to the grazing capacity of the Reserves without trampling too heavily on Native sentiment has been an old-standing problem of the Native Affairs Department. Despite the alarming effects of over-grazing, the Department is still a long way from obtaining the consent of the chiefs and people to compulsory limitation.<sup>1</sup> It has been secured in isolated areas. But Zululand has shown little sign of appreciating the purpose of Departmental preaching. The chiefs agree that the velt—grass or grazing—has deteriorated

<sup>1</sup> A 1943 census showed 3,000,000 Reserve Natives owning 5,779,000 cattle units, of which 4,000,000 were cattle, the balance being small stock. Another 1,600,000 cattle were owned by 2,200,000 Native tenants on white farms.

because of over-stocking. But, they answer, why not buy more land? The fact is that even with a much more generous provision of land purchase for Native occupation than the final figure of  $7\frac{1}{4}$  million morgen (under the 1936 Trust Lands Act), there never will be enough land for the old shifting pastoral way of life which the Bantu tribes followed in their drift down Africa, and which became, incidentally, the way of life for the trekking Boer farmers when they emigrated out of the Cape Colony in the Great Trek of 1838.

Zululand, being the most conservative of all the tribal areas, is the toughest nut to crack for the Department in this overdue matter of stock limitation. All the chiefs I visited were large owners of cattle. Old Mtubatuba, the wizened, eighty-year-old chief whose main kraal is near the railway station named after him, must be the richest of them all. His herds are variously estimated at between 12,000 and 18,000. They are spread out among his numerous relatives. But the old man has still a sharp eye for individual points, such as shape of horns and other details, which enables him to pick out his stock from any mixed herd.

Mtubatuba is usually the biggest seller of cattle at the sales organised by the white administration throughout Zululand. These sales were aimed at reducing the number of Native-owned cattle. But, though they are financially a success, they do not even absorb the natural increase of the stock each year. So the central problem of diverting the Zulu mind from its obsession to own cattle remains.

The day we called on Mtubatuba he insisted on slaughtering a beast for us. Siposo had offered us the same honoured gift, but we had declined. We accepted Mtubatuba's offer, and a young man was detailed to stab the beast behind the shoulder with a long spear. We took some choice cuts to grill over a fire, and within an hour there was nothing but a bloody patch of grass foraged by dogs to mark where the carcass had been skinned and cut up.

Not long after, I was in the auctioneer's box at a nearby cattle sale, when an American saloon car drove up to the side and Mtubatuba skipped out, leaning on a big *sjambok*, and, with a henchman bearing a gladstone bag at his heels, he came nimbly up the steps into the box and squatted down in a corner at our backs. The sale was ready then to start.

More than a hundred pounds must have found its way into the brown leather bag that day. One by one his followers who



were in charge of the various cattle he was selling came into the box and placed the money collected at his feet. The old man carefully laid out each pound note and ten-shilling note separately to check the amount handed over. Very occasionally he would allow a tribesman to keep a few shillings as a *bonsella*, or bonus.

When I talked to Mtubatuba through an interpreter he could not tell me the make of his car. He knew it only by its colour—black—as he knew how to distinguish hundreds of his cattle. In his still bright, though sunken eyes I saw the same light of suspicion and uncertainty as I had seen in Siposo's face and as I was to see in the faces of half a dozen other chiefs met en route for Mahashini—the Place of Horses—where the royal kraal of the House of Zulu stands.

Leopard-skins—insignia of royalty—lie scattered prodigally over the floor of the reception *rondavel*—round hut—at Mahashini where Arthur Mshiyeni ka Dinuzulu, the late Regent, used to receive his guests. All round the walls were pictures of Mshiyeni in various kinds of uniform, and a few tinted ones of his brother Solomon, whose sudden death in 1935 pulled Mshiyeni out of the obscure compounds of Johannesburg into the full glory of a Regent's position at £500 a year. Now that glory is on the wane. The new heir, Cyprian Bhekuzulu, second son of the favourite of Solomon's forty-five wives, was nominated successor before the assembled chiefs in August, 1945. And Cyprian was not Mshiyeni's choice, nor, for that matter, the choice of the Great Council of elder chiefs, which deliberated for so long over various claimants to the title.

Cyprian was not in their calculations at all. His mother had not been the Great Wife. They desired to hand-pick a successor who would have due regard for their place in the scheme of Zululand affairs. Instead, the Government, after one or two false moves, hesitations and an inquiry of experts, accepted Cyprian, largely on the strength of a letter purporting to be signed by Solomon in which he unequivocally names Cyprian as his heir.

So Cyprian received the Royal salute—"Bayete! Bayete! Bayete! U-suuuuutu!"—of his people on that warm winter day of August 1945, and Mshiyeni, his mouth swathed in a woollen scarf, itched and fretted on a seat below the dais of Government officials.

Mshiyeni was a sick man when I met him in the guest

*rondavel* at Mahashini some time before this event. With him was Esther, his yellow-skinned, 200-lb. royal Swazi wife, an educated woman who spoke careful English. I had with me the inevitable official and MPika. MPika greeted Mshiyeni reverently as "Ndabazita". He preserved his air of profound respect throughout the talk we had, using, an interpreter. From time to time he would break in behind Mshiyeni's hoarse and worried voice with the word: "Mageba!", naming a great ancestor, renowned for wisdom, who had long preceded Tchaka and Senzengokona in the Zulu dynasty.

Mshiyeni means "Leave ye him" and, like most Zulu children's names, commemorates a circumstance of his birth. He was born in exile in St. Helena, where his father, Dinuzulu, spent seven years following faction clashes in 1883-4 and 1888-90. In his private room where he keeps his most sacred possessions, such as guns and saddles, Mshiyeni has hanging a large photograph of a little valley choked with houses which was the main vista below the stoep of Dinuzulu's lodging in St. Helena, and his first view of the world.

Mshiyeni had just returned from Pretoria and a session of the Natives' Representative Council, of which he was automatically a member. He said that much work had accumulated for him in his absence.

He did not wish to work indoors. But he had no choice. "I am a man of the soil. The soil is my life. Only now have I put on a collar and tie. When you go I will take them off."

In his rusty, impatient voice, twisting uneasily in his arm-chair, and his black eyes roving constantly from interpreter to the official and myself, Mshiyeni went on to speak of the great suffering among his people. Afterwards the official was at pains to explain to me that this barrage of complaint was, in truth, a compliment. It showed that Mshiyeni and the other chiefs en route who had expressed grievances to us about land, cattle, crops, money and drought were flattering us. They would not bother to communicate these thoughts to any minor official.

Mshiyeni's complaints ran on for some time. There was great shortage of water: The people had no mealies. Nor had the stores, owing to Government permit restrictions. The mealies, Mshiyeni thought, should be brought to the kraals in wagons. There was no transport. He himself had mealies and had also planted wattle-trees long before. But his people had not all planted wattles. So now they came to him for hut-poles. . . .

"Mageba!" chimed MPika, like a faithful old grandfather's clock in the corner.

Mshiyeni showed us round the two or three *rondavels* and central, square-built house making up the royal kraal. The furnishing was simple but good, and everything was spotlessly clean. In front of the line of huts was an enormous earthen square. Here, said Mshiyeni, he planned to build a big house when materials were available.

As we drove out of the square with the Regent's "*Hamba gahle*"—"Go sweetly"—in our ears, MPika Zulu raised his right hand and exclaimed piously: "I see the sun dawning on the Zulu nation. In ten years all the mists will have cleared away."

I looked at MPika, and felt sorry for him—sorry for his infinite capacity for make-believe, for his sentimental heart, his love of the old kingly forms which many years of white administration had made decrepit and meaningless, and sorry for that queer faith-beyond-reason which many older Zulus have so long cherished in the ultimate good intentions of a British *Rumeni*.

The long sweeps of treeless veld around Nongoma court-house in the heart of Zululand, 15 miles from Mahashini, are all dappled bright with herds of cattle. Not until you study the land do you begin to see *dongas*, or ditches, created by soil erosion veining the valleys. But they are not frequent enough to suggest a problem.

The official with me, however, did not like them. In the course of our travels he made me so *donga*-conscious that I was unable to look at any piece of landscape without seeing cancerous signs of erosion. When I protested he was spoiling the view for me, he turned his talk to the interpreter, a young Zulu named Khumalo from the Nongoma magistracy.

Khumalo listened respectfully to the (to me) familiar arguments about over-stocking, which the official clearly rated as the most cardinal crime of the Zulu people. Presently Khumalo said: "If you are going to reduce their stock, sir, will you not have to give them something else in which to invest their money and make their bank of? What about elimination by substitution?"

This last phrase came out so aptly and unexpectedly that for a while it left the official floundering. Afterwards he complained to me that Khumalo, like so many half-educated Natives, had learnt a few catch-sentences out of entirely

unsuitable books with a Socialist bent, and this was the result.

With a few hours spent at a tribal wedding at MPika's kraal, where one of his sons was taking a bride, visits to chiefs Maliyamakanda, Enkantini, MCiketi, uSemtele, a trip into the Hluhluwe Game Reserve to stalk a couple of white rhino, for pictures, and a week-end fishing trip to Kosi Bay, among the swampy flats of Northern Zululand near the Portuguese East border, my survey of tribal life in Zululand was reckoned complete.

It lacked nothing in the shabby-picturesque. The spell of Zululand is very strong. You can so easily forget the bad things—the way the sugar-farmers have infiltrated into some of the good coast-lands, the lethargy which has put only 14 per cent of all the arable Native land under the plough, the absence of railways and communications, the plight of the 200 odd half-caste descendants of John Dunn in their little Reserve, who come under the Native Affairs Department, yet are not Natives, the lack of fencing, the primitive way crops are cultivated, the complete lack of industries, power-plants (despite some big rivers), organised water supplies, and a score of other innovations which would make for a better-controlled, more progressive outlook among the people.

It is not so easy to overlook the complete absence of Government schools, hospitals and clinics. These remain almost entirely the responsibility of the missions (of which the American Board Mission is the most historic in Natal). Nor is it possible to avoid sadly reflecting on the manner in which the tribal chieftain system has been castrated, and then retained for official quotation as an example of the integration of hereditary rule with a progressive democratic system. That the clan loyalties of the people have survived says much for the fibre of the old ways. But the loyalties are bestowed on empty shells; the substance within has flown to Pretoria and the headquarters of the Native Affairs Department via the local commissioners.

The paramount official concept in Zululand and the other Reserves is to ensure white supremacy, even in these areas where the Natives may be in the proportion of 10,000 to one. Such tribalism as remains is permitted only in so far as it does not intrude on that overriding concept. The British system in Africa of "indirect rule" through local chiefs has many critics. But in a predominantly Native area it is a far more honest

effort at upholding and fortifying the good features of a chief's status than the hypocritical South African version.

Zululand reminded me of an ants' nest that had been overturned and in which the ants still swarmed aimlessly, knowing that their world was broken, but not knowing what they could do, or where else they could turn, in order to capture a real meaning to life again.

### CHAPTER III

## RECIPE FOR A RURAL SLUM

"Speaking generally it is notorious that the existing Native Locations and Reserves are congested, over-stocked, eroded and for the most part in a deplorable condition."—NATIVE AFFAIRS COMMISSION, 1937-38.

ZULULAND AS a Reserve is not seventy years old. It has not yet begun to show the worst effects of the Reserve system—that is, of neglect, absenteeism, impoverishment, congestion and over-stocking. But if there were any doubts about the efficacy of the Union's recipe for creating a rural slum, the Ciskei locations in the eastern Cape Province, which are more than 100 years old, provide the evidence.

In the Native Affairs Department they have a little domestic joke about land "suitable for Native occupation". I first heard it when driving through the Wolkbergen of the Transvaal and after I had casually admired the starkly picturesque stony heights of the first ridge near Chumies Poort.

"Yes," said my official chaperon, "suitable for Native occupation," and earned a laugh from the district agricultural officer, who was sitting beside me. In the Ciskei, I discovered later, such broken uplands to which Natives (and wild animals) were driven were sometimes jocularly called "baboon rocks".

This was the spirit in which the locations of the Ciskei were born in the first half of the nineteenth century, after the early clashes between Eastern Cape frontiersmen pushing northwards over the Kei River into the tribal lands of the powerful Xhosa and Pondo peoples had subsided. Thus were manufactured the small, scattered black "islands" of the old Transvaal Republic after the Dutch Voortrekkers had settled down on their 20,000-acre farms.

Location is an ugly word for an ugly condition of living. The pioneers of the last century who invented locations are glamourised to-day. They are pictured as godly, sharp-shooting patriarchs with a stern but just method of dealing with the Native tribes upon whom they impinged. But it would take a very indulgent person to glamourise either the locations or the various methods by which Natives were deprived of their land.

Yet among South Africans, most of whom have never set foot in a Native Reserve, the belief persists that these areas are a kind of African Arcady, lands flowing with beer and maize, where the lazy Bantu recuperate after six months' indifferent labour in the towns.

Land and cattle were paramount with the Natives. The nomadic white pioneers suffered under the same peculiarly African obsessions. Olive Schreiner sums up the varied approach of the white man in Africa thus:

“The Boer if he wishes to annex a Native territory says: ‘The damned Kaffir. I’ll take his land from him and divide it among my children.’ The Frenchman says: ‘I shall take it for the glory of France and keep it in her honour.’ The Englishman sighs and folds his hands and says: ‘It’s a very sad thing the way these Natives go on. They believe in witches and kill them. I really can’t let this go on. It’s my duty to interfere. I can’t let these poor benighted people go on so!’”

By the 1850's, when the Dutch trekkers had swallowed up large portions of Natal and the Transvaal, they had perfected a technique of land-grabbing which kept fighting as the last resort. They were numerically at a disadvantage, and they had learnt about these things in their early thrusts northwards in the Eastern Cape. Gaika, one of the better-known chiefs of the early nineteenth century, who was given “protection” by settlers, once exclaimed: “When I look at the large extent of fine country that has been taken from me I am compelled to say that, though protected, I am rather oppressed by my protectors.” Thus might a Chicago trader in the palmy Al Capone days have complained to the bosses after finding how costly the “protection” racket was for him.

“Protection” from 1819 onwards has finally squeezed more than 3,000,000 Natives into 13 per cent of the land, leaving 2,300,000 whites to spread themselves in the balance of 87 per cent. The shifts and stratagems by which infiltration obtained the 87 per cent will one day, I hope, fill a proper place in the history books of South Africa. They are not relevant here, beyond the insight they give into the growth of certain group attitudes between blacks and whites. If, for example, an observer of the South African scene should wonder why it is so difficult to discover a body of white opinion which has any respect for the Native as a man, he must look for the answer in history and the long years of mingled infiltration and violence in the last century. It is very hard to respect someone you have been able to dupe so easily, to shoot with such impunity, to indent as labour so readily, to “boss-up” so harshly and employ so cheaply.

Black-white relations were first given a chessboard pattern in the Ciskei round about 1840. Locations alternated with white farms. The settlers were thus sure of their labour, and the chances of united action against the new masters minimised. Whatever uplift there may have been in this intrusion of white civilisation did not come from the farmers, but from missionaries. Hardly a ship touched at the Cape that did not have its bright-eyed evangelist or two from Europe and America.

To-day in the Ciskei somewhere round 900,000 Natives occupy about 500,000 morgen (a morgen is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres). Thirty per cent of these people are reckoned to be landless. Up to 70 per cent of the able-bodied men are recruited annually for the gold-mines. This has been the system for many years. But long before the Rand gold-mines opened up, officials had been sounding an alarum about Ciskeian conditions.

In 1875 the Civil Commissioner at Kingwilliamstown, which is the capital of the Ciskei, found the district impoverished and overcrowded, with very little land fit for cultivation, and constant bickerings among the cramped tribesfolk over possession of their miserable plots.

In 1946 the chief agricultural official in the Reserve told a State Commission that the only hope of saving the bulk of the locations was to evacuate the people, fence off the land and give it an indefinite rest. To such a pass has the combination of absenteeism, poor and insufficient land, lack of money, lack of directive, and indifference among the people themselves brought the Ciskei. As a recipe for making a rural slum and

condemning the inhabitants to an eternity of poverty, the system is almost fool-proof.

North of the Ciskei the Transkeian Native Territories (known for short as the Transkei) were absorbed by a mixed process of conquest, annexation and secession. They comprise the Transkei Proper—East Griqualand, Pondoland and Tembuland—and make a homogeneous block of land, 16,000 square miles in extent (the size of Switzerland), of which 13,000 square miles are occupied by 1,300,000 Natives, and out of whom 600,000 are classed as “Red” or heathens. Both the Ciskei and the Transkei fall within the Cape Province’s borders for electoral purposes. Some arid blocks of land for Natives in the Kuruman–Mafeking district of north-west Cape also fall within the Province.

The Orange Free State has two small Native Reserves on its eastern border adjoining Basutoland and Natal. These bleak, bare, poverty-stricken zones contain about 30,000 Natives: the bulk of the Free State’s 660,000 Natives live as tenant labour under feudal conditions on white farms. Natal Province, which has Zululand as its main Reserve appendage to the north, has numerous Native locations scattered among its fertile white farms. Grudgingly, as in the Ciskei, some land had to be allotted to the big Native population by the colonists. But, as they used to argue, it did not do to give the Native land, because it encouraged his “habitual indolence”, and freed him “from the necessity of agreeing with the European settlers to establish himself on their lands as a labourer”. Having forced the Natives into the hills and inaccessible valleys, the colonists produced a rationalisation to the effect that while such land was worthless for white men, it was suitable for Natives. Here, no doubt, lies the origin of the Native Affairs Department’s stock joke already quoted.

In the fourth Province of the Union, the Transvaal, there is only one “natural” Reserve—that of Vandaland, in the north-east, where the 150,000 Bavenda people keep very much alive their dark old customs of initiation schools and “python dances” for young girls. The balance of the Transvaal’s rural Native population, numbering not far short of 2,000,000, and embracing such tribes as the Bapedi, Shangaan, Balobedu (“Realm of the Rain Queen”) and Batlaping, are dotted about the drier and stonier parts of a Province which measures its wealth in terms of minerals, not black human lives. Some Native chiefs of the Transvaal, like Sekukuni, the Bapedi king,



put up a long and good fight for their territories. So did one or two chiefs near the Zoutpansberg. They all succumbed in time, either to gunpowder or guile.

In dealing with Native chiefs, it has to be noted, questions of honour, fair play and the sacredness of a bond hardly entered into the colonists' transactions. When South African politicians to-day declare that questions of the ethical rights of Natives must not interfere with the absolute domination of the white man, this traditional absence of code is worth bearing in mind. Sir Bartle Frere, chief engineer of the Zulu War of 1879, made the point that in dealing with a black "savage" and despot like Cetuyayo it was not necessary to observe the same code of rules as one would if disputing with a civilised ruler. The Dutch trekkers who took possession of the Transvaal had for many years been operating on the same principle, or lack of it.

A good example in this context concerns the famous Boer leader Piet Retief, who was massacred by Dingane, the Zulu King, along with sixty followers. Retief was promised a large slice of territory if he brought back the King's cattle, which, it was believed, had been stolen by a border chief named Sikonyela. Retief went back to Sikonyela—a man who had helped to show Retief and his wagons a way down from the High Veld into fertile Natal through the difficult passes of the Drakensburg Mountains—and by a simple trick of demonstrating a pair of handcuffs to the unsuspecting chief was able to bring the right amount of pressure to bear on him for the surrender of the cattle.

For further history on the "slim" art of acquiring territory the bluebooks of the Bechuanaland border disputes and the Zululand-Transvaal boundary quarrels offer rich data. Professor Murray may have been examining the history of white penetration in Africa when he wrote:

"If ever one is tempted to accept Mr. Balfour's description of the life-history of the human race as a brief and discreditable episode in the life of one of the meaner planets, it would be when one reads of the dealings of the white races with the coloured races."

If Zululand appealed to my romantic sense, the Ciskei inspired only pity. Nothing could disguise the nakedness of the land. It was during May, which is autumn in South Africa, and

the beginning of the long, cold winter spell when no rain could be expected for at least four or five months.

The official with me kept saying apologetically that he had never seen the locations looking worse. If we had gone there the following winter, which succeeded a droughty year, it must have been a shattering sight, for famine-relief measures had to be instituted. Middle Drift is the sad heart of a sad region. From the road you look across on either side to a barren wilderness of stones and straggling thorn-bushes. In the distance stand the greenish Amatola ("Calves") Mountains. At close quarters they belie their distant charm. They have long lost their indigenous forest, save in the remoter and protected kloofs or glens. Now they are rocky, steep slopes with little or no soil to give a grip to any grassy covering. Stones and thorns make of Middle Drift a picture which reminded me of a Native who said: "Even a baboon would have to go on crutches here, the land is so stony and hard."

What a woeful land of shortfalls this is! The Ciskei needs 837,000 bags of mealies a year: it produces on an average 352,000 bags, and mealies are the staple diet of all rural Natives. If it were to supply each member of a family with half a pint of milk a day it would have to produce 3,987,000 pints more each year. One plough to 2.6 families; one harrow to twelve families; one planter to 81.4 families; one cultivator to 31.5 families—such are the figures arrived at by the Assistant Director of Native Agriculture who has charge of the Reserve.

At the Mount Coke Mission Hospital the incidence of V.D. among expectant mothers has risen in ten years from 2 to 20 per cent. Pot-bellied, spindle-legged Native children are a commonplace. Aware of what these things meant to their future labour supplies, the Chamber of Mines in 1937 sent an agriculturist and a dietician to the Ciskei and Transkei in order to survey the position. Most copies of this massive and alarming report now reside safely in the vaults of the Chamber. Perhaps the two experts were too thorough. Their survey was, in effect, an indictment of the status quo in the Reserves, for, to use their own words: "There can be no doubt that semi-starvation is a very insecure basis on which to build a permanent labour supply. . . ."

The system has continued—it is part and parcel, as I have indicated, of State policy as it has grown up—and there is no man of sufficient vision, or any Party conscious of true national issues, to make a crusade for the radical changes which are the

only kind of changes which at this late stage might check the spread of disease, poverty and sullen discontent.

Two things stayed among my impressions of Middle Drift, apart from the stones and the thorns. One was Dr. R. T. Bokwe. The other was Fort Cox Agricultural School, whose white gables stand out vividly across the barren veld as you look towards the Amatolas. Dr. Bokwe is a Native, the son of an educated Native missionary who, by years of stinting and concentration, was able to travel to Edinburgh and take his medical degree. He is one of the dozen Natives who have managed to do this out of South Africa's 7,750,000. But, unlike most of the others, Bokwe did not seek a practice in the cities. He returned to the location he had known as a child. Now he runs a maternity hospital there and a clinic. And after years of unhonoured work he was at last made an additional district surgeon under the Department of Public Health. He is the only African with such a title. It brings him in another £150 to £200 a year. This small, dark-eyed man with the patient smile and the soft, modest voice is one of the men I always think of when people (South Africans, that is) tell me that "Jim Fish" does not require education because, anyway, he cannot absorb it. Very few white South Africans would have overcome the hundred and one obstacles which lay between this child and his ambition. We ourselves insist on being judged by the best among us. Let the Bantu be judged by such men as Bokwe, and others before and after him, and they will not be found wanting in any of those virtues of courage, tenacity, intelligence and humanity by which we set so much store.

Gaika's uneasy bones are buried a couple of miles from Fort Cox Agricultural School. The site of the school, as its name implies, is itself historic. And only a mile or so away is Burnshill, or 'Burenzile', as it became in the Xhosa tongue—the spot chosen for the first mission station among the Kaffirs by Charles Brownlee more than 100 years ago. The Agricultural School started in 1929 is a bit of history, too, in a departmental sense.

With the establishment of this institution, regarded by some officials as a daring experiment, the Department of Native Affairs set out to make agriculturists of its several million black peasantry—those who had not gone off to the mines to make their fortune. After eighteen years Fort Cox, which now has an annual roll-call of 120 students, drawn from various parts of

the Union and the neighbouring British Protectorates, too, is viewed rather dubiously by its old admirers.

"The fact is," said one official, "I doubt if we've turned out a single Native farmer from Fort Cox."

"Was that the original idea?" I asked as we sauntered round the sheep-shearing shed.

"Part of it, certainly. The two-year course is designed to produce agricultural demonstrators, most of whom the Department could absorb. But we fancied a proportion would go back home and farm their own lands, or their family's lands, on the lines they'd been taught. But not on your life, man! If they can't get a job with us they sit at home on their backsides till one turns up."

"What sort of salaries do they draw as demonstrators?"

"They start at £7 a month and they can go up to £10."

From the grumbling note in the voice of the official he obviously felt that some people did not know when they were well off.

Out in the field I discovered that the demonstrators were not regarded as of much value.

"They don't want to take their coats off," said one agricultural foreman. "They just want to be boss-boys."

"That comes of watching white men," I said.

The foreman's expression conveyed that my remark was in bad taste.

I found it difficult to believe that the Department really thought it was tackling the rural agricultural problem seriously when it started Fort Cox. There is nothing wrong with the two-year course. But plainly it was too heavily loaded for students possessing only Standard VI education, although it has plenty of practical work distributed through it. The incongruous thing to me was the size of the Reserves requiring demonstrators, the remoteness of many of them from Fort Cox, and the vastly differing climatic and soil conditions with which students had to deal when they shifted away from the school.

If the Department sincerely wished to convert the Reserve tribesfolk to modern agricultural methods, one Fort Cox could merely scratch the surface. The neighbouring Transkei, with three similar agricultural schools of its own, is making little real progress in educating its people through employing demonstrators as assistants to its white agricultural officers.

There was another obvious criticism to which I never received a proper reply. Why, I asked officials, was there no

Fort Cox for female students? In the rural areas the women-folk do practically all the work on the land. The men do the ploughing. For the rest it is a woman's sphere—the planting, the *skoffeling* or hoeing, the weeding and the harvesting. Thus has it been in Bantu tribal society for hundreds of years. Women's responsibilities for producing crops have, in fact, been increased by the migration of the men—their husbands, lovers and sons—to the towns.

Yet there is no Fort Cox for women demonstrators. The only institution approaching it was a tiny school at Mbuto in the Transkei, where six women teachers were being trained as home demonstrators in Transkeian kraals.

If you want proof that there is something profoundly lacking in the Fort Cox concept of converting pastoralists to agriculture you need only walk across the well-cared-for vegetable garden projects of the students as far as the fence. Where the fence stops, there the shining example of Fort Cox's methods ends. Beyond and all around lies the familiar vista of stones and stunted bushes. At Flagstaff Agricultural School in the Transkei you see the same sudden transition from fertility to bare, worn veld.

Within the last few years extra emphasis has been placed in most Native schools on agricultural training. This does not diminish the failure of Fort Cox to fulfil its true function, nor explain the absence of similar schools for the distant locations of the Transvaal, Natal, Zululand and the Free State.

Perhaps part of the answer lies in the reply given by one commissioner more candid than most because he was on the eve of retirement. "It's always the same with the Department," he said. "They nibble at everything. You ask head office for £200 for a specific job, and after waiting a few months you get your estimates back whittled down by some junior clerk to £50, and that's the end of your scheme."

An early morning appointment with a school inspector at Burnshill gave me a few minutes in which to look round the famous mission site. Nothing much stands that you can identify with the old station. Like the kraals of the old Native kings—of Umzilikazi in the Transvaal, of Dingane in Zululand—the huts of the early white men were fashioned of mud and wattle and such-like perishable stuff.

Burnshill has a big Native school, and the Native principal lined up some of his pupils for a photograph. I called in at the

store, and received the usual invitation to take coffee with the storeman. He was a simple, slow-speeched man who I guessed from his accent would have been happier to talk to me in Afrikaans.

I asked him about the Native people who were his customers. He said they were very poor, though better educated than the average black country-folk with whom he had dealt in the Ciskei.

"They 'as a Native missionary in charge," he told me. "I don' think it would pay a white missionary to live 'ere. The people iss too poor, man."

I asked him a few more questions before leaving. Illegitimacy, he told me, was very high round about. (Could it be higher, I wondered, than in the urban locations of Johannesburg?) Girls went to town to work, he said, and came back periodically to give birth to a child, which they deposited in the care of their old folks. The young men went away, and did not always return or send money, and their families became destitute.

Some of the men who came back were dying of T.B. or V.D.

I asked him if any of the young men bethought themselves of crossing over the fence beyond the school and taking a course in agriculture at the Fort Cox school, whose graceful gables were clearly visible from the stoep of his store.

He shook his heavy head. "No, man," he said. "If they wants to go to school, they like a real school—Lovedale, you see. Then they want to be teachers after that. No dirty work for them, once they've 'ad some education."

He shook his head again in puzzlement at Jim Fish, and excused himself to go out into the shop and harangue a new customer in fluent Xhosa.

The Ciskei has charm once you get away from the "problem" and the people who are fumbling with it. It has, for one thing, a sense of period and a touch of gentility—two qualities so rare in South Africa as to be virtually unknown outside the Cape Province. Grahamstown on a grey, misty morning epitomised these things for me.

From the entrance of the oldest hotel, where, as a local wag said: "I always feel as if there's a dead duke upstairs", I looked across an immensely broad, tree-lined road with a line of palms planted down the central grass island. On the farther side of the street was a façade of faded white houses and shops

with heavy brown shutters looking like an old Colonial print. The spire of St. George's Cathedral up the street was lost in mist, but the belfry was giving tongue. And so were other towers of school chapels and different churches of which the town has so many, till the whole air was full of a seemly brazen clangour, and it was for a moment as if I was once more in a world of faith and friendliness towards my fellow-man.

At breakfast the talk turned easily towards religion. The official with me had seen street celebrations in Jerusalem of black priests and followers of what he understood to be the Ethiopian Church. He gave an amusing picture of the curious vestments, the jangling of bells, the spangles, the priests' antics and the gibberish they intoned so wildly.

The third man at the table—a bald-headed, retired municipal clerk—said: "That was not gibberish. It's an archaic language called Gersh. They use it for ceremonial and ecclesiastical occasions, rather in the way some of our churches use Latin."

The official with me chuckled: "If Christ came back he'd have some shocks, seeing how he's remembered."

Unfortunately, I was in the midst of a mouthful of toast and missed an obvious cue. Presently I asked the retired clerk whether Natives could attend the services in the Cathedral.

"Oh, yes," he answered, almost too quickly; "but of course they prefer to worship among their own kind."

"And their own smell," contributed the official of the Department.

Even the farmers in the Ciskei share in this gentility I mention. Not all of them. But those who have prospered, and especially those who are descended from the 1820 group of British settlers.

One I visited in the Kei Road district showed me savings-bank books belonging to some of his Native labourers. More than £100 were deposited in one book. He was paying his men only the current rate of 10s. a month. But their families also could pick up 5s. doing chores, and there were the usual perquisites of separated milk, hut sites and building materials free, grazing for so many stock, and the master's cast-off clothes at Christmas-time.

On the whole the men were very content, he said. They had a much more sheltered and secure life than Natives in the neighbouring location. He agreed that the opportunities for

them to advance themselves, to obtain education for their children, and to improve their status were very small. But did they—those who had not been contaminated by visits to the town—want a new life? He doubted it. The fathers certainly did not like to see their sons going off—or their daughters. When this happened it usually meant the ruin of the family—and it was happening all too often for the farmers of the district.

I suggested that 10s. a month was open to improvement for men who worked, however slowly, from sun-up to sundown. The farmer agreed. But it was the customary wage. He knew of farmers who did not pay even this.

On the other hand, he said, he knew of one farmer who called his “boys” together one day and told them he had decided to raise them all from 10s. a month to £1. The announcement created consternation. Later in the day the farmer had to receive a deputation from the men.

The spokesman said they were sorry, but they could not accept the £1 a month. If the boss wished to pay them £1, then they would all leave.

The farmer had to press for an explanation. Finally the spokesman said: “If the ‘baas’ [master] pays us this money he will expect us to work twice as hard. Then we will all die. We would rather have the old money and live.”

Sister Dora is one Ciskeian character who made my travels there memorable. To-day her full title would be Chieftainess Sister Dora Nginza. Thus was she honourably cited by the Xhosa Paramount Chief, Archibald Velile Sandile, when he visited her clinic in New Brighton Non-European Village at Port Elizabeth in 1945. It was a nice gesture from decayed tribalism to the new detribalised Africa which South Africa is so rapidly but reluctantly creating.

Sister Dora is a fine, plain, homely lump of Africa, all bustle and starched bosom. I met her in her clinic, and she told me anything I wanted to know without interrupting her odd-jobbing. She recalled the moment, twenty-seven years before, when she and three other Native nurse probationers, all products of the Victoria East Hospital, Lovedale, stood abashed outside an examination room doorway wondering whether to enter.

“At last I said to the others: ‘The salvation of African women lies with us’, and I pushed open the door.”



Sister Dora and her friends were among the first Native women to train as professional nurses. To break away from the tribal pattern is a rare and terrifying step for a kraal-born girl, though the wrench is not so great in an area like the Ciskei as, say, Vendaland. Mission schools such as Lovedale, St. Matthew's and Healdtown, to mention the three biggest and oldest in the Ciskei, have spread knowledge and Christian belief very wide in their ninety and more years of existence. Within three miles of Lovedale is Fort Hare, the South African Native College, the only University College for Natives where a degree course can be taken in Southern Africa. The Ciskeian Native people have produced their martyrs like Ntsikana, and their great educationists like the Sogas and the Jabavus. Nonetheless the tribal concept dies a slow death, and so far as modern medicine goes it is only in the last thirty or forty years that nursing has been accepted as a profession for Native women of some education.

I can well believe Sister Dora when she told me that the superstition-ridden country Natives started to have curiosity and faith in white medicine only when they found their own womenfolk attending to them in the clinics and hospital wards.

At either end of the Ciskeian wedge—that is, on the coast and 100 miles inland—are two places whose names are inextricably mixed up in the evolution of race relations between whites and blacks. On the coast is Bethelsdorp mission, which Dr. Johannes Theodorus Vanderkemp founded on behalf of the London Missionary Society in 1804. From here he fought slavery, and demonstrated his convictions by marrying a Mozambique slave woman whose liberty he had bought. By such actions and the untiring battle Vanderkemp and his fellow-workers put up on behalf of the Hottentots and Kaffirs wherever they found oppression, did the name of missionary, especially English missionary, become an object of suspicion and downright hatred among the Dutch colonists. That hatred persisted through the later days, when Livingstone and others came on the African scene. It has not disappeared to-day: It is another strand in the tough racial rope which South Africa has strung around its own neck. Vanderkemp had the right idea when, early in 1800, he suggested that two kinds of missionaries were required in South Africa: one for the slave-owning, illiterate frontiersmen, and the other for the heathen with the dark skins.

Inland, at the top end of the wedge, is the famous Glen Grey district, which gives its name to the 1894 Act of the same name. The Glen Grey Act was the millionaire Imperialist Cecil John Rhodes' "solution" to the Native Problem. Instead of the communal ownership of Bantu tribal society, he substituted a "one man, one lot" plan. They were small lots averaging around 2 or 3 acres, and they could not be sold outside the family. The sons of a man owning such a plot were expected to go out and find work. After all, they had taxes to pay, and for them to hang around so small a plot would make "loafers" of them—the most despised category to which Rhodes could consign a man.

Economists who know something about the potentialities of plots of this size and on such soil label the whole idea "unjust and an economic absurdity". Sarah Gertrude Millin, one of Rhodes' innumerable biographers, who is better known as a writer of fiction than an expert on the "problem", says: "The Glen Grey Act remains the basis of the solution of the Native Problem."

The day I dropped in at Glen Grey happened to be the day of the monthly meeting of the District Council. This Council was also formed under the Act, and it is by this local council system, with a General Council or "Bunga" at the apex of the pyramid, that Glen Grey and its Act are best remembered. But not in the Ciskei. Like agriculture, health and almost any other aspect of Native life in this forlorn region, the "Bunga" of the Ciskei is a sickly plant. When the "Bunga" system is being discussed it is usual to have the Transkei in mind. There it has acquired most character, and is sometimes referred to as a "Native Parliament".<sup>1</sup>

The Glen Grey District Council session was dull and formal. The white magistrate sat up on his bench, and the Natives in a half-circle at desks down on the floor. They listened to a farm manager's report with barely a comment. They put forward a motion or two about roads, fences, dipping tanks and the allocation of lands and kraal sites. They sat there just a drab bunch of dejected-looking old men (most of them) come to hear what the magistrate considered suitable for them to listen to and discuss.

I am not lacking in a sense of history, and I was fully conscious that I was present at a session of what the official with me called "the mother and father of all District Councils".

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VII.

Afterwards, as we drove towards the Transkei, I consoled myself with the realisation that soil erosion and the like are only the external part of the Ciskeian problem; soul erosion is the submerged part, and it goes much deeper.

#### CHAPTER IV

### MORE OF THE RECIPE (THE TRANSKEI, ORANGE FREE STATE AND NATAL)

"The Transkeian Territories which I have the privilege to represent on behalf of the Native people may be aptly termed 'the Forgotten Country'."  
—SENATOR W. M. H. CAMPBELL, Senate, Cape Town, April 8, 1947.

THERE WAS an angry man in Umtata, the capital of the Transkei, the day we signed the hotel register. He was a big farmer from the Volksrust district bordering Natal and the Transvaal, and he was looking for permits to recruit ten "boys"—*i.e.*, able-bodied young men—for his farm. But the permits were not forthcoming from the magistrate.

"This place is just a closed preserve for the mines," he said to me after he had unloaded his grievance.

That view was later substantiated by a variety of Transkeians, including churchmen, doctors and even one or two officials of the Department. Yet to the outsider there appears no shortage of young men—at least in Umtata itself. All day long they jog up and down its broad, sloping main streets on horseback, or bask outside the magistrate's court, sunning their naked bellies and torsos in the sun. Physically these Pondos, Fingos, Xhosa, Bacas, Tembus, Hlangwinis and minor tribesmen are on the small side. But they are colourful enough, with their ochre-red blankets knotted at the shoulder, big brass ear-rings, sluttish clouts tied close to the head, and hide whips swinging from their wrists by a piece of cord.

Their country has a pleasant openness about it, too, with long, easy, downland sweeps patterned with great aloë-hedges with "red-hot poker" flowers on parade in winter, round mud huts with thatched roofs and little windows picked out with whitewash, and only a rare wayside store or cluster of square-built houses with petrol-bowser to remind one that 13,000 white folk earn their living in the Transkei along with the 1,300,000 Native peoples.

The Transkei offers great temptation to the planner. Un-

fortunately, men with a plan have a way of overlooking or brushing aside factors which officials spend most of their lives studiously observing in order to qualify for their pensions as Civil Servants. From the administrative viewpoint—and the Bunga and the white district magistrates are all controlled from the Department's headquarters in Pretoria—the Transkei is a rural backwater, a period piece situated 300 miles away, which rarely, if ever, sees the Minister of Native Affairs and has quite forgotten what General Smuts, the Prime Minister, looks like. Such ignorance is not of their choosing. From the white electorate's standpoint the Transkei is negligible, and therefore lives virtually behind God's back.

But to return. The general aspect of the Transkei, especially if you go there after the rains, is, as I say, a pleasing one, so long as you are not looking for signs of progress. Then you will begin to ask questions. You will, for example, have to look hard for any railway system. The only strip of line is from Amabele (on the main line to Port Elizabeth) up to Umtata, a distance of 70 miles, which means an over-night journey of anything over eight hours. (The approximations which occur here and throughout this book are part of the official neglect to treat the Native people, their families and their rural retreats as matters of sufficient national import to make the registration of births and deaths and the compilation of other statistics compulsory.)

No factory chimneys blur the chaste blue Transkeian heavens. They have no industries to do the blurring, although they have the raw materials for boot-and-shoe works, for tanning hides, for canning meat, for woollen goods, weaving, basket-making and such-like manufactures. The Transkei has rivers and waterfalls; but no electrical undertakings stem from them. It has coal deposits and it has minerals; but they have never been properly surveyed because, being in Native-occupied territory, they are no longer in the open market for exploitation.

The Transkei has parts where the rainfall is as high as 50 inches a year and where many hillsides could be clothed in valuable timber—timber which would provide hut-poles and house-frames and, above all, fuel.<sup>1</sup> One expert of Bunga estimates that the Native people use more than 130,000 tons of cow-dung as fuel each year. This practice, linked with the reluctance of Native families to make use of kraal manure from the cattle-pens on their ploughed lands, is a very grave loss to

<sup>1</sup> A minimum of 120,000 acres of fuelwood plantations are needed. There are under 20,000 acres at present.

the soil. I can give you the official explanation for this serious and almost universal omission in the Reserves. But official explanations are apt to get monotonous. Too often they reduce themselves to a simple formula like: "The niggers are just damn lazy". This was how one Bunga official covered up the frustrations of his job after twenty-five years in it.

Two queries were uppermost in my mind when I met this attitude. (1) Why did the official persist in his job when the responses were so small—unless he was too "damn lazy" himself to change? (2) Why had not other methods been tried to persuade the Natives to conform to proved white agricultural practice, if officialdom was getting so little proof over the years that its preaching was taking effect? The Department is very fond of advertising its keenness to obtain the co-operation of the rural Natives whenever it has reforms or changes in mind. The extraordinary fact remains that the instances of such co-operation being given over a period of thirty-seven years, and in which innumerable adjustments have been, and are being made in rural Native life, could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

The Transkei, backwater though it may be to the Department and the rest of the country, invites questions of this kind because, potentially, it has so much to commend it to the agriculturist, the forestry expert, the sociologist, the economist, the doctor and the scientist.

What an opportunity for a grand experiment in collective farming! Except that the word "collective" is a kind of bogey word and, like "agitator", is lit bright red with Moscow fires in the Departmental mind. Umtata itself is not so afraid of these words. The doctors and the missionaries sometimes use them. But not the officials. New books, new ideas, new techniques evolved in other countries—these are scrupulously avoided. No accidents can happen to you if you preserve your *status quo*. Let other countries try out their Tennessee Valley Authority schemes, their settlement works and their sovietised farming. What do they know of Africa, these countries?

So, in stifling initiative in the Native, we have succeeded in stifling initiative in the Civil Servant who rules the Native. And sullenly, when provoked, the Civil Servant points to the Native and blames *his* ignorance and sloth. It is the favourite national alibi whenever conditions reach a stage of such crisis that the public demands that something has to be done.

These were conclusions I reached after looking round the

Transkei. A few snapshots I found worth keeping because of the insight they give into Native life there. A cattle sale was one. It was not on the scale of the Zululand sales. But it had atmosphere.

This sale was in the Libode district, a few miles out from Umtata, and very close to the fine, big, square brick house occupied by Paramount Chief Victor Polo of Western Pondoland, a hereditary chief who was mission-educated and whose style of living would be rated upper middle class if he were white.

The "props" were simple enough: just a few palisaded pens linked by a race to the sale-pen, where the auctioneer—a white man from Umtata—took his stand. In the pen near the race entrance stood Henry Bulwer, an agricultural officer of the Bunga, a real Transkeian-speaking, fluent Xhosa. Bulwer was there to interpret the bidding where necessary to the Native owners, and advise them on values.

Perched round the top of the pen were a few half-naked herd-boys, a tribesman or two, blanketed, and smoking their long-stemmed pipes of wild olivewood, and three white buyers. Two of these were store-keepers—an Afrikaner and a Jew—both following the same practice of buying cattle to fatten for the Cape market. The third was a cattle speculator who was regarded by officials as a very "slim"—cunning—bird.

"Start me going! Who'll start me going?" shouts the auctioneer after the first beast—a fine, big, brown cross-bred ox with Afrikaner blood in it—had been driven into the pen.

"I'll take half-crowns," says the auctioneer after the price had crept up to £9.

Bidding closes at £9 5s. The owner—a "Red" Native—consults with Bulwer first, and then with a blanketed woman up on the fence. Georgie, the stout, white-haired clerk of the sale, and an old Transkeian whose father was known to the Pondo as Somqwaka—the Kindly One—from his precarious seat on the top of the fence begins ragging the owner in Xhosa.

"Sell the ox," he shouts, "and you'll have money for a new blanket."

The tribesmen along the fence guffaw. Georgie can always be relied on to put the crowd in a good humour.

But the owner refuses to be jockeyed into selling. The ox is driven out, and will probably be put up later, when the owner has seen what sort of prices are ruling.

Two miserable scrub cattle, with a dash of Friesland in their

black-and-white markings, and boney hips sticking out, are driven in.

On sighting them Georgie roars: "We buy the old ones for the mothers-in-law to get rid of them," and in the general laughter the cattle are hurried away as unworthy for sale.

Their swift disappearance causes a delay before the next stock is driven in.

"*Azingēne!* They must come in!" shouts Georgie impatiently.

Bulwer takes up the cry: "*Azingēne!*" and two small cows come blundering in, pursued by the crack of a stock-whip. They are thin and in bad condition. They stand still, heads down, and defaecate miserably while the crowd and the buyers speak of them contemptuously.

The blanket-wearing owner says in defence that they are in milk and in calf.

Bulwer shouts this fact across the pen incredulously, and thus is it received.

Georgie thunders back in Xhosa: "They are in calf with dung!" (he used the stronger word), and the tribesmen roar delightedly.

The beasts are knocked down for a few pounds. The next lot of four, solid-boned oxen barge into the ring and clash horns. Are they being offered together or separately? Bulwer talks to the owner, who announces that he wishes the black ox to be bid for first.

"Does that belong to your favourite wife?" calls Georgie, and when two more are offered together for sale he wisecracks: "Be careful you don't offer too much for one, or the other wife will be angry."

The sale is soon over. Only seven of the cattle offered are sold, and they fetch £56. Three months before, the sale here turned over 1,300 head averaging £8 to £10 for an ox. And at the sale preceding this only one beast was offered!

Cattle dominate the lives of the tribesfolk here just as much as in Zululand or the other Reserves. The last census of stock showed there were 1,554,132 cattle, 126,000 horses, 2,521,583 sheep, 919,000 goats, 117,000 pigs and 12,000 donkeys. The introduction of sheep into an already highly stocked area was the brain-child of the Native Affairs Department. The idea was that it would give the Natives a cash crop. It has done that, and it works out at an annual average per family of 15s.

or £1. Sheep and goats now outnumber the cattle by almost three to one, and are largely blamed by experts for the denudation of the veld.

"From the point of view of food supplies," says one of them, "the introduction and encouragement of wool production is nothing short of suicidal, when we consider the density of population and the consequent shortage of fresh milk and oxen for draught purposes. It is the sheep which are driving the cattle off the land. . . ."

Among farmers in America and elsewhere there is a saying: "First come cattle, then sheep, and finally desert." Yet, though cattle remain an obsession with the people, it would be wrong to imagine they all own stock. A veterinary officer who conducted a survey of seven districts found that 24 per cent owned no cattle at all and 36 per cent had five or less. The big owners with as many as 3,000 sheep and fifty or more cattle are the Bunga councillors, the headmen and the chiefs. They naturally are quick to protest at any measure which threatens the advantages of the tribal system of communal grazing.

Statistics of cattle and small stock are more accurate than those for population. There are more dipping-tanks<sup>1</sup> in the Transkei than hospital beds; more stock inspectors than doctors. The Natives sometimes say, "In the Reserve it is often an advantage to have four legs rather than two". And some of the educated among them will remind you of the 1936 drought, when starving Natives in both the Transkei and Ciskei were paying 18s. to 25s. a bag for maize, and the Government was supplying it to White farmers in the same districts as cattle-feed at a subsidised price of 7s. a bag.

Most of Bunga budgeting, which has the handling of the revenue from twenty-six magisterial districts, and which amounts to about £300,000 a year, is concerned with cattle and crop improvements, roads, bridges, education and health. Under "education" fall the three agricultural schools mentioned earlier. The oldest, at Tsolo, was started in 1904; the newest is Flagstaff, begun in 1930, and which I visited. Between them they have supplied about 180 demonstrators to the agricultural department of Bunga.

Flagstaff is a smaller edition of Fort Cox, and open to much the same criticism. The course is a two-year one, and available

<sup>1</sup> Compulsory dipping of cattle has been in force for years in many areas as a measure against certain tickborne diseases, like East Coast Fever, which have played havoc in past years.



to students with Standard VI education. Standard VI in Native schools is reckoned the equivalent of Standard IV in White schools, and it is asking much of students to absorb instruction in no fewer than thirteen subjects, among them agriculture, veterinary science, horses, cattle, sheep (wool), dairying, pigs, poultry, entomology, economics, botany, book-keeping, forestry, vegetable-gardening, horticulture and farm engineering.

What the students fail to absorb mentally they make up for in the voluminousness of their notes. In fact, the taking of notes seems to be an end in itself. One Director of Native Agriculture in the Transkei, when it was pointed out that note-taking on slavish lines was bad, said that the students like to have a large collection to take home with them at the end of term. They had talismanic value.

All instruction is given in English (in which very few have any fluency). A kindly notice on the board in the main hall states that speaking in the "vernacular" is forbidden, except on Sundays.

I was taken round the school and, of course, the 10-acre demonstration plot without which no agricultural school for Natives is complete. It is all there—a model *rondavel* costing £5, silage, water storage, vegetable garden, mealies planted in strict rows and hoed up neatly, Napier fodder strips between belts of mealies, small assorted paddocks for the handful of cattle, a fowl-house and run. I noted in my diary as I walked over this plot that "Natives as well as European farmers in the district are very interested in this experiment".

The fact is, of course, that you can drive or walk through the length and breadth of the Transkei and not find a single kraal-owner possessing 10 acres of land who has set about imitating the model demonstration plot.

"This plot is like the course," said one agriculturist to me. "It is not related sufficiently to the kraal-stage of living of most Natives. Have you been to Tsolo? You should go there. There's only a fence between a plot like this and one of the most backward, unprogressive locations in the Territories."

Senator W. M. H. Campbell, who is a nominated Native representative for the Transkei in the Upper House, had something to say about Tsolo and other demonstration plots during the 1947 Session. He pointed out that even on these show-spots the average annual profit could only be £25. What could the ordinary Native hope to make on his unfenced plot? "And

even if he could make £25 a year, is £2 a month an incentive to him to remain content as a peasant farmer, when he can earn far more in the towns? . . . Every visitor to the Transkei is shown these demonstration plots. They are show-places, and of course the ordinary visitor is duly impressed. He does not ask questions about them. He is not supposed to."

Again I say the principle of agricultural instruction, as widely diffused as possible, is manifestly desirable if the Native people are ever to husband such land as they are permitted to retain and acquire the self-sufficiency of older peasantries. But the Departmental approach requires complete overhaul, coupled with the opening-up of several higher grades in its agricultural section to Native demonstrators with a flair for their work, before they can expect to come to grips with their massive problem.

Perhaps part of the cause of the failure of the Department's agricultural plans lies with the suggestion an ethnologist made when he was commenting on the Department's eternal plaint of not being able to secure the ready co-operation of the Reserve Natives: "If they only employed somebody who knew something about Bantu psychology it might help. They treat all these things as an administrative job. They take no account of the real feelings and thoughts of the people who have to carry out the new regulation, or whatever it may be. You sometimes hear it said that Africans have never established a symbiotic relationship with the land. We White people have never established a symbiotic relationship with Africans, either—and that's just as important. If the Africans are parasites on the land, we're parasites on the Africans."

Other Transkeian show-places are the Betterment Areas of Butterworth and Umzimkulu at opposing ends of the "Territories". Butterworth, in the south, is an old location. Its inhabitants are mostly Fingos—a tribe composed of remnants fleeing from Tchaka's fury. Their disintegration has helped to make them more pliable to white teaching. Indeed, they fought on the white man's side in the early Kaffir Wars against the Xhosas and Pondos.

In the north one white agricultural overseer with a Native assistant supervisor and three demonstrators was in charge of the whole 140,000 acres comprising the Umzimkulu settlement. This land was bought under the 1936 Trust Land Act, and the plan was to settle on it 2,000 Native families from the

overcrowded locations of the district and farther afield. That was the theory. Actually—and this is true of much more land bought under the Trust for relief of congested areas—there were already many families settled on the land. And, of course, the Department had to pay through the nose for it, the average price being around £6 to £7 an acre for what would normally fetch around £4.

Each settler family receives about six acres of arable land, plus an acre for hut site and garden, and grazing rights for so much stock.

The veld is sour, but the rainfall of the district is high—around 30–35 inches—and experts agree that the area is excellent for wattle-growing. Nothing had been done about this when I visited the district. The usual inter-Departmental discussions had taken place. Much of the Department's work in the Reserves overlaps with that of other Government Departments, like Justice, Labour, Education, Irrigation and Forestry and Agriculture—the biggest of all the State Departments. Such overlapping is inevitable, since the problems of large rural areas cannot be treated as if they bore no relation to the farms and land upon which they abut. Of real co-operation in agricultural matters I saw little. Indeed, in certain aspects, such as soil conservation, the Union Department of Agriculture and the agricultural section of the Native Affairs Department, which was dealing with erosion, appeared to be deadly rivals. The Native Affairs considered themselves older hands at the game than the senior Department. They felt they had more to show for their efforts, too, and they were angry, when Dr. Hugh Bennett, the American soil expert, visited South Africa in 1945, that he was never given a real chance to see what they had done by way of conservation in districts like Herschel in the upper Ciskei and among the sand-dunes of the North Zululand coast.

The white overseer at Umzimkulu was a sturdy, downright man of the practical type one meets quite often in the country districts. And, like so many of them, inside and outside the Department, he was a firm believer in 'strong-arm' methods to obtain results among the settlers. He doubted very much whether many of those settlers on the Trust lands would make peasant farmers, as the Department seemed to imagine.

His explanation why the Natives did not co-operate with new schemes such as Trust Land settlement and stock limitation—the biggest stumbling-block of all—was that they had

been bluffed and lied to so often in the past. The Agricultural section of the Department dawdled too much. The Natives were ready ten and more years ago for the improvements implicit in Trust land settlement.

"Ah, but you can't hurry 'em, man," said the official with me. "We had to win the trick first."

"We won the trick seventy or eighty years ago, didn't we, when we annexed them?" I said.

Afterwards I thought of an old memorandum the overseer had shown me on the desk in his office. It was from a local Native teacher, and had been submitted to the 1941 Young Commission on Overstocking, which had also taken a look at land tenure in the Transkei as it might affect the reshuffling of lands aimed at under the Trust Act.

"The Government is the guardian of the Blacks," said the memo., "and when it has suited its purpose—*i.e.*, dipping of stock and East Coast Fever restrictions—it has not hesitated to enforce new laws. Why cannot it enforce these other new laws if it is convinced they are for the real good of the people?"

Down in the valley, in the heart of the first three settlements, was a clinic with a Native nurse in charge. She was handling 100 patients a month, about thirty of whom were casuals, the balance being ante-natals and maternity cases. Once a month a district surgeon called. Any serious cases of T.B., V.D. and the like had to make their own way on foot to Kokstad, more than 30 miles away.

Health conditions in the Transkei are a short cut to the headlines because typhus and Transkei are almost synonymous terms. This is the lice-borne variety, and appears to be a legacy from the days when British troops marched through Butterworth eighty odd years ago. While there, the troops received an overdue issue of uniform, and gladly flung aside their old and crawling garments. These were snatched up by the Natives and proudly worn, wet or fine, indoors and outdoors.

According to the records, typhus was not officially recognised as endemic in the Transkei until after a severe outbreak in 1917. Local doctors were rebuked when they reported its occurrence before then. They were informed that what they called typhus was malignant fever. The difference between malignant fever and typhus from a Departmental viewpoint

was the difference between half a dollar and a dollar and a half per notified case.

The latest big scare was in 1945.

The blankets worn by the biggest percentage of the population are the favourite harbourage of the lice. They even tell the story at Lusikisiki of the Native who, having bought a new blanket at a store, sat down outside and carefully transferred the lice from his old blanket to the new.

One of the minor rackets among young Transkei Natives is a traffic in de-verminisation tickets, without which a Native cannot travel from the Territories to the towns seeking work. Where municipalities have receiving depots for job-hunters delousing is automatic, as it is, of course, at the headquarters of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association in Johannesburg.

The lack of a proper census makes rigid typhus control impossible. During 1945 four mobile anti-typhus clinics tackled the whole of the Territories. If all the people had turned up at the appointed places—a very big “if”—the whole Transkei might have been inoculated in two and a half months. This is on the basis of each team of one M.O. and three assistants averaging 2,000 inoculations each a day. It took double that time, and only the cheeriest optimist would pretend it was 100 per cent coverage.

Talking to the chief Medical Officer in Umtata, I gathered he was more concerned about the increase in deficiency diseases than in typhus. This confirmed the earlier survey made on behalf of the Chamber of Mines in 1937. V.D. and T.B. were “pretty bad”. Worm infestations were very common, bilharzia being the worst.

There was, he said, a good deal of “competition” from Native doctors, usually and erroneously referred to as witch-doctors. He described one case he watched in a kraal in which a Native doctor was treating an old man. He asked to examine the patient, and found him quite healthy, but very constipated. He then stood back and watched his rival perform his cure. This had as its climax a dance round the patient, the doctor carrying tweezers in one hand and a C.M.R. beetle palmed in the other. Presently the dancing medico pinched the old man in the arm with the tweezers, dropped the beetle and proclaimed to the heavens: “There is the cause of your illness!”

The old man rose and hopped around in evident relief. The

Medical Officer advised him to call at the clinic for a dose of Kruschens to complete the cure.

Where Native doctors still score is in their handling of those numerous upsets which have a psychological foundation. The common Native view of ill-health is that it has been induced by an ill-wisher, and can only be exorcised by magical methods. A frequent complaint among young Native girls, for example, is that described as *siposo*. One practitioner in the Territories says that it occurs invariably in the spoilt-child type. "She displays her frustrations and egocentricity by great psycho-motor activity in a bid to secure the limelight of sympathy she covets. She groans and pants in a most alarming manner, becomes extremely spastic, exhibits tremors which would make a tragedienne green with envy and appears on the point of dissolution."

His treatment for this condition, which is always ascribed to medicine unknowingly taken in the girl's food, was to "isolate the patient, give a bowel washout, and a nasal feed of milk and magnesia sulphate to exorcise the love potion". With the more vociferous ones an open bottle of liquid ammonia (fort.) placed under the nostrils produces tears, inhibits the panting respirations, spoils the performance and impresses the patients with the potency of the white man's *muti*—medicine.

In this doctor's view if the white man earnestly set about eliminating ignorance and superstition, the reproach that "civilisation" in South Africa is spelt "syphilisation" for the Bantu would vanish.

Very little that is good can be said about primitive health concepts, except that obviously those who survive must be toughened by early experience. Belief in Native doctors is still very strong in the Reserves. It would have disappeared much quicker if modern medicine were more freely available. Of the Transkei's fourteen hospitals, nine are mission-owned and run. Missions are responsible for nearly all rural hospitals, and manage to survive under conditions of stringency that would frighten any but the strong in heart.

"The best proofs I can quote of how the Reserve Natives are taking to our medicine," said the Medical Officer, "are the figures of attendances at the hobo clinics we've established. We've got seven going in the Umtata district alone. They're self-supporting, and average round £80 to £100 a month. When we had to raise the ordinary fee from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. a visit, owing to the high costs of drugs and medicines, the people

took it without a grumble. Apart from the seven hereabouts, we've another thirty-three scattered through the Territories. They've been started in the last six years. I reckon we need 250 to give us full coverage."

The M.O. took me to one of his hobo clinics—that at Kambe Location, a few miles out. It comprised three huts which the headman had had built and thatched. One was the clinic, one was for two nurses (a qualified Native nurse and a probationer), and the third was a kitchen and store-place. The log-books kept by the nurse showed the popularity of the clinic. Fees were scaled down from 2s. 6d. for the first visit to a few pence for the second; and from 3d. an ounce for medicines to 1½d. for a pill.

The M.O. visualised his hobo clinics becoming the focal point in a series of Community Centres. This Transkeian scheme overlaps with a later State plan to start 400 Health Centres. Three sites for these were selected for the Transkei. But nothing has happened.

The Transkei, from its past experience of living in official pigeon-holes, is well advised to carry on with its own clinic scheme, rather than hope to obtain benefits from the national plan, which, at its present rate of development, will take another sixty years to complete.

. . . . .

You meet some good types in the Territories. Neglect has not dimmed their sense of what is needful. They know what is required to make something organised and purposeful of the Transkei. They banded themselves into a Transkei Co-ordinating Welfare Committee in order to try to bring about improvements. All the leading figures of Umtata and district belonged to this—officials of Bunga among them. But the head office of the Native Affairs Department in Pretoria did not like the tone and language of certain resolutions passed at Committee meetings. A private minute was sent round advising officials to withdraw their membership.

So the Co-ordinating Welfare Committee's brief career as a pressure-group faded.

"Only one thing worries the Native Affairs Department," said a doctor of Umtata as we stood on the first tee of the town's golf-course. "That's the requirements of the labour market—that is, the mines. What do they care about the break-up in family life, so long as the recruiting average of

30 per cent of the young men of the Transkei for the mines is maintained?"

He paused, and smacked his ball 220 yards straight down the fairway and twenty yards in front of mine.

"I'll tell you what it means—from a doctor's viewpoint. A woman came to me complaining she was sterile. She wanted to have a baby. You know the biggest sorrow a Native woman can be visited with is not to have children . . .?"

"They say they don't start counting till after the first six or seven, don't they?"

"More or less. Well, this woman's husband was away—had been away something like two years on the Rand mines. So we arranged for her to go up to Johannesburg and see her husband. Some time later she came along to the ante-natal clinic full of the joys of spring, and we gave her the usual check-over, including a Wassermann. She was going to have a baby all right—plus a roaring dose of V.D. . . ."

Between executing strokes of intimidating accuracy, the doctor continued on the same theme. What did the Department care about the land question in the Transkei? he wished to know. They talked glibly about a Rehabilitation Planning Committee; but who was to serve on it? Was there an economist on it, or a doctor, or a sociologist? Didn't such men mean anything in the replanning of a vast zone like the Transkei? How had Roosevelt set about backing up the Tennessee Valley Authority scheme? He had gathered together the best brains in the country, and from all relevant walks of life.

Several times the doctor reverted to the land situation, the 30 per cent and more who were landless, and the lack of exact knowledge about the locations. Since Bunga had been formed in 1903 less than ten of the Transkei's twenty-six districts had been properly surveyed. How could title-deeds be issued or any fair assessment of an area be made if it was not surveyed? The last survey of a district had been of Ngcobob. That had taken five years, and cost £50,000.

When I was three holes down I found occasion to remark that I found the "problem" rather oppressive at close quarters after a few days.

"What about me?" he said as he tee-ed up. "I've had six years of it non-stop. That's why I want to get out. There's no Native Problem to a man of science. It's really a political issue. The Native people have been 'swallowed up', as they



would put it. They're our children. They look to us. They're waiting for us to show the way. We can make of them what we will. They're first-class human material. . . ."

He paused to make his drive, and with some satisfaction I watched him pull it far into the rough.

"I thought you said the Native Problem meant nothing to a man of science?" I said as I shaped hopefully for a drive which would take me straight down the "pretty". Alas! I, too, produced a "hook", and disappeared in the same direction as he had taken.

"Since when have you been rated a man of science?" he inquired, and led the way towards the tall tambootie grass.

"We need a new Runnymede for the Transkei." The speaker, a grey-haired, nobly-profiled churchman, paused to strike another match for his pipe. He struck many matches that evening in his study in Umtata, for he was in a talkative mood, and the "problem" was very close to his heart.

Some time later I quoted to him an opinion I had heard in the train on the way to Amabele. It had come from a great hulk of a farmer, a prosperous descendant of the 1820 settlers with several farms in the Eastern Province and numerous progeny.

"The moment you cease ruling the Native by force you're finished," said the old man with finality.

The churchman tucked down one corner of his mouth. "Haven't you met his sort before? They usually preface what they're going to say by telling you that they reckon they understand the Native. Those people only understand one relationship between white and black: that is, of master and servant. It's a very simple relationship, and if human society was static we should be a very contented corner of Africa. Have you been on some of the old wine estates in the Cape? No? There you'll see it at its best. It would make you wish you had lived a hundred years ago, and before Karl Marx began his summing-up of the world's woes."

"I suppose the African has more than his share of docility. That's what makes this master-servant relationship so easy to accept."

"And how long can we go on counting, on that sort of docility? I don't think people appreciate, or want to admit, that the Native is a very versatile, adaptable person. I've met a number of people well disposed to the Native, chiefly, it seemed

to me, because they felt he couldn't possibly advance himself at any different pace from that of the European, and therefore he was never, in measurable time, going to represent competition to them. But are they right? Is it going to take the Native so many hundreds of years to become a trade unionist, or a connoisseur of swing music, if you like? Obviously not. Once he's become detribalised and a town-dweller he rapidly becomes Europeanised. We're Europeanising the Native as hard as we can go—but we won't admit it."

"But not in the Transkei?"

"Not in the way it's happening in Johannesburg. Of course not. We see another aspect of it here: the way working in the towns undermines the chiefs. I think it's time the farce of keeping the chiefs going was dropped. They don't function any more as chiefs—not as they understand the word. You know what one of them said to me when we were discussing some new measure that had been proclaimed. 'We are like a dog whose teeth the Government has pulled and then been given a big bone to chew.' They've been deprived of most of their powers. They merely function as underpaid, and therefore corrupt Government servants, whose title gives them the power to exploit their people, without preserving them or defending them."

The churchman tried a couple more matches before he again got into his stride.

This time it was the Native education system. "It's all wrong—so far as our agriculture goes, I mean. We've made the duds, the Standard Seven failures, turn to agriculture, instead of giving it an exclusive and worthier status in their eyes."

And, inevitably—and recurrently—we came round to the gold-mines. "No industry that owes its operational success to a policy which degrades and destroys its workers *as human beings* has the right to continue."

I tried to get a point or two across. I said that Africa seemed to bring out the worst in white men. The more I looked at the Herrenvolkism of white society in Africa, the more its restraint looked like a problem of purifying human nature itself. The problem had the same facets. It was a complex of all our shortcomings. Life in Africa for a white man gave the seamier side to his nature too much licence and demoralised his concepts of truth and the moral law.

"Why not go to root causes? We have lost religion. That is

the only thing that gives purpose to life. That is why we do not honestly face up to our task and duties towards the Natives."

When we parted at the gate he spoke to me about the books I had to write of my tour. "Please don't make them so much more window-dressing. I'm tired—we're all tired—of such efforts, hiding the real tragedy below. Give the truth—just for once, please."

The Orange Free State has upwards of 450,000 Native labourers who earn an average of 2*d.* each a day "all found". Another 30,000 live in two small Reserves, one at Thaba 'Nchu and the other at Witzieshoek (as spectacular for scenery as for poverty). The Free State is predominantly Afrikaans-speaking. Here you are in the land where Natives are mostly referred to as "*die Kaffers*" and more personally as "*jong*"—youngster—"boy", or "*skepsel*"—creature. Nowhere else does the Native look so miserable, so utterly dejected in his lot, so ragged and spindle-shanked.

The Free State farmers, like all country Afrikaners, are proud of the way they handle their Natives. Sometimes South Africans in other Provinces have said to me wistfully: "Look at the Free State. They never have any trouble with their Natives. They know how to deal with 'em."

No, they certainly do not have much trouble with their Natives on the windy, flat uplands of the Free State. There is no strong tribal tradition welding the people. The most considerable tribal entity—if they can be called that—are the Baralongs, who occupy land in the Thaba 'Nchu area. They migrated down this way from Bechuanaland to the north-west in the early days of the last century, tagging along at the heels of a Wesleyan missionary named Archibell. Through their chiefs they bought land on which to settle from the powerful Basuto chief Moshesh, whose domain is now a British Protectorate and 40 miles east of the village of Thaba 'Nchu.

Near this place I saw the most desolate Native village of my travels. It is called Gladstone, and is apparently a new settlement created for landless folk. Bleak and bare, with hardly a blade of grass in sight and not a tree for miles around, the miserable stone-and-mud huts of the Natives huddle together as if seeking to hide behind each other from the bitter winds that pierce the marrow in winter-time hereabouts. Outside each hut the cow-pads are piled high. These are their only fuel. Across the naked veld you can see the women out on their

scavenging errands each day, ranging for miles, to collect manure to keep their fires alight.

No fences obtrude. Such livestock as can subsist on land which would barely support a tortoise wander around the homesteads. A borehole was put down for the settlers by the Department. But it was not working when I visited the place. Water had to be fetched, in the familiar petrol tins, from a distant *spruit*, or spring. How many thousands of miles a day do the country women of Africa go to fetch water for their domestic needs; and to find wood or fuel substitutes?

Few menfolk were around in Gladstone. Or the neighbouring Reserve. Some of them work for the handful of better-off Natives like Dr. W. S. Moroka, who is hereditary chief of the Baralongs, a farmer with considerable land, a doctor with an Edinburgh degree and a large practice (filtering through separate waiting-rooms for white and black), and a member of the Natives Representative Council.

The bulk of them work on European-owned farms. There can be few drabber spectacles in Africa than that of the lives of many of these farm tenants. Less than 1 per cent of them are reckoned to be literate, and of about 120,000 children of school-going age not more than 17,000 attend classes.

At a time, a few years back, when the recurrent complaint of farmers was raised that the Free State was losing its labour to the towns, a fact-finding committee examined conditions there for farm labourers. A cross-section of letters to the Press gave many glimpses of the white farmer's traditional outlook. The Native had lost his "respect" for the "white man". There should be labour bureaux, because the European should not have to lower himself by asking a Native to work for him. It was shocking to find Natives assaulting farmers, being insolent and refusing to work for low wages; farmers had to "swallow" much from the Natives; Natives must learn to obey implicitly; they must be treated sternly but justly; corporal punishment should be given, because the Native "understood" that.

One witness before the Committee was astonished that Natives were allowed to give evidence in the same meeting as Europeans; when the chairman ruled that it was a public meeting he walked out, and accused his fellow-delegates of lacking moral courage for refusing to do so, too. In an editorial comment on this incident one newspaper declared that it was unsound to have Natives present while farmers were giving evidence, and that if evidence from Natives was really required

it should be taken separately; that the present policy of the Committee would only make the relations between master and man worse; the chief question was, after all, not how the Native was treated, but how to remedy the shortage of labour. The Committee noticed that when a farmer giving evidence wished to show a generous spirit to his labour he was wont to say: "The Native is also human". (I have heard the same sentiment expressed many times in the towns as well as the countryside. It may sound odd to a stranger's ear. You have to live a few years in South Africa before you realise that a remark like this can seriously be regarded in some company as an expression of the choicest liberalism.)

Another *leitmotiv* in the Free State farming attitude, says the Committee, was the appeal to tradition and "the days of our forefathers, who gave their blood for the land and knew how to 'keep the Native in his place'".

Like the rest of the farming community, the Vrystaters do not connect inefficiency with low wages. They put it the other way round: the labour is paid little because it is inefficient. If I had to seek a setting for a film with a title like "The Making of a Caliban", I should choose the conditions under which Free State farm labour subsists on some of the smaller holdings.

While I was driving up from Thaba 'Nchu to Witzieshoek—a magnificent though stark amphitheatre below the mighty confluence of the Malutis and the Drakensburg—an official of the Department told me a story about a Free State farmer. The *Oupa*—grandfather—it seems, had a vivid dream that he went to heaven. So at breakfast-time he entertained his large range of descendants with his memory of all the lovely sights he had seen and the beautiful rooms which were provided for him and his progeny in the heavenly mansions.

During a lull in Oupa's word-picture the Native servant, who had been taking in much of the talk while he attended to the table, interrupted his master hopefully, saying: "Please, *baas*, did you see me up in heaven in that lovely house?"

"*Nee, jou skepsel!*" roared Oupa. "D'you think I went into the kitchen?"

Not all Free State farm labour lives on the spot. Farm work is seasonal. But, like most employers of Native labour, these farmers like to have a cheap reservoir of man-power handy to call on in times of ploughing, sowing, weeding and harvesting. So a number of them have bought farms in the Weenen district

of Natal, which lies over the top of the Drakensburg on the eastern boundary. These are known as "labour farms". They are bought at quite high prices for the labour which is squatting on them—or would like to squat—for a modest average rental of £5 a year per family, on condition of supplying services.

There is no supervision. And, as far as I could see, driving through a belt of them, there was no limit imposed on the number who squatted or the amount of stock they had with them. The result of this system over a period of years was one of the most grievous, poverty-stricken spectacles of ruined land and ruined people that South Africa—a land of great wastefulness in such matters—can offer. One big strip of land below the Umhlamba Mountain was known in the Department as Dongaland. There it stretched—miles of crumbling shale, thorn-bush, occasional clumps of prickly pear, and a hut here and there. Recovery in such areas could hardly be expected in a hundred years of complete rest, because there is no longer any soil left on top in which Nature can begin to work her cure.

On the way to one location we stopped at a mission school run by an American and his ailing wife. Barrett, the missionary, had kept his sense of humour. But he had a great nostalgia to get back to the States, having before coming here spent six years in Zululand, where his wife had contracted bad malaria.

The school-children, as usual, were invited to sing us a song, which they did with gusto. Some of them, said the Commissioner with us, walked seven or eight miles over the top of the mountain each morning. I said they looked hungry. I wondered what they had in their bellies, leaving home so early. "Boiled mealies and a few flies," said the Commissioner.

Whether it was that he was on the eve of retirement or not I do not know, but this particular Commissioner dealt in humorous asides very freely, and to the recurrent embarrassment of the head-office official who was with me.

Some of his unkindest cuts were reserved for a part-Arab stallion, the property of the Native Trust, which I found well-housed in the heart of the Loskop location. This station was planted here for the benefit of the surrounding tribesfolk, many of whom rode horseback. The stallion was a finely-bred animal and cost £100 a year to maintain, including the services of a groom at between £3 and £4 a month. The fee for the stallion was 5s. Yet in a year he had served only eleven

mares. It was, in the opinion of the Commissioner, a clear case of the Natives looking a gift horse in the mouth.

He was highly critical of conditions of farm labour in the district. "They must come under the Wage Determination Act," he said. "There'll never be any justice for them until they do." There were many farmers in the Estcourt district for which he was Commissioner who did not pay their labour any cash wages. Dairy "boys" had the worst time. They had to be up at 3 a.m. and work through until sunset. The six-months' service contract system in Natal was, said the Commissioner, open to much criticism. Labour was glad to leave after it had completed its six months, and thus lost the value of any experience gained. It was a certain way of perpetuating inefficiency. It was unfair, too, on the "boys", because the farmers could, if they wished, withhold the document of release which it was necessary for a labourer to have before he could quit a farm.

The Commissioner slated the Department for its habit of shifting commissioners and magistrates so often. It took a commissioner a year or two, he said, to obtain the confidence of the tribesfolk (assuming he thought of his job in that way), and no sooner had that confidence been won than the man was transferred. It was very difficult for a new commissioner to see things in the same light as his predecessor. But the Natives had very long memories. They could quote promises given them verbally twenty years before. They could not write. Their memories were all the more retentive on that account.

This Commissioner was able to speak with authority on the Natives of Natal and Zululand, where he had spent most of his life. He was an expert linguist, and it was partly because of his known gifts for handling the tribesfolk tactfully that he had been shifted to this particular area; where the Department, disturbed by the desecration of the lands, had been able to declare a policy of compulsory reclamation back in 1938. An intrinsic part of the reclamation plan was the re-allocation of arable lands. (So it is, of course, with the national Rehabilitation-of-the-Reserves scheme discussed in another chapter.) But arable lands are given out by the chiefs under tribal law. It is one of the ancient marks of their authority, and deeply entrenched.

The Commissioner described the difficulty of finding the owner of a particular plot. One man would have a piece here and another piece over there, through the death of an uncle.

Not even bribes, or the hint of bribes, could move the chiefs and headmen on this point.

"There's only one way of ever achieving anything," said the Commissioner. "That's cancel all ownership rights and re-allot the land." From the way he said it he did not believe for one moment the Department would ever take such a step.

He was not vindictive about the Natives and their ruined lands—not those in the Weenen area, at any rate. He reserved his contempt here for the farmers who bought labour in this fashion, and the Government, which permitted such malpractice. He drove us out to see Draycott, a tribally-owned farm of 1,085 acres, upon whose *donga*-veined surface 800 people were eking out a living. It was an area which the Department wished to fence off and rest indefinitely, in the same manner as they require to treat large parts of the Ciskei. But they had no alternative land on to which to move the people. So the ruination went on.

On our way back the head-office official offset the Commissioner's tales of woe with a long version of the "shanty-town" menace springing up around Johannesburg, and which he said was the work of agitators.

"The way these people are gibbering," he grumbled, "we'll be getting a Black Government in South Africa one of these fine days, man."

The Commissioner did not appear to be shaken by this thought.

"Then," he said, with that grin which I now knew to be so habitual as not to be a grin at all—"then they'll be able to get a bit of their own back, eh?"

## CHAPTER V

### BUSHVELD IDYLL

"The difficulty with the Native problem is that the white farmer wants to enjoy the fat of the land, while white 'labour' seeks to monopolise the cream of industrial employment."—SIR PERCIVAL LAWRENCE.

WINTER, WITH the air as mild as milk, the sun over all, no roads, but only smooth, dusty earth tracks winding endlessly through the thorn-bush and the lion-tawny veld—there you have the Bushveld of the northern Transvaal, towards



which so many city hearts yearn between June and October. But it is not the solitude and warmth of these great open spaces that make the spell of the Bushveld. What draws South Africans on is the thought of all the horned game that still lurk up there waiting for men with a licence and a gun to come and shoot them.

Every good South African likes to include an odd shooting trip in his calendar. And the Bushveld, despite many years' depredation by farmers and their biltong-hunting friends (biltong is dried meat and a national delicacy), still has areas where kudu, rooibok, duiker, steenbok and other species of the myriad buck family are fairly plentiful. The more lordly wild beasts, however, now live mostly in Reserves, of which the largest is the Kruger National Park in the north-east Transvaal.

It could not be expected, therefore, that when we left Pretoria to visit selected Native Reserves in the upper Transvaal we should travel weaponless. I myself have no gun. But my companion from the Native Affairs Department more than compensated for my unsporting appearance by being weaponed to the teeth. His armoury included a shot-gun, a .303 Enfield, a .22, together with hunting-knife, gaiters, bush-shirt, a compass, fishing-rod and an unlimited urge to display his woodcraft. We were in no danger of starving. Each of us carried a permit, signed by the Provincial Department, declaring we might "shoot for the pot". The rest of our equipment, stowed aboard a large old Buick, comprised tenting, camp-beds, chairs (to lend dignity to our *indabas* with the rural Natives) and a young Native clerk who was to act as interpreter and spare driver should the fatigues of the day prove too much for us.

We made, to my town-bred eye, an impressive miniature *safari* as we headed northwards. All we lacked was a dog, perhaps another "Jock of the Bushveld"—that national hero about whom Roy Campbell, South Africa's most celebrated poet, wrote waggishly:

"He occurs in a sentimental novel which displays the usual train-window insight into 'Native psychology' which is so dear to colonials: and the usual animal-lover's sloppiness which is popular everywhere. Jock was a big-game hunting dog, he had soulful eyes and always tried to bite niggers—a typical colonial."

Subsequently I made several other expeditions into the Transvaal back-blocks to study irrigation schemes, education

and health at close quarters. None of those trips had the charm of the first. For one thing, we actually did use the tent on that *safari*. We even slept out one or two nights, lying wrapped in blankets in shallow trenches dug pointing to the log-fire which we kept burning as a foot-warmer all night. And, though we were never within sight of starving, the guns—all three of them—came into play at different times. The mortality among large or small game on our account was, however, negligible. But my companion collected some notable tales about the ones that got away.

I met my first Native Commissioner on that trip. He was a man named Wilson, who at that time was stationed at Potgietersrust. When we called in at his offices we were told he was out on "Tax tour" and was somewhere in the Beauty district, 60 miles away to the north-west. So, with a massive khaki-clad Native constable as guide, we drove out along the dusty roads into an eternity of thorn-bush, and spent the night there before pushing on in time to catch the "beak" at breakfast.

Wilson was travelling his district in some style. He had a big lorry for carrying tents, and a couple of cars for his staff. We sighted his white tent-tops above the *haakensteek*—hook-and-stick—thorn-bushes long before we reached him. His pitch was alongside two big *marucla*-trees. Here in this small clearing the local Chief, Kutter Seleka, was accustomed to hold his *lekgothla*, or court. Seleka's tribe were Baphutings—People of the Goat (totem Phuti, the goat)—and a ragged, ill-looking crowd they were when later in the morning they began to line up at the tents to pay their General Tax (£1 for all adult Native males between eighteen and sixty), Dog Tax, Bicycle Tax and the rest of their dues, which have qualified them for the title of being the highest-taxed section of the population, proportionate to earning power.

A number of women queued up also. They had come to collect their monthly military allotments from their husbands, who were in the Army. The most striking among these were several tall Herero women of fine bearing and distinguished by their bright yellow-and-red silk turbans, or *doeks*, and dresses with quaintly Victorian waistlines. Seleka's tribe were close to the Bechuanaland border, and these Herero women must have come over from South-West Africa via the Protectorate.

"Rabothlale"—that is, "Father of Wisdom", as the Natives spoke of Wilson—lounging on a leopard-skin *kaross* in his

private tent, and talking his own brand of racy English laced with Afrikaans, was, to me, rather a "Bones of the River" character. All his life he had lived and worked in this stretch of the Transvaal. As a child he had learnt Sesuto-Moshesh, or Southern Sotho, as spoken in the Basutoland Protectorate. A Native teacher in an American Mission school had taught him Sepedi, which was the leading Native language of this middle part of the Transvaal. At his own school he had learnt High Dutch. Now, after thirty odd years in the Department, he could switch freely from Sepedi to Serelong and Sekgatla—both dialects of Sechuana.

Wilson had a friendly paternal attitude towards the Native. "Treat Jim all right, and he's all right with you," he said, speaking without any sense of being patronising. "It's the towns that muck the *munt*<sup>1</sup> up."

He was friendly and communicative when it had been explained that I was a newspaperman in search of "copy" for an official survey. But it was not easy to frame the questions. His attitude was entirely that of an administrative official to whom the Native was someone whom he knew when he paid (or didn't pay) his taxes, when he appeared in court, or offended against one or other of the numerous regulations regarding stock. The Natives were no "problem" to him. In these parts they were, indeed, a low-spirited crowd, presenting few snags to officialdom. Chief Seleka was amenable. He wished his people to get education, and he had raised enough money by tribal levy to build a handsome school beside his village.

From such amiable exchanges we drifted into shooting gossip, which is just as pernicious in the Bushveld as is fishing tittle-tattle along the coast between Cape Town and Durban. Maxims were swapped, like "Never shoot into the brown", meaning select a specific point to aim at, not the general outline of the bird or beast under your sights. "Always aim low" was another dictum which made heads wag approvingly.

The afternoon light was softening into a soothing golden languor when we took our leave. My companion took the wheel, but before driving away he laid a loaded .303 significantly between us, remarking the while: "Round four o'clock is a favourite time on the roads, you know."

"What for?"

"Guinea-fowl, man. Besides, I've got to use the gun now she's cocked. Can't get the bullet out otherwise."

<sup>1</sup> *Munt*, short for *umuNtu*, "a person"; plural *aBantu* ("people").

We drove for some miles in somnolent peace, till suddenly the driver braked hard, jerking me into wakefulness, and reached for the gun. The only prey in sight, as far as I could see, was a small brown bird standing rather forlornly on the left-hand side of the road.

"Partridge!" said the official tersely. "I think it's lame," and levelled the gun across my chest to point it out of the open window on my side.

As he did so his right elbow pressed the hooter on the driving-wheel and blew a raucous blast. The official swore; the partridge cocked its head and hobbled a few yards farther off. Up went the gun again, and the car hooter sounded another rude alarm. The partridge seemed to take note this time, and moved deeper into the bush.

In his haste to sight the bird, the official blew yet another siren-blast. At this the partridge, thoroughly bored, took wing.

"*Alle magtig!*" said the official, and in his annoyance raised the gun and fired a shot at random. There was an outraged squawk and to-do about fifty yards off.

"Never fire into the brown," I reminded him, but the noise of the car being put violently into first gear may have prevented him from hearing.

A sequence of characters—white men and Natives, mostly chiefs—flit across the memory-screen when I think of our travels through the Transvaal. There was George Masibi, to the west of Potgietersrust, in a dry-land zone covered by the usual bush, and out of which curious humped kopjes reared themselves like a scattered school of sleeping whales. George was a man with sixteen headaches, the headaches being the sixteen wives he had inherited from his deceased brother. Such is tribal Bantu custom, and for a bachelor it was a grave responsibility. George occupied a square-built house half-way up the side of a small kopje. Each of the sixteen wives had a round mud hut along a terrace below his stoep. He had them well under his eye. But he could not be watching them all the time. And should one of them have an affair with a tribesman and a child result, that also became part of George's burden as a chief.

George was a tall, handsome, melancholy young man with rather Arabic features and feminine hands, dressed in ragged khaki shirt and trousers with a patch in the seat. To me he spoke halting but good English. To the white overseer he

used Afrikaans. To his headman, whom he instructed to fetch us Kaffir beer, as we said we would prefer that to tea or coffee, he spoke in Sotho. I found him rather a pathetic character. But that often seemed the way with the chiefs I met. (You have to know something about the hair-trigger precision with which the old Zulu kings ran their courts to realise upon what a plane of barbaric superbity some Bantu chiefs moved in the days before the white man attained mastery.)

George kept his dignity, ragged-seated though he was. And he did not forget to apologise for providing us with so little in the way of refreshment and entertainment.

"My lord," he said to me, flickering his long eyelashes, "if you had told me in time we could have had some sports and dancing."

We left him standing there, hands clasped together, and bareheaded in the sun. Beside him lay two big crude drums that his naked ancestors had danced to. A cluster of pot-bellied children with swollen navel-buttons yawned and rolled in the dust of the communal earthen yard of the sixteen thatched huts. In the background was an open shed showing the tail-end of George's American saloon car.

Far more primitive were the one or two *stads*, or main kraals, of Bavenda chiefs like Rasengane and MPaphuri. Vendaland is in many ways a land of secrets. It has its gloomy sacred lake of the crocodiles, Funduzi. There is the priestess of the Pepiti Falls, with her ten husbands: a shaven-headed old woman of strange aloofness, though she was dressed only in a *salempore*—a striped cotton blanket tucked under the arms, which is almost universal among the Bavenda women. And there were here and there white men who had "gone Native", as the saying is, and were living in remote kraals with a plurality of wives, mostly Shangaans, for the tribal bonds of the Bavenda are as strict as any in Africa, while the Shangaans, who are exiles from over the Portuguese East African border, are very easy-going in morals and habits.

Sometimes till long past midnight you will hear the steady, pounding thud of what sound to be drums. More often than not it is the sound of women "stomping" the mealies—that is, crushing them into powder with big pestles in hollowed tree-trunks, an exercise which is good for the figure, according to the missionary-author H. Junod. The Bavenda women are reckoned by commissioners to be the hardest-worked of all the hard-working tribal Bantu women. I never saw such sub-

servience among any other tribe as that shown by the wives of their chiefs. Old MPaphuri, a bloated old man with blood-shot, uneasy eyes, posed for one picture with a dozen of his—all young women—who in his presence moved on their hands and knees and kept their faces averted. The biggest chief of the district was reputed to have 365 wives. Him we did not visit, because he was not expected to be sober after ten in the morning, and he had a reputation for insulting officials and guests when in his cups.

White law sometimes seemed very shadowy in these parts compared to the power of the chiefs. I met one of these, who struck me as an amiable and hospitable man. Afterwards I learnt that he had just been fined £15 for kicking one of his subjects to death. Of one chief many tales were told of his murderous violence. One case which came to light out of many that did not was that of a tribesman who, the chief decided, had "opened his kraal"—that is to say, had had an affair with one of the chiefs wives. The tribesman was stripped, tied hand and foot and held over a fire, so that ultimately he died from being scorched from the waist downwards. Eventually the only white doctor in the area, which contains more than 150,000 tribesfolk, was called in because, it was said, the man had got drunk and fallen into a fire.

The *dhomba* dances are one of the real heathen spectacles of Vendaland. These are arranged by headmen and tribal leaders, and are really initiation ceremonial dances for girls crossing over from puberty to womanhood. They are a useful form of revenue for the organisers, as each girl, or her parents, pays 10s. as entrance fee. The girls spend some weeks in these schools being instructed in sex matters and housewifely tasks. The "python" dance which they perform derives its name from the sinuous movements of the girls' linked arms. Naked save for a tiny apron, they dance hour after hour to the thumping of hand-beaten drums and the ululatory songs and trilling of the older women. The official with me when I watched one of these dances developed a very fastidious expression after a while. Later he had something to say about the stinking heathenism of it all. With wrinkled nose and pursed lips, he told me that the songs which the girls sang, and the boys, too, at their circumcision schools, contained many obscene expressions.

I asked him if they were any more obscene than the songs sung at "smokers" or by a touring football team.

Vendaland, in so far as it has yielded to mission influence,

has been mainly pioneered by the Berlin Mission Society, with the Swiss Mission folk close behind. I spent a pleasant few days with one Berlin Mission family at Tshakhuma. The old man, with his pointed moustaches, high, stiff collar and untiring punctiliousness, was a period piece. He had been on the spot some fifty years. He told me that they had on the Mission Reserve land about 600 families settled in complete security—a kind of security far exceeding anything enjoyed in the adjoining Reserve. Yet after all those years, and with a primary and secondary school established near the mission, he could not claim that more than fifty families out of the 600 were professing Christians.

He attributed this to the close-knit character of tribal life and the fact that there had been so little white penetration east of Louis Trichardt. The Bavenda people did not respond freely to the blandishments of gold-mine recruiting. The Shangaans scattered among them did. So did the Bapedi element. According to Dr. J. Rosset, the medical superintendent of Elim Swiss Mission Hospital, there are villages in his area where V.D. was reckoned to be 100 per cent. I saw some of the infected children in his hospital, and more at a small mission hospital in the Pietersburg area. Dr. Rosset said the difficulty was to ensure that the infected ones returned to take a full course of injections.

“As soon as the primary symptoms disappear they’re apt to assume that they’re cured. I sometimes think it might be better if they were left to develop an immunisation, like the Arabs have done.”

Dr. Rosset’s wife was an eye specialist. After a morning session with them, and a look round the wards, I began to wonder whether there were any healthy Africans left in this lush, remote corner of the Province. Mrs. Rosset had conducted a survey of eye diseases for the Public Health Department in this part of the Transvaal. Her research confirmed the fact, already known in State health circles, that South Africa had the highest incidence of preventable blindness among its non-whites in the world.<sup>1</sup> The figures for T.B. are equally disquieting, while infant mortality among the Bantu in some areas is given as 500 to 1,000 in the first two years. With an average male expectancy of life of forty-five, the Bantu health picture is one of the saddest aspects of the “problem”.

<sup>1</sup> Out of 3,000 cases examined for the survey 1,710 suffered from trachoma; more details are given in Chapter XIII.

An old German trader named Borchers, who possessed a chain of thirty stores through the district, spoke of the deterioration of Native youths since they began flocking to the towns. Lorry-loads of them heading for the gold-mines passed his door from as high up as Barotseland on the Zambesi River. They went by singing. And if the lorry should break down they would climb out and cheerfully help to push.

"When they return from the mines they don't sing," he said. "If anything happens to the vehicle they do not assist. They are silent, and often sullen. They sit back, or climb out and lie in the shade. 'We are tired,' they say; 'we cannot push'."

Borchers, once his reserve with strangers had softened, spoke feelingly on a number of matters. He was vehemently against the old Squatters' Law of the Transvaal, which entitles a farmer to ninety days' free labour from such natives as he allows to settle on his land (in Natal it is 180 days).

"I call it virtual enslavement," he said. "The time is never required consecutively. But the 'boy' must constantly be on hand in case he's wanted."

He had little good to say of mine-recruiting and its effects on the tribesfolk round about. He had provided huts on his farm for the widows and deserted wives of men who had gone to the Rand and not returned. The women gave him their labour. They were fed, and received a few other "perqs."

Borchers' store was for us a halting-point between Elim and Lemana Training College. With nearly 400 boarders and a total muster of round 1,600 in its Primary, Secondary and Normal College sections, Lemana is about the biggest Native school in the Transvaal, and on a par for size and facilities with the older foundation of Lovedale in the Ciskei.

I preferred the atmosphere of Lemana to that of Lovedale. The students appeared more cheerful, and from what I saw of the literature available in the reading-room of the library at Lemana, the college authorities aim to enlighten the senior students about happenings in the world rather than inhibit them. I saw Socialist magazines on view there, and the leading daily papers, including rabid Nationalist Party papers printed in Afrikaans. This freedom of thought and encouragement of ideas are much more noticeable in mission schools established by Continental Orders and the Roman Catholics than in off-shoots of the sterner Presbyterian faith, the Scottish Churches or the Dutch Reformed Church. Lemana must be a mentally stimulating experience for its students who carry through with



the courses. From its gay infants' classrooms and their desks and chairs in bright primary colours to the fine museum of Native handicrafts, I felt that education here was something more than the conning of books and writing of examinations.

My headquarters for some trips in the northern Transvaal was Louis Trichardt, named after the Dutch Voortrekker who paused here awhile before striking for the coast and Lourenco Marques, where he contracted fever and died. Trichardt the first morning I viewed it was adorned on one main street corner by the large blond presence of an artist friend of mine from the Rand—Bill Lamb. Bill was heading vaguely for the sacred lake of Fundizi, with a new satchel on his back, a fresh collection of paints and canvases to hand, and a careworn expression on his fresh, tanned face.

He had, he said, arrived up from Johannesburg the day before, and was putting up at the hotel on the other side of the street. But he did not wish to stay a moment longer in this small *dorp*, picturesque though it might be, nestling against a backcloth of afforested mountain slopes.

Somehow the fact that he was an artist had got around, and in the small hours of the morning he had received an imperious summons from the man next door to come and paint a portrait. Bill finally allowed himself to be led along the passage to the room of a drinking companion of the man who had burst into his room demanding that he bring his brushes and palette along. The summoner explained bibulously that he and Charlie, his lifelong pal, had been having a glorious reunion in the bar after being parted for some years. The result of the foregathering was that Charlie was now unable to stand up, and was sitting, half-in and half-out of his pyjamas, on the bed. In this attitude, the man who had summoned Bill demanded that Charlie be painted for posterity.

Money was no barrier. Bill could state his terms if he would execute the portrait. Bill mentioned the figure of ten guineas for a quick sketch.

"It's yours, man," said the lover of portraits, and while Bill set to work a cheque was written out.

Bill showed me the cheque. He was anxious to take it into the bank to make sure that it was not one that bounced. I waited while he went inside. Presently he came out with a sheaf of notes and grinning. We headed for his hotel bar. We also had a reunion to stage.

Among Louis Trichardt's most engaging characters were two colourful veterans who put me in tune with the Transvaal of the last century, when some Native chiefs were still powerful, still reluctant to accept white penetration and jurisdiction, and a man might take a day to ride round the boundaries of his farm and still not see the end of it. There was Colonel Piet Möller, a veteran of Oom Paul Kruger's Republic, who had fought in eight Kaffir wars (some hardly justified the name), and Joe Albasini, the uncrowned white king of the 30,000 Shangaans settled in this stretch of the Province.

Oom Piet Möller, a spare, active man past seventy, had a slight limp, the result of having his leg crushed by a cartwheel a few months before.

The doctor had said to him: "Oom Piet, it doesn't look as if you'll walk again."

Oom Piet bared the shin of his sound left leg and said: "D'you see that lump there, doctor? They said I'd never walk again when I got that, and that's forty years ago. I'll come down and see you at the surgery in a few weeks' time, man, don't worry."

And he did, limping, but nimble of step as ever.

The day I met and talked to him he agreed to show me round Schoemansdaal, once the metropolis of the elephant-hunters. To-day it is a bare site with only faint furrows, pomegranate bushes, syringas and aloe to mark where the hunting trekkers with Andries Potgieter had settled and built houses. Oom Piet's talk was of shadowy figures of the past—of Magatu, Magoeba, Ramabulana, Malaboch, Mamatola—big chiefs of the Bavenda and other tribes with whom the settlers lived in a constant state of uneasy peace which could be shattered any moment by the disappearance of cattle or the shifting of beacons.

Joe Albasini had something to say about Schoemansdaal, too. And it was not complimentary to the Boers, its original founders, or their successors. His grandfather had been Juwawa (the Native way of pronouncing his Christian name, "João"), a Portuguese adventurer who in the first half of the nineteenth century had made a great name for himself as a hunter in Portuguese East Africa before crossing the border into the Transvaal. With him came his private "army" of Shangaan elephant-hunters, and in time he settled on a farm near Schoemansdaal, which he used as an ivory dump at which he loaded his wagons for Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein and

whence they returned laden with ammunition, bales of cloth, beads and household goods.

Such was Juwawa's power that he held two official positions, firstly as Consul for the Portuguese, and secondly as Native Commissioner for the tiny Transvaal Republic (tiny, that is, in population, for in the whole of this vast northern area of 25,000 square miles there were, in these middle days of the nineteenth century, not more than 300 white families settled).

Having shot out most of the big game in the surrounding country, and faced with increasing opposition by Bavenda chiefs, the Boers decided to evacuate Schoemansdaal. But Juwawa remained. He had his own Shangaan *impis*, plenty of stores, a couple of muzzle-loading cannon, and help came from Mpfumo, a big Shangaan chief in the south-east, who sent him twenty-five crack game-shots. For twenty months of spasmodic fighting Albasini held out. But one day, when ammunition and food were running short, Magatu came down from the hills at the head of 10,000 men and determined, at any cost, to blot out the white chief.

When Albasini saw the might arrayed against him he took thought, and ordered two white oxen to be driven out to meet the dancing hordes of Magatu. Magatu halted his warriors at the sight of the oxen, and when he had held talks with his fighting leaders he sent back two other white oxen. So the way was cleared for parleying. The two chiefs, Albasini and Magatu, met and agreed on boundaries at Pisakop. Then there was peace.

But it was a restless sort of quiet. Albasini had two "generals", Wamanugu and Mswani (whose praise-name was Nhlazi "Mswani u-ma hamba a zuza ngeNhlela", meaning Mswani-who-breaks-wind-as-he-trots), who were unhappy unless they were fighting. Mswani, his body covered with scars from spear-stabs, would present himself to Juwawa of a morning, after his braves had sung their daily war-song, the theme of which was "Zinike"—"Give" or "Show" (us something to fight)—and speak in the following terms:

"O, *Baba* [father], that little chief over there, whose name is Bekwa, is saying many rude things about you. He calls you a dog who cannot fight, a poor weak thing only fit to lick porridge-spoons. Moreover, he is given to stealing cattle. Also he caught one of my men the other day and beat him sorely. We cannot swallow these insults. It is time he was taught a little lesson. Listen! My soldiers are calling out his name!"

Juwawa, who did not discourage these sorties, had his own ideas of dispensing justice. On some occasions he made use of the "touch-me-not" acacia (in Afrikaans called "Gedoelige Plantjie" or Feeling Plant). This was useful in cases where he thought a man guilty but it was difficult to prove it. The defendant was invited to touch this plant, and the curling-up of its sensitive leaves on contact provided the necessary proof.

When the country became more settled and the Boers returned in force, Albasini presented them with a bill of indemnity totalling £64,483 for keeping the country open for the white man. President Schoemann informed him that there was roughly 7*d.* in the Republican till, but he could have twelve farms and a location for his braves. The location is to-day known as the Knobhouse Location, south-east of Louis Trichardt. The twelve farms were to have been in and round Schoemansdaal. But they did not materialise. Juwawa died in 1888. Antonio, his son, who is father of the present Joe, took on some of his father's duties and titles, but not that of Native Commissioner. After a succession of unpopular appointments (Joe told me), a deputation of Shangaan chiefs waited on the holder of the title early in the 1900's and said:

"Once we had a big tree and we sat down in its shade and were happy. Then we had a second smaller shoot, but that has gone. Now there is a third tree growing, and we want to sit under the shade of that tree, O father."

But the shade of the Albasini tree, despite deputations over a long period of years, has not spread itself again to cover the Transvaal Shangaans. To-day Joe is a farmer and cattle speculator—a massive hunk of a man with square chin, eagle nose and the kind of eye that made me think he was born out of his time.

Tradition, however, dies hard. Joe is a respectable figure round Louis Trichardt to-day, but I noticed that not long after I had left the district he was called out by the Native Affairs Department to shoot a marauding bull elephant which had been causing big crop damage in the area fringing the Game Reserve. I hope they let him keep the tusks!

Juwawa Albasini is linked with an even greater legendary character in Transvaal tribal history—Mujaji, the Rain Queen. Mujaji is the prototype of all the African white-queen fables. Rider Haggard, who based his story *She* on her, said that she had pure Arab blood. The Kriges, relatives of General Smuts,

who lived among the Bolobedu tribe of Mujaji for two years in order to write a book about her and the rain-making legend, report that she was much lighter in skin when she was young.

She was a woman past seventy when I met her and shook her hand in 1944, and I would say that she was undiluted Bantu stock from the crown of her stubbly white hair and round head to her dragging, bare feet.

Mujaji is third in the dynasty. The rain-making reputation dates from 1800, when the queenship was incestuously founded. Each of the three Mujajis has reigned about half a century. Juwawa met the second, and had designs on her, so the story goes. But she filled him up with beer and no harm came to her. Piet Joubert, a Boer general, sacked the royal kraal in 1894 and thought he had laid hands on the Queen. But the ancient crone he beheld lying on a leopard-skin was afterwards declared to be a stand-in.

From those times has come down the tradition that no white man has seen the real Mujaji. This is good reading for the story-books. But it is no longer true, although I would agree that very few have met her. General Smuts is one. He describes her as "one of the highlights of anthropology", and speculates, looking at her "calm, strong face", what she thought of the fate in store for her. (According to custom, she is supposed to poison herself once her powers as a rain-maker are discovered to be on the wane.)

The Native Commissioner who took me up to her kraal, which is lost among the misty hills 20 miles east of Duivelskloof—Devil's Gap—a winter resort in the eastern Transvaal, considered that the suicide tradition was in process of being broken down.

"Her time for committing suicide was reckoned to fall after the fourth initiation school or lodge for the circumcision of boys to be held among her people. But the third lodge was as far back as 1919, and there's been no attempt to hold a fourth. The very fact that they've put off the fourth lodge is a sign to me that they don't want the old girl to bump herself off."

There are other reasons which may explain the break with custom. Her daughter who should be successor had married a commoner, and a Shangaan. That had shaken the tribe from top to toe. The retention of the old lady might have been connected with this mistake on the daughter's part.

I had no dialogue with Mujaji. It was something of a state

occasion, being nothing less than the opening of a big mission school—Berlin Mission—within 400 yards of her kraal. Hundreds of children had massed in front of the school. As we drove up the rocky, winding, earthen road we passed many tribesfolk heading for the same spot, who, in the case of the women, dropped on their knees and pressed their hands together in a graceful form of salutation to us, the strangers.

All tribal Natives have a vivid sense of manners, the Balobedu especially so. They lost whatever fighting habits they had when Mujaji became famous. "The Queen does not fight", is a saying of theirs conveying the sacrosanct kind of reputation they have acquired through her fame.

"They believe in compromise to settle domestic disputes," said the Commissioner. "That helps me a lot."

With the Commissioner were a provincial inspector of Native Schools, together with German missionaries and their wives and a retired magistrate, making up all the white folk present. We had seats along the stoep of the school. Each doorway was framed in what are known as Mujaji palms—huge green fronds from the nearby sacred forest of cycads in which are buried the former rain-queens.

Sitting there, I noticed a sudden pivoting of hundreds of black heads in front of us, and an equally sudden drop in the blather of voices. The Queen was approaching. She came slowly down the rutted, dusty track from her kraal, preceded by two old ladies-in-waiting wearing cotton blankets tucked under their armpits. Behind her came half a dozen grey-beards.

Mujaji walked slowly along the line of white visitors, her right hand held out, and shook hands as she passed. Her eyes were half-closed, and her frosted old head nodded slightly. She wore her big gold ear-rings, and a long purple coat with wide, puffed shoulders over a blue print dress. Her feet, as I have said, were bare, and the weight of wire anklets, which are a very common form of adornment among Transvaal tribes, made her feet drag.

Before she settled down at the far end of the stoep carpets were laid on the floor. Then she dropped down on her haunches in the familiar Native way. As she did so the grey-beards who had stationed themselves below the stoep in front of her broke into her praises: "*Khifidula-maru-a-Daja . . .*"—"Transformer of the clouds . . .".

Once she had sat down, her people, who had sunk to their

knees at the sight of her, were able to stand again, and the ceremony began. For over an hour Mujaji sat watching and listening, crouched on her carpet, sometimes leaning forward on her elbows to take snuff from a metal, cartridge-like container, or more usually sitting with her head flung back and lips turned inscrutably down.

Later on, Mineri, her "Prime Minister", received us in the Queen's outer kraal, which has a curious palisade of sticks with carved heads which are supposed to be presented by envoys from various tribes in southern Africa when they come to pay homage and ask for rain. In the middle of her kraal Mujaji has built a square, European-style house for visitors. It has four bare rooms with hard wooden chairs in them and a calendar or two and coloured portraits of the English King and Queen. From the stoep I had a final glimpse of the Queen beyond a palisade.

She had discarded her purple coat and was kneeling beside a fire in front of a round mud hut. Spread out before her was the remains of a carcass of sheep, with the butcher in anxious attendance. The Queen was selecting the joint for the day. She looked to be as much at home among the cooking-pots as among those sacred rain-pots which no white man has ever seen.

. . . . .

"If you lie on your belly you can see a fortnight ahead" is a saying you will hear in the south-western Transvaal, where several Native locations are situated in an immense flat Grain Belt. The soil of this region of great vistas is not rich. But maize does not require high fertility in which to prosper, and in a good season the Native areas can produce 120,000 bags of grain, of which more than 60,000 are exportable surplus.

Part of the Native-occupied land is the Kukane Location which Oom Paul Kruger sanctioned. The newest section is made up of thirty-six farms bought under the 1936 Trust Act. But, unlike Trust-land occupants in other areas, these residents are not kept strictly down to the agreed figure of 5 morgen per family. Most of them were tenants when the land was owned by a big private company and they held plots up to 30 morgen—about 70 acres. The Department has had to allow them to keep these miniature farms, and there were a number I visited where the Native owner was producing up to

eight bags of maize a morgen (which is more than double the national average for white farmers).

In this same Lichtenburg area I came across Native farmers who owned as much as 1,200 morgen; and very successful owners they were. Their methods and machinery were as up-to-date as those of any white farmer, and they were considerable employers of labour. They were the only big Bantu farm-owners I met throughout my travels. They had bought their land before the 1913 Land Act, which restricted land purchase by Natives, and upon which the whole structure of "Reserve" policy has been founded.

Even the tribesfolk of the Kukane Location, where land is communally held, gave outward evidence of being better off than the people of most of the other Reserves. Nearly all had horses and horse-carriages. These they had taken over from neighbouring white farmers when they in their turn had switched to tractors and motor-cars. As a mark of their sophistication in agricultural matters many of them plough with double-furrow ploughs. In the Ciskei and Transkei, as I have already indicated, not every kraal has a plough. They like to tell in Lichtenburg area of the Fort Cox Native demonstrator with his new diploma in his pocket who came to instruct the locals in the arts of agriculture. His demonstration of how to plough with a single-furrow implement caused rude laughter. Then the tribesfolk instructed *him* on how to plough with a double-furrow model.

Over the southern border of this vast western area of the Transvaal lies the most historic of northern mission stations. It is the massive-beamed, cruciform church erected by Robert Moffat, missionary extraordinary and father-in-law of Livingstone, who founded a mission at Kuruman on the edge of the Kalahari Desert some 100 years ago. An earlier traveller in these parts declared, "It would require a good pair of spectacles to see a blade of grass in this world". Except for along the furrow below the wonderful "Eye" of Kuruman (a fountain of crystal-clear water which disgorges 150,000 gallons an hour into a lake in the centre of the little town), the whole of this huge magisterial district of 15,000 square miles which falls within the Cape Province is naught but a wilderness of *cameel-doorn*—camel-thorn—and hook-and-stick bushes. One hundred and five years ago old Moffat had regular fights with new settlers over water rights on the furrow which he led off to the mission five miles below the "Eye". They are still having those



fighths to-day. But the garden of the mission has long been a lush, mellow oasis with an amazing variety of fruit and timber-bearing trees spreading shade beside the red-brown earthen walls of the original settlement.

Near-desert type of country has a curious fascination. It is a combination of heat and loneliness and the does-it-matter? outlook which living so far from town society breeds. A young Native Commissioner spoke to me of this when he mentioned a number of cases in the district of white men going Native.

"Is that what the Kalahari does for you?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "When I came here my wife and I made a pact, after we'd seen what life was like, that we would keep each other up to scratch."

The Kalahari recurs as a name often in local dialogue. Undoubtedly it symbolises something for folk in the Kuruman region. They seemed to regard it as sailors look upon the sea—as a vast wasteland where a man can turn his back completely on the things of civilisation.

The people of these parts are either Batharos or Batlhapings, both offshoots of the Bechuana tribes, who rank pretty low in the scale of Bantu clans. Both tribes were deprived of their chiefs and some lands after taking part in a rebellion late in the nineteenth century. Only within the last three or four years have the descendants of their hereditary chiefs been elevated to the old positions. These tribes were made the pawns in a pretty game of freebooting between 1850 and 1890 conducted by Boers and renegades from the diamond-fields, whose base was the small Republic of Stellaland and its capital Vryburg. These gentry used to play off one chief against another, offer their help, fire a few shots and then demand, as payment, large tracts of land and/or cattle. There were many claims for slices as big as 50,000 morgen—over 100,000 acres—which individual "filibusters", as a State Commission spoke of them, asked in payment for services rendered.

The little mission hospital in the district which has a Native population of 25,000 is St. Michael's, an Anglican foundation, with fifty beds. The out-patients' section is easily the biggest, and by 1943 the attendance had risen (in eight years) to an annual figure of 23,728. In the same period the number of V.D. cases reporting for injections had risen from 680 to 4,388. The nearest X-ray plant is 143 miles away, at Kimberley.

If the Natives are of a low type, physically and morally, the

white farmer did not earn many praises from officials to whom I spoke.

"You've only to look at their hands," said one man. "They don't work. They're stoep-sitters, coffee-tiplers and pipe-spitters."

This description fits farmers I met in most other parts of the country where Native labour was cheap and plentiful.

From Kuruman I headed north for 200 miles to Mafeking. The countryside remains the same, and the sense of an undiluted Kalahari desert lurking just over the western horizon persists. The Department regards this, and rightly so, as purely ranching country, in which one beast to 15 to 20 morgen—30 to 40 acres—is not out of the way. Agriculture is secondary. The main pre-occupation is to find water. Over 100 boreholes have been put down. Twelve have been sunk in what is known as the "notorious" Railway Block, a huge vacant piece of bushveld of 100,000 acres which was intended for Native occupation, but where no Natives can be persuaded to come and settle. Water scarcity is the chief objection. Thus felt the chiefs from the ruined Ciskei who were brought here as a preliminary to transporting their people to the new Canaan. They came and saw and were not impressed.

So the Railway Block through which I motored remains a great empty belt of land near the dry Malopo River in which a certain amount of game still lives, and which is therefore visited at week-ends by the young sportsmen from Mafeking who like shooting buck with or without a licence.

To raise any kind of crops here is an achievement. Yet I heard tell of one tribesman—a Basuto—who, although he had to carry water for his plot 12 miles, yet succeeded in raising a fair crop of maize and Kaffir corn.

Rainfall is a little better when you get into the Rustenburg district, 70 miles north-west of Johannesburg, and where some 130,000 Natives are living on something over 1,000,000 acres, half of which is land bought under the Trust Act, the other half being locations or tribally purchased farms. In many ways the Natives of this area are considered aristocrats among their people, in that a big percentage of them earn relatively good pay in Johannesburg and Pretoria as cook-boys and domestic servants. Their earnings they spend on their plots, and the style of house they build and the way they cultivate their gardens and increase and improve their stock by making use of Departmental services show that they are a much more

alert type than, say, those to the south in the Kuruman district.

The Rustenburg area contains a large bull camp begun by the Department and from which acclimatised Afrikaner bulls are sent to the other eighty odd camps scattered through the locations.

Here in the west, too, is the leading showplace of the Department when it speaks of what it has done in irrigation for Native areas. The project is known as the Taungs scheme. (Taungs is better known as the site of Professor R. Dart's world-shaking discovery of a skull which, if not the missing link, was certainly a new link in the chain of evolution.)

When it is completely developed the scheme will irrigate 8,000 morgen of Native-occupied land. By 1945 some 4,000 morgen had been cleared and served with furrows. Unfortunately the soil is very poor, and the Batlaping take their time about learning how to farm on small irrigated plots of a couple of acres. They are achieving better crops now, but they are still apt to migrate to the Grain Belt in the south for the reaping season when they should be looking after their own lands. Even children in the schools—seventy or eighty at a time—absent themselves for this reaping trek. They do not necessarily expect payment in money. In the past they have preferred to be paid in bags of mealies. Then they had food to last them through the dry winter.

Eventually the Department hopes to see Taung and its plots produce surpluses for urban Native markets. It visualises the same thing happening with the heavily subsidised fruit farm and co-operative vegetable farm it has established in the north-east of the Province. The schemes are so minuscular, however, that except as shop-window dressing they looked to me to have little relation to reality. I put them in the same category as the agricultural schools—that is, as toy laboratory experiments which, if they prove anything at all, it is that if you want to do something worth while for Native agriculture as a whole you must stop playing with it.

I saw all the other irrigation schemes which are linked with Native areas, but most of them were very small, and few gave evidence of ever amounting to anything big. In one case—that of Gompies, near Potgietersrust—the Department had fallen a victim to its own policy of permitting, and tacitly encouraging, recruiting of adult male labour for the mines. The little Gompies River project was largely spoilt by the lack of male labour.

After the scheme had been given an extended trial and failed, the Department arrived at the profound conclusion that irrigation projects were workable only when the male plot-holders were full-time on the job, and not 200 miles away working in the mines.

I cannot close my account of this Transvaal rural trek without a last pen-picture of our intrepid Bushveld *safari* in a lethal sporting attitude. That brief meeting we had with Commissioner Wilson, and another night spent camped out on a Trust farm east of Pietersburg, where before breakfast we could see the buck grazing like cattle on the facing hillside, had sharpened my companion's appetite for the chase to the point of insomnia.

I had not helped matters either by quoting to him a passing exploit mentioned by the late Deneys Reitz, a former Minister of Native Affairs, in his book *No Outspan*, in which he claimed to have laid low six guinea-fowl with a single shot.

One morning, when the sun had not yet risen to dispel the mists clinging to the river-bed near which we were camped, the official invited me to try to flush some game along the margin of the river. We decided to take the car with us, and loaded on to the front seat a .303 and a shot-gun. Not 200 yards along the main dirt track we rounded a thorn-bush, and beheld seven or eight plump-bodied, black-grey guinea-fowl pottering in close formation on the road.

"*Gahle!*" ("gently") hissed the official, and I braked the car until we were crawling.

Then at another signal I stopped. We were not more than 20 yards away, and the bunch appeared oblivious of their peril.

"This is my last cartridge, man!" said the official, and slipped out into the road and took up his position on one knee with levelled rifle.

The morning quiet rippled and swiftly dissolved in its great emptiness the "*Whau!*" of the gun. I grabbed the .303 and leapt out on the heels of the charging official. In the medley of feathers and squawks it was not easy to tell how many he had felled. Some were legging it fast for the bushes. In fact, before we could reach them they had all re-assembled themselves and were racing for cover—all except one laid out on its back.

This victim waited till the official was a couple of yards away, then rose fussily, shook its feathers—what remained—threw back its head and gave the guinea-fowl equivalent of a

horse-laugh, and sped after its friends, with the two of us butting through the thorns in a frenzied effort to slay it bare-handed.

But it was not to be.

After five minutes' blundering and bleeding pursuit without even sighting the birds we gave up. Thereafter we spoke no more of shooting until we happened to draw up for lunch at a small hotel in Nylstroom. Just within the gate through which I led the way I saw a sight which pulled me up in mid-stride. There, within a yard of my feet, stood a guinea-fowl. True it was in a chicken-wire cage and looked remarkably domesticated. But the opportunity was not to be missed.

I turned and called softly to the official, who was fussing about with the car.

"Have you got your .303?" I asked.

He said he had, but what about it?

I invited him to bring it with him.

He walked up to the gate, registering suspicion.

I pointed down to the fowl, saying: "I won't tell."

He gave me a look of hauteur and returned to potter with the gear stacked up in the car.

## CHAPTER VI

### ALL THIS AND FIVE MORGEN TOO

"They are a Raw Deal, the rawest deal that has ever fallen to the lot of any nation in history."—MR. W. A. COULTER, opposing General Hertzog's Native Bills before they became law. House of Assembly, Feb. 1, 1936.

ONLY A FINE turn of speed saved the Native Commissioner at Pietersburg, in the northern Transvaal, from being man-handled by angry Africans in 1944, when he was demarcating 5-morgen (10½-acre) plots on Trust Land. Agitators were blamed for this. Whenever the African people object with any vehemence, the administration blames "agitators". This has two advantages. It saves the trouble of examining the merits of a complaint; and it enables one to call in the police.

The operations of the 1936 Trust Land Act, which created the standard of a 5-morgen plot, are worth studying. So, for that matter, are the debates at the joint sitting of both Houses between February and April of that year, which saw the passage of the late General Hertzog's long-cherished Native

Bills (the Trust Act being one), which would finally "solve" the "problem". Those debates are notably illumined by some dying flickers of what is known as the Cape Liberal tradition. One surprising torch-bearer was a sardonic-tongued lawyer named Coulter. In words that were prophetic of what happened in 1946 at U.N. in New York, he warned Parliamentarians that if Hertzog's motion to introduce a Bill stultifying the Cape Native vote could not be justified at the League of Nations, "South Africa and its delegates will be exposed to a flood of ridicule and contempt". After some ironic play with the Smuts' brand of "humanity-is-on-the-march" kind of oratory, designed specially for overseas consumption, Mr. Coulter remarked that he had yet to learn of any legislature with self-government proceeding, save on the ground of treason or rebellion, to take away a right of franchise that had been granted in the original Constitution eighty years before.

He reminded listeners that the Bills had taken ten years to incubate, and the Native people were expected to make up their minds on them in six weeks. Only 2,500 copies of the Bills had been printed. And none of them was in any of the four main Native languages because, as a later speaker explained, some sentences in which they were couched were so tautological that they were not even intelligible in the original language in which they were drafted. (General Hertzog in late life was not much behind that other Elder Statesman, Ramsay MacDonald, in the art of making himself and his listeners dizzy with words.)

Hertzog, when he came to move the second reading of the Bills, found that they were consonant with a higher law—"the principle of self-preservation", which was above Christian principles.

In what manner they fitted into this loftier concept is dealt with more fully in the next chapter. We have not yet quit the land, and before I do so the main clauses of the Trust Land Act require explanation.

In substance the Act implemented the policy as laid down in the 1913 Land Act, wherein separate rural areas for Natives and Whites were defined, and it was agreed that the 21,000,000 acres then occupied by Reserve-dwelling Africans were inadequate. It took three changes of Government and twenty-three years before Parliament settled down to passing the Trust Land Act, which promised another 14,500,000 acres to relieve the congestion in the Reserves. To purchase this it was planned

to spend £10,000,000 at the rate of £1,000,000 a year. The coming of war in 1939 knocked that schedule sky-high, and land-purchases were restricted until 1945. However, by April 1947, over half the money had been spent, and only a little more than 3,500,000 acres had been acquired. Nor were they 3,500,000 choice acres. The only merit of some of them was that they lay alongside what was already a Reserve or a location. Their position enabled the impoverished owner to ask a fancy price. Hence the disparity in estimated and actual expenditure. As to relieving congestion, the fact is admitted, and has previously been referred to, that a considerable number of families were already settled on much of this "Trust land", as all acreage bought under the 1936 Act is spoken of.

That the Native population, according to rough census calculations, is increasing at the rate of 2 per cent annually, and will have doubled itself at 16,000,000 in another thirty odd years, does not upset the land law-makers.

In so many words the Native people have been told, by head officials of the Native Affairs Department, that there never will be enough land to go round, anyway, and that when the Trust Act quota has been reached, that is the limit. This means (as has been pointed out before) that when the Trust-land purchases are complete the Native people will occupy 13 per cent of the country, while the white section, which amounts to only one-fifth of the total population, will occupy the balance of 87 per cent. The official answer to these oft-quoted figures is to declare that the Native areas lie mainly in the rainfall zones. This is only a half-truth. Some of the Reserves and locations enjoy good rainfall. A considerable proportion do not. And what help is rain when it falls on stones and stark hillsides?

It is often forgotten that only 15 per cent of South Africa is regarded as arable. I do not need to quote figures to show which section of the community holds the major part of that 15 per cent. Just as the old frontier Boers in the Eastern Cape Province consolidated their encroachments in Kaffraria, or "Kaffirland", by seizing the water-holes, so it became custom for all settlers, once they had thoroughly reconnoitred the country, to penetrate to those areas where the vegetation indicated good rains.

Over the Trust lands the Department of Native Affairs exercises full control. It marks out the 5-morgen plots. And for

these the tribesfolk pay £1 10s. rent a year in the Transvaal; minor variations occur in the other Provinces. A small number of stock are allowed free: any number over ten have to be paid for. Grazing, residential and arable areas are selected. The Department aims to organise the lives of the Trust-land settlers along the lines on which it would wish to guide those of the tribesfolk living on Reserve lands handed out according to custom by the chiefs and headmen, where grazing is communal and other factors prevent model agricultural practice.

Although 5 morgen is the average plot size, it is very difficult to keep to any set figure, as the Department will admit. Five morgen in the Pietersburg district, with its poor rainfall and poorer soil, is hardly equivalent to 1 morgen in a selected part of fertile Natal or the Cape. And, as I have already shown, in areas like that of Lichtenburg, in south-western Transvaal, the Department has had to make concessions to the rights of tenants which existed before the Department bought the land.

At any rate, 5 morgen is average, and it is on this basis, presumably, that the Department has expected to train a new species of small-holding peasant Bantu farmer. In doing so it has cheerfully ignored the lessons of history and of its own repeated experience of trying to convert Native pastoralists overnight into agriculturists. The Glen Grey Act of 1894, which Cecil Rhodes inspired, was based on 3-morgen plots. They were deliberately small, so that the sons of a plot-holder would have to go out and work. A high proportion of these plots have long been listed as N.B.O.—that is, non-beneficially occupied. The same size of plot was taken as a criterion in the Transkei, and I have said enough to show how agriculturally backward and non-self-supporting are the Transkeian tribesfolk on their 3-morgen plots.

The Department was, whatever its good intentions, compelled, in this matter of allocating Trust land, to cut its coat according to its cloth. The cloth was 14,300,000 acres in size. And all the Department felt it could afford to give out was 10½ acres to each landless family. If it was compelled to be niggardly in its assessment, it might at least have avoided the mistake of following the one-man, one-lot principle, which was part of the failure in the Glen Grey district and Transkeian systems. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that by repeating the error the Department is still thinking in terms of likely labour requirements in the towns and on the white farms.

Remember that the Bantu of South Africa are not born



agriculturists. (Very few African tribes up to the equator can be so described.) They were cattle-owners and nomadic. They scratched the soil and planted maize and kaffir corn. When that plot was exhausted they wandered off to another. They have none of the down-to-the-earth skill of the Indian market-gardeners of Natal, the Portuguese market-gardeners of the Cape and Transvaal, or the peasant folk of so many countries one could name. Those types have taken generations to produce. And time and freedom of movement and choice have sifted out the successful plot-holders from those whose talents lie elsewhere.

No such play of natural laws has been permitted with Trust-land tenants. The Department expects the Native peasantry to remould itself into a pattern that no white farmer, with all his advantages of education, implements, knowledge—acquired, learnt or hereditary—and facilities for obtaining bonds and capital, would dream of imitating. The average size of white farms is about 2,000 acres. Very few of the owners of such land are content with that figure. Very few of them are economically stable. You have only to take note that 64 per cent of South African people are in agriculture and that they produce only 12½ per cent of the national income to realise that farming and efficiency are strangers in the country.

The Department, I should stress, has not been content merely to have its agricultural officers and commissioners marking out the plots, and leaving the agricultural miracle to take place by guess or by God. It has spent many thousands of pounds from the funds made available in staff appointments creating depot farms in selected areas, providing subsidised seed and fertiliser, putting down boreholes, building dams, and on anti-soil erosion work (a big item), stock improvement and all the rest.

In all this budgeting one fact impresses me—namely, that the highest role played by the Bantu themselves in this campaign to make agriculturists of their 3,000,000 country cousins is that of agricultural demonstrators with a top salary of £10 a month. The last place where a Native can expect to obtain a decent-ranking job in South Africa, oddly enough, is in the Native Affairs Department. Like certain philanthropists and the poor, the Department aims to do everything for the Native except get off his back.

Trust funds which derive largely from Native taxation enable

the Secretary of Native Affairs to play Father Christmas to out-of-the-way mission hospitals and similar needy institutions. But the total inadequacy of such moneys, together with the ineffectual Departmental approach to the dire agricultural needs of the Reserves, made it clear by 1944 (and, indeed, before) that, Trust or no Trust, betterment areas' proclamations or not, the Reserves were declining at a rate which called for something more than an occasional blood transfusion.

The new cure bears the name "Rehabilitation of the Reserves", and it is a ten-year plan which may cost £12,000,000 or so. I first heard of this new "solution" in 1944, when the Minister of Native Affairs addressed the Natives Representative Council on the subject and called for their co-operation and that of their people. The success of the scheme, he said, depended on the people backing the Department 100 per cent.

The Councillors then sat back and listened to the Director of Native Agriculture expounding more details of rehabilitation, so much of which is an echo of the recommendations made twelve years before by the Native Economic Commission.

Professor Z. K. Matthews, a Native who is lecturer at the Fort Hare Native College, holder of American and English degrees, and generally considered the shrewdest and most level-headed of all the Native Councillors, rose and said, *inter alia*, and speaking in English:

"We have had a vast amount of information about the plans which the Government have in mind for the rehabilitation of these Reserves. A great deal of technical information has been placed before us, and I think all the Councillors are aware, from the speeches that have been made by these experts, that they are expert on the questions with which they have to deal. Now, Mr. Chairman, I am wondering whether it is sufficiently realised by the Department, and by these officials, that the problem with which they have to deal is not merely a technical one, not merely a question of whether one knows how to make two blades of grass grow where one blade grew. This is an economical, physiological and sociological question, and it does not seem to me that in the arrangements that are being made any provision is made for associating sociological experts with the technical experts which we have got in connection with this scheme. We notice, for instance, that you intend to have regional tests, in which you will have a demonstration officer, an engineer, a

soil expert and an agricultural officer. I do not know, but I seem to see a lack there of an expert on human nature. . . .”

After he had been interrupted he went on:

“I want to say that a great deal of mischief has been caused in the Reserves by agricultural officers who have not got a sociological outlook. They look at the work they have to do merely as a question of cattle and soil, and not people, and I want to emphasise that point, that these technical experts will have to realise this when they are making arrangements in the different Reserves and appointing officers to deal with this problem, that men with a sociological outlook are absolutely essential—men who know how to work with people. They may be very good agriculturists, but if they cannot work with the people, they simply put the people against the excellent schemes drawn up by Head Office.”

Professor Matthews went on to make further significant criticism—not, it should be noted, after being prompted behind the scenes by white well-wishers (a frequent insinuation when the Council touches on a weak spot in the administration), but straight after the chief agricultural officer had spoken. Were the Reserve people supposed to co-operate in rehabilitation going to be the familiar part-time majority or were they going to be full-time farmers? If the scheme depended on farming all the year round for its success, what was going to happen to the people who had no land? How was the scheme linked with the general economic set-up? How did it link up with other needful reforms in the same areas—with health services and educational demands? Stock limitation had been spoken of as cardinal to the success of the scheme; but it was no use telling the people they must do away with their sheep, their goats and to have two oxen instead of six, unless a substitute was put forward.

He ended:

“I would like to say, finally, on this question of co-operation, that co-operation depends not only on the people, but also on the officials. It is a two-sided thing, and you know, of course, the famous Negro definition of co-operation—that the Europeans like to get co-operation from the Negroes in America, but the whites there do the operating and the Negroes the co-ing. . . .”

I have discussed this lack of co-operation many times with officials and people knowledgeable in Native affairs. The official line is very easy to follow. It is a popular line and a safe one, because, by putting all the blame on the Native, it absolves the Department from responsibility for the inadequacy of its proposals and the repeated failures it has encountered when dealing with the more backward rural areas. The longer you can charge the African with ignorance, laziness and stupidity, the longer you require the services of a Native Affairs Department and the safer are the jobs of the people in it. Here you have a beautiful example of that "higher law" of self-preservation which General Hertzog placed above Christian principles.

How often has an official accompanying me on a trip discoursed on the peculiarity of "Jim Fish"! How many times have I heard the old, old story about the way "Jim" works hard for the European farmer, but when he goes home to his kraal he won't work for himself and apply the experience he has learnt to his own cabbage-patch? There is no end to the peculiarities of this feller "Jim" (so the argument goes). He even comes to town because he is too darn lazy to work his own land properly. He deserts the town as soon as he has made his pile (anything over £25 is supposed to allow him to live in luxury for a couple of years). There is no bottom to these ingenious explanations from Head Office.

I was listening to the official complaint one day at lunch, with an inspector of Native labour in Natal as the third member of the group. Neither of us was listening very much: I because I had heard it so often before; the inspector because he did not believe it anyway, for presently he interrupted by saying: "Why is it we always judge the Native by different and higher standards than we expect to be judged ourselves, eh? The way you talk about the 'munt', one would think he's the only lazy man in Africa. The laziest men I've seen in this country are the stoep-farmers and the boss-boys. Why pretend it's Jim's fault if he doesn't make a success on five morgen? Can you show me any white man keeping himself on five morgen? I'll tell you something that happened on my little farm. I bought a cultivator, see? Cost me a lot of money—for me. And I had a good 'boy' who learnt to drive it. Well, what happens? I come home one day and I find he's broken it, but he still goes on trying to use it. Of course he only made it worse. First I gave him a ticking-off. Then I realised: 'Why the hell *should* he

worry about it? Why the hell *should* I expect him to be efficient, respectful, keen, industrious and all the rest of it—on two pounds ten a month?’ Yes, I pay him two pounds ten a month with his keep, and that’s thirty shillings more than anyone else is paying round here, believe me. . . .”

“Too much, man,” said the official, sucking his pipe and looking rather pityingly at the amateur farmer.

“Why should he be a miracle-boy on two pounds ten? Why should *he* care about what happens to my cultivator? He’ll never be able to own one himself. He’ll never have a piece of land the size I’ve got. He’ll never be able to go to the bank and get a loan, as I did, to buy more land. He fills his belly—I fill his belly. And his family don’t starve—quite. That’s all I can say I do for him, and pretty nearly all he can hope to do for himself. Ambition? What’s the good of ambition to a country Native? He won’t finish up in the White House, will he? If he ever acquires a brick-built house he’ll have performed a miracle, won’t he? Or if his children manage to get to school and stay past Standard II—that’ll be another miracle. What kind of people d’you think we’re making of them when they only get scraps from our tables and, when they don’t get scraps, they’re liable to get a kick?”

The head official spoke sympathetically about this inspector, after he had left us. I was given to understand that he was an emotional type, prone to sentimentality, rather erratic, a decent enough fellow, but fundamentally weak.

An agra-economist gave me his theory on non-co-operation.

“Don’t you see,” he said, “this is one of the few opportunities to date that the Native people have had of saying ‘No’ to their commissioners and officialdom? You know what a farce consultation, so called, has always been with them in the past. Now the Department has a scheme which stands or falls on the way the people themselves carry it out, and they’re at last trying to get them interested. They’re driven, you see, in the last resort to genuine consultation with the people, and they’re very rusty on procedure. In fact they’ve never evolved an approach which had certainty of success though the country is full of amateur and professional experts on Native affairs. Has that ever struck you as strange?”

I said it had, very forcibly. But I wasn’t surprised, having listened to the way officials spoke about the Native people among themselves.

In the book I wrote on the agricultural situation in the

Reserves for the Department I said, on this business of rehabilitation:

“The Department knows better than the rest of the country that unless such a Plan is pushed through the chances of the Native Reserves becoming deserts inhabited by a miserable, half-starved, disease-ridden permanent Poor Black population of some millions is as certain as to-morrow’s sunrise.”

I do not think that has yet appeared in print, or that it is likely to appear in any official publication, for the Department (and the nation) are much more anxious to ensure that that ‘higher law’ of self-preservation is operating than they are that rehabilitation is succeeding.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE THREE “PARLIAMENTS”

*Mr. R. W. du Toit:* “Mr. Speaker . . . every day in this House you read us a prayer from which I will quote a few words—

‘Let Thy blessings descend upon us here in Parliament assembled and grant that we may, as in Thy presence, treat and consider all matters that come under our deliberations in so just and faithful a manner as to promote Thy honour and glory and to advance the good of those whose interests are committed to our charge.’

May I suggest that unless we want to get very close to blasphemy . . . it would be as well to alter this prayer to read—

‘To advance the good of the white people?’”

*Mr. Speaker:* “Order!”—HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY DEBATES, Feb. 1, 1936.

IF THE democracy of a State could be measured by the number of its Parliaments, South Africa would lead the world. The Union, whose motto is “*Ex unitate vires*”—unity is strength—possesses two official languages, two flags, three capitals, four shades of citizen (three unofficial) and three “Parliaments”. Only one of these last functions like a true Parliament. That is the all-white House of Assembly (with an Upper House or Senate), which sits in Cape Town from January to June each year and makes the laws. The other two so-called Parliaments are merely advisory boards. They achieve the dignity of the title “Parliament” usually when

questions are asked about what the country is doing to uplift the darker majority of its people. The older of these "debating societies", as some realists speak of them, is the Bunga or General Council of the United Transkeian Territories, which dates back to 1903-4. (The neighbouring Ciskei also has its Bunga.) The newest "Parliament" is the Natives Representative Council, a national body formed under the Hertzog Bills of 1936.

To understand the spirit in which Native policy is formulated a visit to the House of Assembly debates is imperative. Here are gathered 153 of the nation's leaders—the Smuts' majority group of the United Party, the official Opposition of the Nationalist Party, led by ex-predikant Dr. D. F. Malan, and the handful of Labour and Dominion Party spokesmen. After you have listened to the sentiments expressed on colour questions in this, the nation's forum, you will be ready to believe any horror story ever circulated about the nation's treatment of its non-whites. When the Native question raises its head—as it has a habit of doing at the most unrehearsed moments—then the level of debate sinks immediately, and Hertzog's "higher law" of the jungle and self-preservation rules. All the inconsistencies, the ignobleness, the catch-penny emotionalism of the street corner and the saloon bar are straightway given freer play. Thus you find rabid Afrikaner Nationalist followers of Dr. Malan complaining bitterly because pensions of 10s. a month are paid to Africans too old to work, or because little black children who work on the farms are lured away to a nearby school by the prospect of a morning plate of soup or mealie-pop.

Amid the squalor of such sentiments remains one remarkable survival of the despised Liberal spirit—Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr, the Deputy Premier. More than once Mr. Hofmeyr has been about to resign over some new piece of legislative intolerance towards the non-whites, only to remain because without him and the three white representatives of the 7,750,000 Africans the still small voice of a Christian conscience would be drowned in the baying of the Afrikaans-speaking-race bloodhounds.

Mr. Hofmeyr is a member of the United Party—General Smuts' party. But on race matters he speaks a different language from the rest of them, including his chief. At bottom the distinction between Nationalists and United Party on race questions is largely one of degree, not of kind. Both are imbued with the "white supremacy" creed and an instinctive deter-

mination to keep the African in a state of permanent inferiority. Both of them waver sympathetically over the misfortunes of the 900,000 Coloured people, without doing anything significant about them. Their intensest race feelings are reserved for the South African Indian group of 280,000, the bulk of them segregated in Natal, and not permitted to settle in either the Transvaal or the Free State. The South African Indians menace the economic monopoly domination of the white group. Hence the rabidness of anti-Indian feeling. The Indian, unlike the Native, understands the machinations of small and big business, and is prepared to work much harder to earn his case than most white tradespeople and business men. The operation of the "higher law" *vis-à-vis* the Indians shows itself in such elegant language as that used by a Nationalist member for the Free State on March 31, during the 1946 session, when he said:

"If Mr. Hofmeyr ever succeeds in bringing Indians and coloured persons into the House as members of Parliament, I should be given a machine-gun, and they will be brought down as fast as they come in. . . ."

Outwardly the House of Assembly wears an air of Victorian decorum. Its seemliness of architecture and furnishing is enhanced by the old silverware of the tea-rooms, the big-whiskered dignitaries whose portraits predominate on the walls, the deep-piled carpets, and the worn leather benches and dark brown panelling of the interior of the debating chamber itself. It is not difficult, viewing that cockpit from the visitors' gallery, to believe that once upon a time (in the days of the old Cape Colony's Assembly, which used to meet here before Union in 1910), rotund and dignified oratory draped itself around discussions on the status of the non-white and those moral principles which Hertzog firmly discarded many years ago. If that high-toned approach survives at all, it is only in the Senate, which, with the single exception of Senator H. M. Basner, is reckoned a place where public figures can cultivate their silver hairs and a belated piety, and demonstrate their mental liveliness by passing occasional motions of adjournment. It has no real powers over legislation.

Every year, as it seems, Liberal-minded folk who are concerned about the tone of the House of Assembly debates find fresh grounds for fearing that the quality of discussion and thought has declined. Yet I am not so sure, on this fundamental issue of Native policy, that official and Opposition



opinion has sunk any lower than it was, say, twenty years or so ago, when Roy Campbell, the poet, happened to be in the House.

“Never has the mentality of White South Africa been revealed more clearly,” he wrote in 1926, “than when I sat in the gallery of the House of Assembly. A heated discussion was in progress. Few speakers spoke at any length who did not contrive to contradict themselves once or twice before the end of their speeches—not obviously, perhaps, but in such a manner that a few simple mental deductions would have neutralised the purport of each speech. These self-contradictions were either taken for granted or not noticed. It was purely a battle of group-sentiments: reason only functioned in a curious inconsequent manner as it does in dreams. All those who spoke were entirely submerged in, and only actuated by, the dream-consciousness of the crowd. It caused me a certain amount of uneasiness that instead of using arguments, opponents regularly and almost automatically sought for low and selfish motives to which to impute each other’s sayings and actions. I do not contend that this revealed anything shifty or uneasy in the general conscience, for we are not concerned with the moral part of it here. It was the psychological interest that held me almost spellbound. The speakers were charged with a fierce elemental electricity. I have never been more impressed in my life. I experienced something of the same sensation as a child when I attended a Spiritualistic séance: only this was more ghostly and there was no trickery about it. . . .”

A few years later another writer and poet, Leonard Barnes, visited the House, and gives this picture of it in 1930.

“It was a typical scene. General Hertzog and a few of his weary Titans peacefully dozed on the Government benches. An Opposition member was on his feet making a noise like a bluebottle at a window-pane. Suddenly from his droning the word ‘black’ disengaged itself—the reference, I fancy, was to boots, certainly not to Natives. But the word alone was enough for the Prime Minister and his stalwarts: the context did not matter. In a twinkling they jerked themselves forward like hunting ferrets, in a tense and, as it were, snarling vigilance: the vicious bristling on the fur on the scruff of their necks was visible from the public gallery. Such

is the temper and the atmosphere in which Parliament expresses its will for the future of the subject race."

Six years later came the historic session when a joint sitting of both Houses gathered to debate and pass the Hertzog Native Bills. Leading parties and politicians were then at liberty to parade their feelings towards their non-white countrymen at full stretch. Between 1930 and 1936 had been a period of depression, of reluctant going off the gold standard, a fusion between Smuts and Hertzog—ancient rivals for the Premiership—which led to the formation of the United Party and the breaking-away of Dr. Malan from the Hertzog camp to form the powerful Nationalist Party. For the ageing Hertzog this session and these Bills were the crowning moment of his life. For his Deputy, General Smuts, holding the portfolio of Justice, it must have been a period of extreme embarrassment. In 1926, when the Bills first came up for examination and he was leading the Opposition, he had said about them:

"I say that however much we may try to safeguard our own white position let us never do so in a way which violates moral principles because that will recoil on us. The white man does not require that. I do not for a moment believe that it is in the interests of the white man in South Africa that legislation like this should pass—not for a moment. It would be craven, it would be cowardly on the part of the white man to seek shelter behind such laws in order to protect himself against the native. He does not want it and he does not ask for it."

Was it perhaps the memory of these sentiments that kept General Smuts so silent during that long-drawn-out 1936 joint sitting?

Hertzog, for his part, had some moments of startling clarity. In defending the necessity for the Bills and the form they took he was frank enough:

"As long as the conditions existing today continue the white man can never with a true heart go and use his power really to advance the Natives. It is impossible. I say the European dare not do it. I say again that the Native has no right to expect the white man, as long as he remains a danger to the white civilisation in South Africa, to assist and support

him. . . . I hold the view that the Native must go ahead . . . provided it happens in a way compatible with that great interest of the white man that he shall remain the ruler in South Africa."

In doing its job as official Opposition the Nationalist Party used exactly the same kind of arguments. Dr. Malan said the most dangerous aspect of the plan for a national Natives Representative Council was that it would bring together on a common platform various widely scattered tribal groupings. Would not this accelerate the creation of one "Kaffir nation" and, by inference, hasten the likelihood of a political *rapprochement* between Africans throughout southern Africa? A predikant-Parliamentarian called the Bill "a sin against the ideal of segregation". Another spokesman complained of the proposed annual salary of £120 for Natives elected to the new Council. Ninety pounds, he felt, was ample. Members of the Bunga, it was noted, received £30 a year, and they were considered very well off.

Mr. Hofmeyr clung to his Liberal viewpoint, although he belonged to the Smuts-Hertzog Fusionists. The Bills, he said, were based on fear, and no sound policy of government could be so founded. There was fear of the Native vote in the Cape Province (a survival of pre-Union Colonial days and based on a simple literary and property test), yet only fourteen of the Cape constituencies had more than 250 Native voters, and in only four was there more than a 10 per cent Native electorate.<sup>1</sup> The principle of communal representation contained in the Representative of Natives' Bill was unsound. Communal representation of different races implied a divergence of interests between European and non-European. There was a far greater community of interests in the land. To stimulate differences, as the Bill did, could only lead to hostility, and could not be for the ultimate good of all sections. He quoted the reports of official commissions which had examined communal representation in East Africa, Ceylon and India, and which separately found that the principle did not work. What was needed was some proper political recognition for the thousands of educated and semi-educated Africans.

Time was, in the House of Assembly, when there would have been not one, but half a dozen Hofmeyrs, talking in this intelli-

<sup>1</sup> In 1930 this was reduced to 5 per cent—by Hertzog's sudden and simple expedient of giving white women the franchise.

gent strain. I take it to be a mark of progressive Afrikanerisation of the national outlook in colour matters that Hofmeyr has become so lone a voice. The "higher law" which views national progress in South Africa as a competition between white and black, as a fight in which only the white is allowed to carry the weapons, use the knuckle-dusters, fire the guns and drop the bombs, now swaggers in the House in unashamed arrogance, cracking an invisible sjambok against its boot, and snarling at anyone who dares to challenge its naked *baaskop*<sup>1</sup> tyranny.

If this is thought exaggerated, listen now to the voice of Mr. J. G. Strydom, the Transvaal leader of the Nationalist Party speaking in 1947, not on a piece of Native legislation, but on a Welfare Organisations Bill wherein it was felt natural that a man of colour should serve on some committees, since welfare had so much to do with the vast poor non-white majority.

*Mr. J. G. Strydom* : The European race in South Africa can only remain a European race if it preserves its feeling against colour. Once it loses that feeling, as in the way it is absent in most European countries which have had no experience of the coloured problem and who have no coloured people, South Africa cannot remain a white man's country; we must then lose our race purity. There is nothing to prevent that if the white race loses its anti-colour sense . . . if we lose our colour feeling and the non-Europeans are developed and civilised we must become a coloured nation. Then it would be quite useless to speak about white civilisation and the Christian white civilisation—it will then be a fantasy. Then it will drive you to the logical conclusion, and it will happen that in the Assembly and in the Provincial Councils and in the Town Councils you will get intermingling, and that coloured can travel with you in the same compartment and eat with you in the same dining-room and at the same tables; and eventually you will have no objection to living with them if they are decent and civilised.

*Minister of Social Welfare*: Have you any objection to letting your babies be attended by coloureds?

*Mr. Strydom*: Let me put the Minister right. I do not really want to answer such points, but in that case the coloured is your inferior, your servant and not your equal.

*Mr. Hayward*: But it is a very important point.

<sup>1</sup> *Baaskop*: Afrikaans, literally "masterhood".

*Mr. Strydom:* The Hon. Member intimates through his interjection that he would not take exception to coloureds sitting at the same table with him and eating with him. I want to say incidentally that whatever the position may be, no non-European has ever had the privilege of looking after my child.

*Mr. Henny:* Do you believe it is wrong?

*Mr. Strydom:* I can quite understand that there are people who cannot afford it. But I am not attacking these people. The position there simply is this, that the non-Europeans are their inferiors and their servants. But here we have the position where they are your equals.

*Mr. Swart:* Does the Hon. Member say that the coloured maid can sit at his table?

*Mr. Strydom:* Those interjections really signify that because non-Europeans look after their children they also ought to be allowed to travel in the trains and to eat with them. . . .

*Mr. Henny:* That is Nationalist logic.

*Mr. Strydom:* . . . because non-Europeans are decent and educated in some cases. I admit that there are many such. But now Hon. Members are arguing that because they are respectable and educated, those who have reached that stage should be treated on an equal footing with Europeans in every sphere of life. That must lead to the downfall of the Europeans. . . . Accordingly there is only one policy to follow if you wish to preserve the colour instinct and remain a European race in South Africa, and that is we should follow the policy of separation between the races so far as it is a question of equality, not where he is your servant; and to carry out that policy consistently in any field of life.

*The Minister:* Will you tell me this? Does your policy of separation imply eternal subordination?

*Mr. Strydom:* I had thought Hon. Members on the other side endorsed the standpoint that the Europeans are the superiors and guardians of the others, as they sometimes intimate. Now the Minister states that the Europeans should not remain the masters in South Africa. Yes, our attitude is that the Europeans must remain masters in South Africa. . . .

The full import of the term "segregation" is discussed in the next chapter. I have quoted the above passage at some length because it brings into sharper focus this fundamental tenet of the Afrikaner colour outlook—namely, that no matter how

worthy, how successful, how gifted, academically or artistically, a non-white may be, he cannot be adequately recognised by the white section, because that spells the "downfall" of the dominant group. This is the bone that sticks in the gizzard of the Liberal South African, or anyone who believes in the ideals of democracy. Africans are not poor, ignorant and unskilled because they are incapable of rising in the scale, as is sometimes argued. They are in their low state, and kept there, as far as legislation and public opinion can maintain such oppression, for the very reason that, given the same facilities as the whites, they are well capable of improving themselves and acquiring the lineaments of Western civilisation, not in centuries, but sometimes in one generation.<sup>1</sup>

Neither the Smuts United Party nor the Nationalist Party can stomach the truth of a proposition like this, however many examples in support you might be able to quote. The Nationalists take refuge in talk of *apartheid*, or separation. The Smuts Party speaks of trusteeship. Not the kind of trusteeship, however, that is usually understood by the use of the word. Vaguely in the official mind is an eternal state of "Christian" guardianship over a ward who never grows up. In a homely simile, used, I fancy, without any conscious irony, Smuts put it this way to a 1947 delegation of African leaders: "As that Black nurse has carried the White baby, so the White baby, as it grows up, must in turn look after that Black nurse". The African in the eternal role of a Black "nanny" fits in well with the Nationalist Party view already quoted on the lips of Mr. J. G. Strydom. In 1942 from a Cape Town platform General Smuts spread himself on the trusteeship theme.

"The whole idea of trusteeship is that there is a trust imposed on the European—as the Covenant says, a 'sacred' trust. There is a trust on him and there is a responsibility placed on him. There is a duty placed on him to look after the interests also of his ward—to look after the interests of the people who have been put in his trust—this is the underlying conception of trusteeship which we have to put into practice."

On the same platform happened to be the High Commissioner for the British Protectorates, Lord Harlech. He also

<sup>1</sup> Dr. A. Xuma, President-General of the African National Congress, is a modern case; 100 years ago Tiyo Soga proved the same point.

spoke, and he it was who postulated the question left unanswered by General Smuts: "What happens when the ward grows up?"

In 1943 a deputation from the Christian Council waited on Smuts in Cape Town asking that certain urgent aspects of the "problem", including disease, non-recognition of African trade unions and lack of adequate political representation, be examined and improved. On this last matter Smuts said, in that practised, yielding way of his which concedes your point and then leaves matters exactly where they were: "You come up against impossible snags as soon as you get on to the political terrain. You get away from the merits at once. It becomes a battle-ground where justice cannot be done. You fight a political battle instead of a social battle. We must seek to find ways of doing justice." Thus talks Smuts at his own fireside. But let him but label his luggage for overseas, and rosy visions of his native heath begin to cloud his mind. They were all about him when he answered critics at the first United Nations session in New York, and glorified the Bunga, as "the Native Parliament of the United Transkeian Territories".

Along with many more South Africans, I too, shared the common view, and felt that, backward though the rest of the Reserves might be, in the Transkei, with its local councils and its Bunga, existed a model of how tribalism could be integrated into a democratic system of local administration.

But that was before I visited Umtata, and the Bunga in session.

How explosive sounded the Xhosa clicks<sup>1</sup> as I stood for the opening of Bunga and listened to the eighty-seven African councillors reciting the Lord's Prayer in their own tongue! Most of the speeches made were either in Xhosa or Sotho. For translation purposes there were three interpreters at work. Each side of the House had its own; and the Chief Magistrate had one sitting alongside on his presiding throne who was really a personal attendant. Bunga is well-housed in its own £30,000 building, easily the most impressive in the little town. Its main hall, in which session meets, is handsome and well-proportioned. The Councillors are ranged on either side of it, all seated at separate desks on a raised dais. In the middle of the hall, in a double row below the magisterial chair, are the

<sup>1</sup> The Xhosa dialect has five clicks, the Zulus three, all borrowed from the Bushman.

twenty-seven district magistrates (in the rest of the Union they, like their chiefs, would be called Commissioners, since their districts population are predominantly Africans).

Councillors were a mixture of chiefs and headmen with no great standards of education beyond that they might have picked up in the lower forms of the mission schools. But none of them was short of words. Indeed, they have a saying in Xhosa that "speaking is something one enjoys doing". And enjoy it they appear to do in Bunga for a fortnight or so each year. Their main topics of discussion would convey little to a stranger. Some are connected with tribal customs such as *twala*—marriage abduction—and its side-issues *teleka* and *ngena*. One item I noticed on the long agenda read: "That the Government be respectfully requested to bring about uniformity in the amount of damages in cases of seduction followed by pregnancy of virgins, by fixing the number of cattle payable at five head." Another demanded that since the "Colour Bar" was fundamental to the Act of Union of 1910, the Government be asked to adopt a "policy of class distinction and differentiation between cultured and uncultured Natives, as is the position with Europeans and Coloured".

About 50 per cent of Councillors wore glasses. I do not think 50 per cent needed them. All, of course, are dressed in lounge suits. Some ride in on horseback. Others come by their own cars. In the earlier days of the century they met in the magistrate's court and similar small places. Pipe-smoking and snuff-taking were universal in those times, and spittoons had to be distributed strategically.

I listened for an hour or two that opening morning. The tone and conduct of the meeting were impressive. The eighty-seven councillors made a weighty group of men, not stiff or self-conscious, but alert, good-humoured and conscientious. To a townee, like myself, the whole proceedings had an odd remoteness. The bulk of the agenda had to do with rural matters. And I was lulled into an uncritical frame of mind by the rare novelty of seeing a black-white gathering.

Later, as I toured through the Territories, I began to notice things. It was soon clear, for example, that although Bunga and its administrative staff was self-supporting, and handled an annual budget of nearly £300,000, there were no high-up jobs for Africans. They could work as chauffeurs, as agricultural demonstrators, and road-makers. But all decent-ranking positions in these Native Territories were held by whites. And



that, when you begin to examine the Bunga set-up, is exactly the state of affairs in this so-called Native Parliament.

One of the senators elected to represent the 1,300,000 Africans of the Transkei, named W. M. H. Campbell, a man who for more than three years preserved a classic silence in that august House, came to life during the 1947 session with an attack on the Bunga system that shook that seemly Chamber to its chandeliers. He began by quoting Smuts' description of Bunga at the United Nations, and also that given by another South African delegate who called it "the legislature of an entire Native area". "The Bunga has no legislative power whatsoever," said Senator Campbell, "and as far as the Native members are concerned it is merely a debating society. . . . The Native Councillors as such have no real power: (a) in the District Councils because, though they are in the majority, any resolution they pass can be over-ridden by the Chief Magistrate; (b) in the Bunga because their resolutions have to be passed by the Executive Committee or the Chief Magistrate, and thirdly, where necessary, by the Minister of Native Affairs; (c) in the Executive Committee because the Chairman has a casting vote and, in addition, if a decision is contrary to his wishes it may be referred to the Minister. . . . Yet what," asked the Senator, "was the original object in constituting the Bunga?", and answered his own question with a quotation from a former Secretary for Native Affairs addressing Bunga in these terms: "Not one of us has lost sight of the objects for which the Council was instituted, and that was to train up the Native people to such a stage that the management of their own local affairs could be entrusted to them."

Senator Campbell said: "If they have not, after fifty years' training, deserved such recognition, then for Heaven's sake let the world know the facts, and don't perpetrate this bluff that the Bunga system is a wonderful instance of self-government by Africans."

Senator Campbell gave an example of how discussion could be stifled on an unpopular resolution. A Councillor forwarded to the chairman of his District Council (the magistrate) a notice that he intended, at the next Bunga session, to move the following:

"That this Council condemns the Union Government's non-European policy which has caused the Union Government to look ridiculous in the eyes of the world, and requests

of the Union Government, in the interests of peace, order and good government, to change such non-European policy and to implement the decision of the United Nations Organisation on the Indian question at Lake Success."

To this the magistrate sent a reply:

"With reference to the attached copy of Notice of Motion submitted by you, I have the honour to inform you that the chairman of the General Council has ruled that it is not in order: (a) by reason of vagueness, in that it does not indicate the nature of the change of policy asked for, and (b) by reason of irregularity in that it refers to a matter that does not fall within the province of the General Council as defined in Section 21(1) of Proclamation No. 191 of 1932."

Senator Campbell's comment was that "if that motion is vague, then, in comparison, some of the motions put before this House are rubbish".

"It is always amusing to me," said the Senator at another point, "to read the paragraph in the Native Affairs report which deplores the fact that more District Councils have not been founded." He quoted a passage from the 1944-45 annual Report which has this pious sentence: "The somewhat slow response from the less developed parts of the country is an indication of the degree in which the Native people are ready for democratic institutions." "Surely," he said, "it must have dawned on the Department that the real reason is that the Native people do not want a council based on the Transkei system as at present constituted. What benefit would it be under the present constitution?"

Senator Campbell had something also to say about the sort of jobs Africans could expect to get in this Native Reserve. "Every executive position in the Bunga service is in the hands of a European. Africans only hold subordinate positions. These are all they are allowed to occupy. They are on a different scale of pay from the Europeans. Let me put this question to the Hon. Minister. Scholarships are granted by the Bunga to Natives to study at Fort Hare. Many of them have graduated there. Have any graduates ever been taken into the service of the Bunga with a view to training them for executive posts? I know several of them have qualified, and I know they have applied for positions, but without success. Of course, the European executives do not want them: they do not want to lose their jobs in the Accountancy, the Agricultural and the

Engineering Departments, and they will move heaven and earth to keep the Natives out."

When African councillors in a neglected rural backwater like the Transkei begin presenting resolutions such as that quoted a moment ago, it is clear that, "Forgotten Country" though this may be in the Government's eyes, the Transkeian Africans have their eyes and ears wide open. If challenged, I know the Departmental reaction to this and kindred protests. It will say that somebody has put the Councillors up to such mischief. Ostrich-like, it would like to believe that by burning its head in the sand such complaints no longer have point or meaning. It is not so difficult for the Department to feel and act this way about the Bunga, which sits for only a fortnight once a year, and in a dorp a few hundred miles away from Pretoria, the administrative capital. When it comes to the Natives Representative Council, such a tactic does not work at all.

And so the final show-down in August, 1946, between the Council and the Department (as representing the Government), at the time of the strike of 70,000 African gold-miners, and the adjournment of the Council were as certain as the Ides of March.

One thing Bunga possesses which the more august Representative Council sadly lacks is a proper home. When I first attended a Council session this body, representing 7,750,000 Africans, was being given temporary accommodation in one of the ancillary rooms of the Pretoria City Hall. This did not suit the bulk of the city's Afrikaans-speaking Councillors. They did not mind Africans in the City Hall as janitors. But for them to be sitting on chairs and exchanging views round a table just like white men was a little too much for the civic stomach. So permission was refused when the next session was scheduled.

At a later stage the Council foregathered in the Magistrate's Court, which, apart from its unpleasant associations for a law-ridden people, was much too small. It finished up in 1946 in the suburban hall belonging to a Theosophical Society. Here it was that Council passed its epochal resolution for a *sine die* adjournment (pending a more satisfactory Government reply), looked down upon by a large oil painting of Christ and the star of Bethlehem embossed on the wall.

Before outlining the experiences and events leading up to that adjournment, let me make plain the official functions and composition of the Council. The 1936 Representation of

Natives Act had as its main purpose the removal of the pre-Union Cape African voters from the common roll, and also the prevention of any increase in these meagre political rights in the Cape, or their spread to the three northern Provinces of Natal, Orange Free State and the Transvaal, without passing the almost insuperable barrier of a joint sitting of the two Houses and by the aid of a two-thirds majority therein. Similarly, the Cape African vote was nailed down to three representatives (white), no matter how many might qualify as time went by under the literacy, property and wage test.

Well over 5,000,000 Africans, therefore, in the three northern Provinces are unrepresented in the House. All they have got is white senatorial representation, where talk is *ad lib.* and where laws are merely scrutinised.

Both the Councillors and the Senators are elected by communal vote. Council is a national body comprising twelve Councillors elected by the people, four nominated by the Governor-General and six "official" white non-voting members—that is, the Secretary for Native Affairs (chairman) and the five Chief Native Commissioners. Council cannot make laws, and its main duty is to act as a channel for the expression of African opinion whenever laws and other matters affecting the African people are under scrutiny. General Smuts graced the first Council session and distilled some attar of wisdom. He did not see Councillors again till ten years had passed, and then it was to tell them that Council had failed because after all it was only a "debating chamber".

I would not like it thought that the African people and their leaders were so politically unversed as to hail Hertzog's 1936 Bills and the new representation as if they were gifts from the gods. They were profoundly disappointed by them. They protested, as far as they were able. They sent deputations to Cape Town—a timely gift of £500 by a Johannesburg stockbroker enabled them to pay their train fares and expenses.

And it is to the resounding credit of the Council, that once it had got into its stride, it had spark and spirit enough to attack relentlessly the system which had brought so poor, weak and ineffectual a body into existence. It did so without neglecting such functions as it possessed in its role of scrutineer, or its main mission of presenting the African viewpoint on the manifold disabilities from which they suffer everywhere they live, settle or travel.

"You know," said one of the Chief Native Commissioners to me during a morning tea interval at a Council session in 1944, "if this Council really represented the bulk of Native opinion we should have to take it very seriously indeed. Fortunately they're only the intelligentsia. Look how out of place Mshiyeni and Mohlaba are alongside fellers like Matthews, Champion or Moroka!"

The same Commissioner refused to be downcast when another Departmental official in the group queried what the future could be with the Native growing more truculent and "cheeky" in the Council chambers and on the street corners.

"Don't worry, man," he said, taking another scone. "*Shim-yane*,<sup>1</sup> V.D. and T.B. 'll wipe them out. You should come down to my territory and see what's happening to them."

In another tea interval I found myself talking to a member of the Native Affairs Commission, a small State-appointed body of advisers which must be the easiest known way of extracting a salary of £1,000 a year ever devised by the Government service. As it happened, African Councillors had just been demanding, in hot and eloquent language, that this same Commission, which was first created in 1921, should be abolished because the formation of a Natives Representative Council made the Commission's advisory work superfluous.

"Trouble with this country," said the member of the Commission, "is that we've got not five races here, but six." And after I'd asked the obvious question. "We've got Dutch, English, Indians, Coloureds, Natives and Africans."

Council has in its ranks some of the most vivid and forceful speakers that I have listened to in South Africa. Tribally they are mixed. But you never think of that when you listen to them. All save one or two chiefs, like Mshiyeni from Zululand and Victor Poto from the Transkei, speak in English. Rarely do they read a speech. And apart from occasional reference to notes they require no prompting. The contrast between their ease of manner and command of language and that of, say, the Minister of Native Affairs—Major Piet van der Byl—is remarkable.

Each session is favoured in its initial stages by a visit from the Minister, who comes to breathe a benediction upon their counsels. Major van der Byl wears a morning coat better than any other Minister in the land. He is equally *soigne* at a garden-party in a tall grey topper—an article of apparel which caused

<sup>1</sup> Illicit liquor brewing.

quite a furore in Zululand at one *indaba* I attended. When the tall, straight-backed Minister comes striding into the Council chamber, with the Secretary for Native Affairs obsequiously at his elbow, and looking like a dowdy bride alongside the major's fashion-plate elegance, everyone rises. The Minister mounts the dais, on which the Secretary's seat as chairman is placed, shoots his cuffs, glares loftily down on his congregation, adjusts his glasses, and prepares to deliver his pronouncement..

Each sentence is translated from English into Zulu—a service which is appreciated by Mshiyeni should he happen to be present, but which otherwise is an anachronism. Having laboriously off-loaded a string of pious platitudes, the Minister sits down long enough to harken to the usual vote of thanks for his graciousness in manifesting himself, and then, secretary at elbow, returns down the aisle and departs, presumably to go and sit up on a cloud.

Over a period of several sessions prior to their adjournment I have listened to Councillors talking the language of democracy to needless walls, asking for its benefits to be extended to them, scarifying the administration, and registering a mounting frustration at their impotence to secure any real improvement in the lot of their people either by suggesting reforms or criticising bills affecting Africans. Time and again the Councillors asked to be treated as men of responsibility and not as boys. Only a handful of mute Departmental officials heard their complaints. The sessions are open to the public, but what white public in South Africa would think of pausing to hear a bunch of Natives talking in any language?

"We are like men talking down a toy telephone," was how one Councillor described the futility of their position. "Like children, we have taken pleasure in the echo of our own voices."

Breaking-point came on August 14, 1946, the same day as that in 1941 when Mr. Churchill and the late President Roosevelt gave to the world their Atlantic Charter and its four freedoms: freedom of speech and expression; freedom of worship; freedom from fear and freedom from want.

A few miles from the Council this bright August morning the batons of the police were flailing to some purpose among the strikers on the gold-mines when Councillor Dr. Moroka rose to read an amended motion:

"This Council, having since its inception brought to the

notice of the Government the reactionary character of the Union Native policy of segregation in all its ramifications, deprecates the Government's post-war continuation of a policy of Fascism which is the antithesis and negation of the letter and the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations' charter.

"The Council therefore, in protest against this breach of faith towards the African people in particular, and the cause of world freedom in general, calls upon the Government forthwith to abolish all discriminatory legislation affecting non-Europeans in this country."

Dr. Moroka reminded Council how Africans had opposed the 1936 Bills with their inhibitory clauses and their false segregationist ideology. He went on:

"We do not agree with the contention held by the Europeans that we are naturally inferior to the white people. We do not agree that if we are given the chance we cannot cooperate with the white man and make South Africa a happy land where the white man can live and where we can live. We realise, as a people, that as long as the present policy of segregation is maintained the African has no chance in this land—our land. Ours will be a position of inferiority always. We shall always have to accept graciously what the white man feels disposed to give us. We shall have no say in the management of this land, the land in which we are born, the land in which we can claim a right, in which we can claim as a right a say in the Government. We cannot agree that we must come here as a Council every day to bring motions, pass motions, hand them to you to place before the Government and then simply be satisfied if we never hear any more about them. We have pleaded here for the relaxation of the Pass Laws and the abolition of the Pass Laws, but instead of the Pass Laws being removed, they have been intensified and made more strict. Instead of the workers' unions being recognised, they have been turned down—they have not been recognised. Instead of Native education being made compulsory and provided for in the same way as the education of other races, ours is put aside; we must be dealt with separately. In our locations we cannot own our own houses. We have no say, no control. Our locations are nothing but Zoos. If you want to go into a Native location you have to go

through a gate: there is a man there who asks what you want, whom you want to see. . . .

“To-day, as a result of this segregation policy in order to try and force people to go and work on the farms, the Natives are not allowed to go to the station and take out a ticket to go to Johannesburg. He first of all has to go to his Native Commissioner, and if his Native Commissioner is not prepared to let him go away, he is simply refused permission to travel by train.”

Dr. Moroka was followed by Paul Mosaka, a Fort Hare B.A., and successful Reef trader, who amplified the long history of African protest against discriminatory legislation, and the disaster towards which South Africa was heading because of its Native policy.

“Sane counsel from black and white has not been wanting. Indeed, Government bluebooks, like the Third Interim Report of the Agricultural and Industrial Requirements Commission, have urged the Government for the reversal of its policy. If so, why does the Government continue in this policy, which is retrogressive and stands condemned before the nations of the world? Why is there this record of broken promises and of bad faith towards the African people? It is because vested interests have proved too strong to be swayed in the opposite direction. A new lease of life to the mining industry of South Africa has been given by the discovery of gold in the Orange Free State. This demands an extension of the cheap-labour policy, and therefore of a Union Native policy based on the paramountcy of the mining and farming interests. How long must your gold be rated above human values? How long shall the African people be huddled together in congested and unproductive reserves, industrial compounds and urban locations? How long will 8,000,000 people live on 13 per cent of the land while most of the 87 per cent of the land is left idle in the hands of European landowners? How long will you retain that elaborate and opprobrious machinery of the past in order to control the movements of the African? How long will the African in industry be denied the rights of a worker under the Industrial Conciliation Act because such recognition would, it is alleged, disturb the Industrial set-up of this country—its mining and farming? How long must the rights and lives of 8,000,000 be



subordinated to the interests of a few mining magnates and rich farmers? Must the many starve and go naked to support the few?

“These are questions which the Government and the white people of this country must answer. On these questions the African has made up his mind. This state of affairs must go. They can no longer tolerate it. The end may not be immediately in sight, but we have begun to feel the pinch, we are tired of this daily bluff, we are not insensitive to currents of world opinion, and we are determined to save ourselves, to save civilisation and the white man of this country in spite of himself. We have to contend with a mass of mental inertia in our European overlords whom the post-war prosperity of South Africa has rendered complacent and reactionary. And upon us, strange as it may seem, rests the responsibility to see that the ship of State is not becalmed in the doldrums. . . .”

And after Mosaka came Councillor Thema, tall, grey-haired associate editor of the weekly, the *Bantu World*, who said:

“This may be the beginning of the parting of the ways, and I want to say that we on this side of the Colour line have a clear conscience. We have tried our best to co-operate with the white people of this country, we have been loyal ever since the white man came to South Africa. I am not talking about little skirmishes that have occurred here and there. These amount to nothing in the history of this country, but the loyalty of a people is judged by the way in which they have co-operated with other sections and the Government of the land. We have co-operated in many ways. We have assisted the white man in the building up of South Africa, in the establishment of civilisation here. We have helped the white man in the construction of roads when South Africa was a jungle. We have helped the white man in the construction of railways, and in going down the mines and bringing forth the gold and diamonds and other minerals. We have co-operated with the white man ever since he was fighting and trying to get a footing against those tribes that were hostile to him. We have always come to his assistance. Yes, we have taken up arms against our own kinsmen, and we have been doing so all along. During the great wars which you have

fought we have come to your assistance, but white South Africa does not seem to realise that in that way we wanted you people to take us into your confidence, and make us feel that we are one with you—one nation, not two nations. White South Africa has turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to us there. They have failed to recognise the fact that the Africans have been trying their level best to do the right thing to live in peace with them in this country. . . .”

Councillor Thema had this to say about the segregation policy:

“This policy of segregation is of such a nature that it prevents us from rising in the scale of civilisation. It does not allow us to have enough land—land on which we can develop our lives to the full. In the towns it is this segregation policy which represses and retards our progress, it does not allow us to build our own homes, and when people are deprived of the right to build their own homes they cannot be expected to rear good families. . . . In the political field this segregation policy does not give us the representation to which we are entitled. It does not give us the representation which will enable us to make Parliament realise, when we make demands, that these demands are made by people who are living with the white people in this country.

“If we must be segregated territorially then we must have just as much land as the white people have. But the white people say ‘No, you cannot have that’—they give us 13 per cent of the land of the country. Thirteen per cent which is spread all over the Union is not a big territory: it is not sufficient to enable us to develop. We have reserves here and there surrounded by Europeans and by other people, and most of that land is desert and is barren. Most of that land is in drought-stricken areas, and that is why we are always starving . . . ours is a starving race . . . and when we run away from starvation in the Reserves and go to the towns you stop us, and you say: ‘Oh, no,’ and because you control the trains and the means of transport you are able to prevent us from using your trains and other means of conveyance. . . .

“There cannot be a lasting peace until such time as everyone is peaceful and everyone is free. I say that God cannot allow it. If He controls this Universe, then surely a way will be found along which the various sections will be prepared to

allow each other to live. But unless a new spirit prevails we shall always be fighting each other and we shall continue to do so until we find a way by which all can have freedom and equality. There can be no peace so long as one set of people wants to trample and ride roughshod over the rights and liberties of another people. If we are opposed to Nazism and to Fascism then surely we in South Africa must set our face against these evils in our land. . . .”

Is this the language of “savages” or near-barbarians, as I have heard official apologists for South Africa’s Native policy at home and abroad speak of its African people? To me this is the voice of righteous men raised in honest indignation against the laws they have to live under. It is the voice, moreover, not of a handful of intelligentsia, as the Department wishes to imagine, but of thousands of that growing middle-class of educated and semi-educated Africans who, like the Councillors themselves, are not permitted to play any responsible part in the affairs of the country in which they are born. Such language, coming from any group of people whose skins were not black, would arouse a storm of national sympathy and fellow-feeling in any country but South Africa.

But I am interrupting the sequence of Council events.

One by one the Councillors rose to address the silent chair, which was occupied on this historic occasion by the Under-Secretary for Native Affairs, Major F. Rodseth. At last Dr. Moroka’s motion was put and carried unanimously. It was only the second day of the session, and it was all over before lunch.

The adjournment of the Council received scant notice in the Press. Like the Government, the Press treats the Council strictly on its merits as a “hot-air” chamber or safety-valve. Besides, undue publicity at the very moment when Smuts was fighting a losing battle in New York against a horde of critics of the Union’s Native policy would have been acutely embarrassing. Editors who were in doubt about the Party line got their instructions soon after Smuts got back from U.N.O. Press conference orders were: “Play down the international aspect of colour problems”.

The next move in the Council impasse came from the Government. Members were summoned to Pretoria in November to hear Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr, the Deputy Premier, read a Government reply repudiating the Council’s resolution as unfair and impracticable, and advising Councillors to count their

blessings. Council found this reply unsatisfactory. It asked for something more positive. It was informed by Mr. Gordon Mears, the Secretary for Native Affairs, that the State had nothing more positive to say. The adjournment stood, and the stalemate lasted another five months, while well-wishers fluttered to and fro behind the scenes.

From General Smuts, at last, came a call for six selected Councillors to come and meet him in Cape Town early in May, while session was sitting. Mosaka was one, and with him went Matthews, Thema, Mshiyeni (no longer Regent of the Zulus) and Chiefs Poto and Maserumule.

Smuts' talk to Councillors was the familiar mixture of the paternal and that "through-the-looking-glass" kind of rumination which constantly flirts with the object in view without ever actually facing it squarely. The position of the Council was very unfortunate, he said. It was a sort of sit-down strike. We must get things on the move again. We could do that by all contributing. The spirit of goodwill was invoked. And understanding. And sympathy. Recriminations were deplored. South Africa was changing. It had changed since Hertzog got his Bills through. They had failed. Segregation into Reserves had not worked. The Reserves were only a partial solution. There was the urban influx. The Native was on the march. (Author's Note: "And humanity?") The Councillors had no responsibility. Council was a debating chamber. Resolutions were passed. Nothing—or very little—happened. What follows? Dissatisfaction, discontent—a sit-down strike. Some said: "Scrap the Council: it's only a talking shop". But he (Smuts) didn't think so. The Government didn't think so. Not at all. Why break up the Council? Native opinion couldn't be ignored. You couldn't govern the mass of people without noting their opinions, could you? (Author's Note: "Were the heads tired of nodding by this time?") So let us give you some responsibility, you Councillors—a bone to chew at, because "one gets tired of talking and then sits down on strike".

The chewing bone comprised several vague suggestions. One was that the Council have much more responsibility and executive authority in the management of the eroded Reserves, and that it should become all-African. However, an official statement published after the meeting put this part in focus:

"The legislative, executive and taxing powers which may be entrusted by law to the Natives Representative Council

will be exercised subject to the authority of Parliament and the Government, who will retain the final say."

Indeed, if any of the Councillors had been hypnotised by Smuts and his vision splendid, the first paragraph of the statement provided the necessary cold douche:

"All that is at present definitely before the Natives Representative Council and Parliament will be the Bill for the recognition of Native trade unions, and this is being published immediately."

But the Councillors were not deceived. They asked for bread, as one of them said to me afterwards, and they were given "a bone to chew at". They, too, produced an official statement answering Smuts' proposals. They emphasised the long delays, and the Ministerial promise that their plaint was receiving serious consideration by the Cabinet. Yet, despite these assurances, all that had been said by Smuts referred only to the Council, "a veritable case of the mountain going into labour and producing a mouse". The Councillors wanted adequate representation on those bodies which, according to Smuts, would have the "final say". They pointed out that "the primary demand" of the African people and the Council was for a change in the "nature and content of our Native policy, with whose fundamental principles they are in total disagreement".

The Council reminded Smuts that more than two years before a Recess Committee of the Council had made investigations for the improved representation of Africans under the 1936 Act. The Committee's main recommendations were still adhered to by the Council, and were: (a) The extension of Assembly representation for Africans to the northern Provinces; (b) the extension of Provincial Council representation to the Northern Provinces; (c) the increase of representation for Africans in the Senate up to the limit provided for in the Act; (d) the extension of the individual vote to the Northern Provinces and the adoption of the system of individual voting for all elections under the Act; (e) the grant of legislative and executive powers to the Natives Representative Council; (f) the increase of the African members of the Council from sixteen to sixty; (g) the extension to Africans of representation in urban local authorities.

The statement, which was signed by Professor Z. K. Mat-

thews, as chairman of the Council, ended by pinpointing three major weaknesses in the Bill for the recognition of African trade unions which they had been asked to approve and to which extended reference is made in the opening chapter.

The House of Assembly adjourned without the Bill coming up for discussion. This timing was not, of course, accidental. The small, but politically alert African Press linked up the attempted *rapprochement* with Smuts' need for an alibi at the next United Nations meeting. The Department shook its head bemusedly. One official to whom I spoke at the time even forgot to use the word "agitator". But the Department managed, as usual, to work it into its annual report when dealing with labour unrest.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SEGREGATION PIPE-DREAM

"You have told us that you are going to separate the Natives from the Europeans, but we think it is impossible. Did not God separate the Europeans from the Africans and surround Africa by the Ocean, and did not the white man come in none the less?"—NATIVE CHIEF, to General Hertzog when he first propounded segregation as an official State policy in 1926.

GENERAL HERTZOG, Prime Minister from 1924 to 1939, in defending the segregation aspect of his 1936 Native Bills, spoke about two fears which had always made the white population of South Africa very anxious. One was the fear of intermingling, of miscegenation, and the other was that of being swamped by the sheer numerical strength of the Africans. He would have been more honest—and so would the rest of South Africa which thinks like him—if, on this fear of being swamped, which has led to so much half-baked talk of segregation, he had said (using the words which Piet Retief's daughter used when explaining why the Dutch Boers trekked out of the Cape in the 1830s): "It is not so much their [the slaves'] freedom that drove us to such lengths as their being placed on an equal footing with Christians".

The Act securing equal rights with other citizens for the Hottentots of the Cape Colony was passed in 1828. The Emancipation Act of 1833 abolishing slavery in Britain's nineteen slave-owning colonies finally convinced the Cape Dutch frontiersmen that they must escape from British rule. These

Colonists had long been unhappy about government of any sort. Through isolation they had become a peasant aristocracy owning large tracts of land and cattle and numerous slaves. They wished to retain that way of life. So they escaped. And they went on escaping from the rule of law till the immensities of Africa swallowed up their trails and they found themselves high and dry on the vast upland plateau of the Free State and Transvaal. But still, like a remorseless Hound of Heaven, the law, as symbolised by the British, followed them into their new fastnesses. It came in the guise of missionaries and prospectors, hunters and traders. Presently it came dressed as a soldier, and through two Anglo-Boer Wars helped to make an Afrikaner *volk* out of the scattered plainmen. The *volk* submitted. But that did not mean they must sacrifice the isolationist ideals which had first made them trek. Ignorant though they might be of a changing world, they had the shrewd, stiff-necked simplicity of the peasant in a unique measure, and a code of conduct which had developed peculiarities all its own through long years of infiltration into lands which were sporadically occupied by half-naked, unlettered heathens whose deadliest weapon was the spear. Without books, and with only rare contact with the outside world, with its scientists, poets, thinkers, philosophers, music, arts, industry and the spreading gospel of the rights of the working classes, these crude, virile men of Africa, with their backs to the Limpopo River, had at last to make their peace with that rule of law they had so long eluded.

Harder still, they had to try to accommodate themselves to a new way of life with ideas about the treatment of Africans which were alien to all their ingrained doctrines and experience as lords and masters over great ranches and much cheap labour. They are still, many of them, trying to fathom the intricacies of urban and industrial living, and seeking in segregation for the African the escape from the realities and responsibilities on which they can no longer turn their backs, because there is no more territory in Africa into which they can trek. On this historic basis is founded the "colour-madness" of the Afrikaner section of white South Africa. Like all race creeds, it is a potent one. Its infection has spread far and deep throughout the civic and legislative structure of the country, and even flaunts itself now as a special brand of true-blue South Africanism to which ethics and a Liberal humanitarian approach must bow the head.

Before discussing the escapism of the segregation pipe-

dream, a word first on race purity and the first of Hertzog's fears—*i.e.*, miscegenation. It is quite true, as Roy Campbell has said, that "Britons and Boers have found it easy enough in the past to jump over the colour bar to gratify themselves sensually". The existence in the Cape Province of a Coloured "nation" of mixed blood totalling 813,190, in a little over nine generations is "no mean miscegenatory achievement". As one old Cape colonist in the slave-owning days who left behind forty half-caste descendants used to say: "When I want a smart slave, then I beget him". Quaint evidence of the robust, uninhibited ways of our forebears has come down in the old chronicles of travellers and visitors. Dr. Andrew Sparrman, for example, in his *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope*, published in London in 1785, describes how, travelling in the Paarl district near Cape Town, he met a farmer who "gave me a list (which by his desire, I took down in my pocketbook, as a result of his own experience) of the constant order of precedence in love which ought to be observed among the fair sex. This was as follows. First, the Madagascar women who are the blackest and handsomest, next to these the Malabars, then the Bugunese or Malays. . . ."

Bantu traits among the South African European population are, one might say, a commonplace. A biological analysis of race mixtures made by Mr. George Findlay (the only booklet I know of in South Africa on this fascinating but neglected theme) concludes that among the 1,900,000 classed as Europeans in the 1935 census there were 500,000 "escapes". Among these, as is common knowledge, are "many well-established and respectable families". Indeed, the more one examines the race-structure of South Africa's population the more difficult is it to accept as traditional the white group's aversion to fusion. Certainly such study makes ridiculous the ceaseless reiteration and emphasis on "European" and "non-European" which confront the stranger on every bus-stop seat and every station. White South Africa in the older families is no more 100 per cent "European" than old American stock.

- Olive Schreiner, a great woman and great humanitarian, punctured this piece of polite fiction many years ago when she wrote:—

"It is strange how many of the leading men in South Africa have dark blood! That's the curious part of it all. If - people with one-fourth or one-tenth of dark blood can say



they will not have a man of half-dark or half-light blood sitting beside them in Parliament, why have not we, who have pure European descent (both our parents coming from Europe) the right to say: 'We will not sit with you! You are not of pure European descent!'

The presence of dark blood in families accepted as white or "European" is a favourite drawing-room topic throughout South Africa, at least among Europeans of the first generation. And in view of the exclusive social and economic privileges which are regarded as the white man's natural possessions (no matter how low in the scale of society he may have fallen), is it any wonder that the number of young Coloured people who "try *vir Europeane*" (as they put it) is a considerable factor in population trends? The legal restraints on marriages between white and black are curiously one-sided in favour of the miscegenatory activities of the whites.<sup>1</sup> But in any event, as a legal authority has pointed out, the Immorality Act of 1927, under which illicit intercourse between white and black is an offence, completely fails in its intention because "primary miscegenation fades into relative significance besides the more important issues as to the mating trends of the coloured people on either side of the colour bar, and apparently the legislation little dreams that the unions of four quadroons-white with the pure stock are the precise fusion-equivalent of the legal union of one white person with one native".

Legal marriages between white and black are extremely rare. According to biologists like the late Dr. C. Louis Leipoldt, the Afrikaans poet and author, the mischief has been done and, short of mass immigration, South Africa's future as a "piebald country" is assured. Even among those who have kept their blood pure, he says, a South African type is developing which is "getting ever closer to the Coloured physique in every way".

For many South Africans who keep up the popular pretence that this question of coloured blood is confined to the Cape, where the old-timers frolicked too freely among their handmaids, these words I have just written will be very hard to swallow. Hertzog's miscegenation fear is deep-rooted now in the psyche of the Afrikaner *volk* and sanctified in the type of Christianity preached by all three branches of the Dutch Re-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Southern Rhodesia, where white intercourse with black women is lightly regarded, but where it is a serious crime for a black man to consort with a white woman.

formed Church (a potent rallying point for anti-colour sentiment and parochialism in many spheres of life, especially politics). "No equality between black and white in Church or State", was a basic principle of the Transvaal Republic of 1858. Despite the smallness, then, of the mixed blood section, a Republican constitution drafted in 1844 had in it thirty-three articles repeating the following clause: "No person of mixed race shall be able to sit in our meetings as member or judge, down to the tenth degree".

The effect of this anti-colour complex is reflected in the census figures showing the number of Christian converts made among the non-Europeans (mostly Africans). The Dutch Reformed Church, with 1,000,000 white adherents, claimed (in the 1930s) only 276,000 converts. The Methodists, with 105,200 white followers, had 730,000 non-white supporters, and the Anglican Church, although only one-third as large on the white side as the Dutch Reformed Church, has well over 200,000 more non-whites in the fold. The Dutch Churches, despite their long start, came late in the mission-field. Too tardily have they realised that by making Heaven "for Europeans only" they have alienated a fruitful sphere of recruitment.

They are handicapped by their Old Testament bigotry and their "curse-of-Ham" doctrine, which they use to explain their race antipathies, ignoring the historical fact that the curse in question did not, in any event, come down as a dictat from on high. When you can get religion on your side to explain away your prejudices, then there is really no limit you can set to human intolerance.<sup>1</sup> The hatred of missionaries, especially English missionaries, by the Boers has deep roots. It persists in more subtle forms to-day as between the Churches, and with a special suspicion reserved for Roman Catholic institutions, because they have done so much among the Africans and, in a South African sense, are seriously lacking in anti-colour consciousness.

Yet, despite these torts and malfeasances, which have created a pathological flaw in the Afrikaner character (in which I include the race prejudice of the Natal British-descended group as well as the predominantly Dutch settlers of the Free State and Transvaal), the history of the three northern Provinces, wherein race-hatred has congealed, contains much odd com-

<sup>1</sup> In 1947 the Dutch Reformed Church could speak of cremation as "heaven" and "a sin of unbelief and the love child of liberalism".

mentary on how the old Adam works, pulpit or no pulpit. The very first Transvaaler—Coenraad de Buys—set a notorious example, originally as a frontier farmer in the Eastern Cape Province, and later when he trekked into the upper regions of what was to become the Transvaal Republic. His coloured descendants, numbering more than 200, occupy farms below the Zoutpansberg, and still hope for the day when they will be accepted as white.

I am not, let me interpolate, trying to imply that cross-breeding between white and black in the northern Provinces has ever been on any large scale. But it is equally foolish, as with so many South Africans, to pretend that such things have not gone on, and that the Coloured problem is simply confined to the Cape. Yet I notice that in 1945, during the House of Assembly session, General Smuts took time out to explain that although in the old Cape Colony the early settlers had erred "as a result of laxity", there was really no Coloured problem in the northern Provinces, because the European race had kept itself pure. The 1946 census figures show that in the Transvaal there are 55,270 people of mixed blood. Natal has over 20,000 and the Free State 18,000. These are the ones actually registered. Can it be possible that when General Smuts was speaking he had forgotten that in 1929 Hertzog had laid before a joint sitting of the two Houses a Coloured Persons Rights Bill designed to give those living outside the Cape, where they had full political rights, the collective right to send a representative to the House? Hertzog's Bill was withdrawn before any debate. So the position remains that the many thousands of Coloured people of the three northern Provinces, to whom Hertzog eighteen years ago wished to do justice and include among the whites "industrially, economically and politically", still have no franchise rights anywhere—in the cities, the Provinces or Parliament.

The Coloured people's sorry position would make a story to itself. "Let us give them the benefit of their bit of white blood", said one High Commissioner. In the Cape they have had some benefit from it. They are still a long way from possessing the same rights as those white South Africa regards as its daily democratic due.

But it is time to consider the second of the two white fears—the fear of being swamped, and for which the answer of Hertzog, the Nationalist Party and the many who think like them, is segregation.

At its highest level this pipe-dream pictures the African advancing in civilisation in his own piece of South Africa (size and position never specified), without obtruding at all into white society or importuning it with the usual demands of a civilised man, such as a vote, a right to speak in civic, Provincial and national affairs, the right to acquire skill, the right to schooling, and the right to sit, sleep and travel in perfect freedom from molestation in his own country. At its lower level it is a dream of the African, always subservient, always the hewer of wood and drawer of water, always on tap if you shout, always ready to call you *baas*—master—always ready to efface or segregate himself either in his *kya*—hut—at the bottom of the garden, in his odorous location on the edge of the town, or among the boulders and thorn-bushes of his Reserve.

There exists, as will already be plain, enough social and political segregation to make an enticing mirage of almost any kind of separation which will put off the evil day when democratic rights have to be conceded to the already considerable group of middle-class and lower-middle-class Africans. As a political creed segregation took statutory form soon after Union in the 1913 Land Act defining areas in which Africans only could reside—*i.e.*, the Reserves. Its urban equivalent arrived in 1923 as the Urban Areas Act. This law was so inadequate for its purpose that hardly a year has passed without a new patch being added in the way of fresh amendments. By 1945 it had been amended so many times that one lawyer has produced a 300-page handbook to explain its workings to municipal and State officials who have to administer it. (I have not heard that any copies of this handy work were ever distributed among the hundreds of thousands of town-living Africans who are supposed to conform to all its tormented details.)

After the 1913 and 1923 Acts came the 1936 Native Bills, with their accent on political segregation. Their failure to meet the existing situation was admitted, as I have shown, by General Smuts, who voted for them. Although he only moved in the matter, so far as the Natives Representative Council was concerned, in 1947, Smuts had already told a public audience in Cape Town in January, 1942, that “segregation—the policy of keeping Europeans and Africans completely apart for their own self-preservation”—had failed. He continued:—

“How could it be otherwise? The whole trend both in this

country and throughout Africa has been in the opposite direction. The whole movement of development here on this continent has been for closer contacts to be established between the various races and the various sections of the community. Isolation has gone in South Africa and it has gone for good. To-day, if you discuss a question like the Native question—the question which we are discussing to-night—you cannot look at it merely from the South African point of view. If you touch this question, you touch Africa, because in this generation this continent has made enormous strides—an enormous march forward towards contacts which we had never dreamt of. . . .”

These are simple truths already known to every white South African whose head is not buried in the sand. But, like so many simple truths, these do not acquire force and point until someone high in authority makes the discovery for himself. But still the segregationists, or those believing in what the Nationalists call *apartheid*, or separateness, enjoy the vague, uncritical support of thousands of people who, if they only sat down and worked out what South Africa would be like without African labour in all its manifold usages and with 100 per cent segregation working, would realise that it is never likely to get beyond the theory stage. In fact it is far easier in most phases of industry and commerce and other spheres to find convergence, overlapping and a community of interest than it is to find reasons for division.

Great national prominence was given in the Press early in 1947 to an article by the Rev. J. G. Strydom, general mission secretary for the Dutch Reformed Church, in which he propounded his segregation solution for the “problem”, which he had arrived at after living for forty years alongside the matter. This was virtually an *ex cathedra* announcement, and therefore deserves critical scrutiny. Mr. Strydom visualised the creation of three Black Provinces: (1) Transkei and Basutoland (the neighbouring British Protectorate); (2) Zululand and Swaziland (British Protectorate adjoining Zululand); (3) North-west Transvaal and the Bechuanaland Protectorate. These Provinces would be given “more or less” the same rights as those of an American State. Later they could have their own Parliament. However, total separation was not contemplated: “The Black man will come in large numbers to work in the European provinces as labourers, but it will not be their father-

land . . . the Union will have control over external affairs, railways, posts and telegraphs, customs, war and so on . . ." in the new Black Provinces.

This may sound attractive. But consider some of the snags raised. First of all the incorporation of the three Protectorates with South African Native areas requires the consent of the British Government, which, though not against the idea of South Africa absorbing them eventually, is also pledged not to transfer them without consultation with the 1,000,000 African people involved. Of the three, only Swaziland has made overtures to the Union within the last twenty years. Though each of them is tied almost hand-and-foot to South Africa economically, the African people regard the Union as a bad place for laws where the only compensation for a spell of work is that wages are better than in their own more backward territories.

Mr. Strydom's plan appeared to take it for granted that the Protectorates are short of population. In ratio to their fertility of land, rainfall and other relevant factors this is not so. In an article I contributed to the national Press on this latest version of the segregation fallacy I wrote:—

"The Rev. J. G. Strydom, as all segregationists, would like to have the best of two worlds. He wants to have cheap native labour available to wash his clothes, look after his children, deliver his groceries, dig the gold that balances the national budget, mend the roads he drives his car along, and dig his grave when he is gathered to his fathers. But he wishes, at the same time, to avoid all the responsibilities of handling a working-class population and seeing it progress by creating for it an ordered structure of opportunity such as is normal in a democratic society."

This analysis had interesting repercussions. It drew from several Afrikaans-speaking writers, including two experts from the Bantu Studies Department of Stellenbosch University (a hot-bed of anti-African feeling and a good many other antis, too), declarations favouring complete or partial segregation as the only solution. I took occasion, in replying to the Stellenbosch academicians, to remind them that another of their Professors, by the name of Cilliers, had produced, in 1943, a much more original segregation plan than any of theirs. It was no less than that "at the peace conference South Africa should seek the co-operation of other nations in reserving Central Africa as a future home of the Bantu".

The Professor, with a *naïveté* unsurpassed among all the segregationists I have ever heard, said this Central African home was needed because we could never afford to give the Bantu a "square deal", as they would surely swamp us. Another view which endorsed all I have said declared that

"talk of segregation is not so much a pipe-dream as a rationalisation. The underlying motive, stripped of all blah, is to 'keep the Kaffir in his place'. The rest is disguise. . . . Segregation is quite hopeless as a practical measure but it does have a practical significance. It diverts our minds from the urgent need for reforms. If we can get everyone to agree that segregation is the only solution, we need not bother any more about improving conditions for the Africans in our midst. As they will not be remaining with us, it would be foolish to build more schools or houses for them. There is no need to worry: it will all come right with segregation. . . ."

I rounded off my argument with the Professors from Stellenbosch by suggesting that at future prize-givings they ensure that copies of books on our race problems by another Professor who once taught in the Cape, and began his higher education at Stellenbosch, be distributed. His name is Professor W. M. Macmillan, from whose pages I offered Stellenbosch this sample quotation:—

"The future of the Union and of all Africa would be brighter if a tithe of the energy that is now spending itself in an unreal attempt to separate them (black and white) were diverted to making smoother the working-out of their inevitable partnership."

## CHAPTER IX

### SMUTS THE SCHIZOPHRENIC

"It ought to be the policy of all parties to do justice to the Natives and to take all wise and prudent measures for their civilisation and improvement. But I don't believe in politics for them. Perhaps at bottom I don't believe in politics at all as a means for the attainment of the highest ends: but certainly so far as the Natives are concerned politics will, to my mind, only have an unsettling influence. . . . When I consider the political future of the Natives of South Africa I must say that I look into shadows and darkness, and then I feel inclined to shift the intolerable burden of solving that

sphinx problem to the ampler shoulders and stronger brains of the future. . . .”—SMUTS, in a letter to John X. Merriman, Premier, Cape Colony, in March, 1906.

“Jannie [Smuts] has the most extraordinary faith in words. I wonder if he thinks they must represent things. He ought to have been a great lawyer and nothing else.”—OLIVE SCHREINER; letter to husband, 1902.

SMUTS THE schizophrenic is a fascinating subject for any historian. The rock upon which his personality has split is the race question. The world knows him as scientist, statesman, soldier, philosopher. Africa knows him as a tough old Boer autocrat of a small but strategically important Dominion, who, at seventy-seven, has outlived his time. In a century which has seen the rise of a vast Socialist State and doctrine and the emergence of a black proletariat and middle-class population under his eyes, he survives as a period piece monumentally embalmed in fustian.

Olive Schreiner thought he had too much faith in words. But word-spinning is the politician's stock-in-trade. When I read yet another speech of Smuts I think of that passage in *Through the Looking Glass*:—

“‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.’ ‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean different things.’ ‘The question is,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master—that’s all.’”

Smuts has been substituting words for progress in the sphere of Native affairs for four decades. And his meeting in May, 1947, with the disgruntled Native Representative Councillors in Cape Town shows that he is still doing his verbal conjuring-act at the old stand. In 1906, in the letter quoted at the head of this chapter, he says he does not believe in politics for Africans. He peered into the future (his reputation as a prophet was as yet unmade) and he saw only “shadows and darkness”. He wished to shift “the intolerable burden of solving that sphinx problem to the ampler shoulders and stronger brains of the future. . . .” For a young man of thirty-six with a public career ahead of him this was a decision which might well have been a load on his conscience. It did not disturb the young Smuts’ slumbers, any more than he appeared concerned thirty-seven years later when he told an audience at Port Elizabeth that in 1908, at the National Convention which led to the



Union of South Africa, he took the line that the Native question "should go into the suspense account". That, he said, was still his view in 1943.

Outside the missions South Africa has yet to produce its white martyrs for the cause of African freedom. Smuts, whatever his young visions, did not include one of himself as a champion of the rights of his black fellow countrymen. They were, and have remained for him, as they have for most of Afrikaans-speaking South Africa, "inferior beings". The blood of slave-owners was in Smuts' veins. He came of farming stock in a district of the Cape where the hunting of Bushmen had been a pastime for the gentry. He made a name for himself in the Transvaal Republic of Oom Paul Kruger, which had been created so many years before by Voortrekkers and Natrekkers, to whom the flowering of a Liberal spirit in the Cape was a stench in the nostrils. "No equality between white and black in Church or in State" was the Transvaal policy. The African people as a factor in politics did not exist outside the Cape Province.

In the Cape the civilisation test, giving the franchise to Africans who were literate and possessed a low wage or property qualification, had been operating for forty years, and had worked reasonably well. The white electorate had not been swamped, and the franchise had provided the necessary "safety-valve" for the Coloureds and for a top-section of African people emerging from rural and often heathen backwardness. No such recognition existed for millions of Africans in the two Boer States of the Free State (or Orange River Colony as it was then) and the Transvaal, while in the true-blue British Colony of Natal the much-vaunted Shepstone policy had been designed, as Merriman and earlier critics at the Cape declared, "to keep the Native in a state of barbarism".

John X. Merriman deserves more than passing mention. He was a grand type of Cape Liberal, a "man of Parliament", of English stock, who had in him a spirit of justice, humanity and fair play without any diminution of his independent South African Colonial outlook. The second half of the nineteenth century produced a crop of such men in the mixed society of the Cape, and they were as solid a group of high-principled, fine-grained statesmen as ever any young Dominion has produced. Such men, of the calibre of Rose-Innes, Sauer, Schreiner, Solomon, Hofmeyr (uncle of the present Deputy

Premier), indulged in few mental or physical treks away from the colour problem. Their approach was as realistic as it was democratic. With proper safeguards, they made the rights and privileges of civilisation an accessible goal for all non-whites. They did not slam the door on colour and bolt and bar it, as did the two northern Republics. They did not seek to evade their responsibilities by vain truckling with segregation or by piling legal barrier on top of legal barrier. They saw their mixed society as a composite whole, not as divided fragments which could be treated separately or neglected, as circumstance suited.

With this cardinal difference of colour feeling, the prospects of Union between the Cape Colony, the northern Republics and Natal were bound to be perilous. The exploratory letters before Union in 1910 which were exchanged by Merriman and Smuts (then second-in-command to Louis Botha in the Transvaal) reveal that Merriman adhered to his earlier belief that the franchise could not, and should not be withheld from the African, provided he could pass a high franchise test. The young Smuts only saw "shadows and darkness". Old Merriman said:—

"So far from its [the franchise] leading to any immediate danger it will be generations before the European political supremacy will be menaced, while it does undoubtedly not only safeguard the rights of the inferior race but also gives them a content which puts an end to the political unrest that any unrepresented population always will have."

Lord Selborne, the British High Commissioner in South Africa, felt the same. He told Merriman that he was looking for a general Native and Coloured franchise based on a civilisation test.

Notwithstanding these views, which were freely expressed, the stubborn Dutch Republican anti-colour views of the Smuts and Botha group prevailed. The non-white franchise was entrenched in the Cape Province, and a historic precedent for side-stepping the African as a political issue established. For Smuts it was a personal triumph of tactics, and the first of a long series of evasions of Africa's greatest problem. The Voortrekkers had trekked away from it. The founders of the Republics had legislated against it. Now Smuts had helped to place it in the suspense account. Onlookers thought his

strategy excellent. African leaders who in vain had sent a deputation to London said: "That cow of Great Britain has run dry".

At Union, with Merriman dished by intrigue of being the first Premier of South Africa, the Botha-Smuts combination was firmly in the saddle. Botha, a successful Boer general and farmer, who was apt to judge a man's status by the number of sheep he owned, was first Prime Minister. Smuts was his right-hand man. They shared a simple Dutch approach to Africans. The first article of their creed was that political power must remain with the whites for ever. To them this was a plain matter of self-preservation. As an after-thought Botha was capable of saying that it was for the good of the Natives that it should be so. Smuts had the same colour creed, but it had begun to take subtler forms after his series of tussles with a little, round-shouldered Indian lawyer of the name of Gandhi, who was also on the edge of an international career. Gandhi's early experiments in passive resistance baffled and enraged Smuts. He had to make concessions. But he made them verbally. He did not keep them all. And he persisted in building a legislative wall round the Transvaal, keeping out more Indian immigrants.

The "problem" after 1910 was still largely in the suspense account. But not quite. There were labour troubles on the gold-mines which involved black as well as white miners. The town-working Africans were the vanguard of the new black proletariat. The combination of colour and working classes was to become an increasing affront to the Boer in Smuts. But in 1913 the Africans were still a docile element. Before they showed their heads in the mines' strike, Smuts had had to make terms with the white strike leaders. "This was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life," he told his friends, "to put my signature on that document together with that of Mr. Bain." He had his revenge a few months later. His enemies credit him with helping to foster a Labour outbreak that enabled him to declare martial law, step in with troops, grab the nine white miner ring-leaders and whisk them illegally out of the country by way of Durban.

Smuts blamed "syndicalism" for that strike. In 1907, when he had used British garrison troops to force miners on the Rand back to work (the technique was used again in 1913), he had said: "I cannot agree to any Socialism". So far Smuts the statesman had not emerged either locally or abroad, and if he

had to depend on his South African reputation, he would still be minus the title. He acquired it first in the later days of the Great War of 1914-18. The build-up came from Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, who used the bearded, active ex-enemy Boer General as a picturesque tonic to a jaded, war-weary, rationed, blacked-out London. England has long had a genius for forgiving those whom she has grievously wronged. The ex-enemy with hand outstretched was an irresistible sporting spectacle. Smuts played his part well. (History repeated itself twenty-five years after in the 1939-45 war.)

But his sojourn in Europe at the time of the Russian Revolution, and with the clear stirrings of a working-class movement all about him, did not alter his outlook. He was an Uncommon Man. He wanted no truck with Common Men and men who talked of a century of the Common Man. If Smuts saw any writing on the wall, it was in red—Moscow red. Bolshevism was the greatest menace. Only a strong Germany could be a bulwark against the spread of the Communist doctrine. (He revived the argument in the 1939-45 war, with trifling modifications.)

He returned to a South Africa which was also, in its non-white labouring classes, beginning to show some ferment of the spirit. Botha died in 1919, and Smuts, the confidant of kings, the maker of phrases which Woodrow Wilson, himself no mean phrase-maker, did not disdain from borrowing, returned to the bickerings of his parochially-minded countrymen and a white democratic system he had never really believed in, and into which he could not conceive anyone with a dark skin being admitted.

Between 1919 and 1924, when he temporarily went out of power, Smuts had a rare opportunity for the exercise of those qualities of statesmanship which London had been acclaiming in him. But Smuts at home and Smuts abroad were no longer the same man. He had tasted the sweets of celebrityhood, and vanity was all about him. The local boy had more than made good: he had been made a god. The "problem" chose this time, when he was at the peak of his arrogance, to show its unsavoury dark head. On the Rand 70,000 black miners came out on strike, as usual asking for more pay. Port Elizabeth had a strike of African workers, too. Other, less familiar manifestations of African unrest occurred. At a place called Bull Hoek, near Queenstown, a dissenting religious sect gathered together on land not theirs and awaited the end of the world. Nor

would they disperse until the trumpets of Judgment Day had sounded. On a less spectacular note, a tribe of Hottentots at Bondelswaart, in the mandated territory of South-West Africa, refused to pay their taxes, and revolted.

Here is Smuts' record of domestic statesmanship during this period, which also included the 1922 revolt on the Rand mines. The 70,000 black miners were driven back to work without any increases. In Port Elizabeth, where the strikers resisted, sixty-eight were shot. The religious sect was dispersed not by Jehovah's trumpets, but by volleys of rifles and machine-gun bullets which laid low 300. The South-West African revolt, which, in a military sense was as important as a fly buzzing on the window-pane of Smuts' office in Union Buildings, Pretoria, was crushed by aeroplane-bombing attacks. (The League of Nations Mandates Commission, when it called for a report, received one which it found to be unacceptable.)

Later, when Smuts, wearing this time his philosopher's toga, produced a book expounding his "philosophy" of "Holism", the South African poet Roy Campbell hailed the occasion in an apt quatrain:—

"The love of Nature burning in his heart  
Our new Saint Francis offers us his book—  
The saint who fed the birds at Bondelswaart,  
And fattened up the vultures at Bull Hoek."

His most savage outburst against "humanity-on-the-march", which he only knew as a phrase, and which he did not wish to understand or conciliate, was reserved, however, for the 1922 strike of the Rand white miners. The seeds of future internal Labour conflict sprouted here aside from the civil war between Labour and Capital. Some mines tried to replace white labour with black. This threw petrol on the revolt. Smuts watched the blaze. Then he stepped in with troops, 20,000 of them, aeroplanes and armoured cars.

In Parliament, where he found time to congratulate himself on a brisk job in which 230 were killed, he told critics: "We are building a nation". He was also venting the rage of an autocrat against the harsh yelping of the underdog. For him "the chastisement of hubris", in Shaw's phrase, came when his South African Party lost a by-election in a Transvaal dorp in 1924, and in pique he called for a general election. Followed a few years in the uneasy role of Opposition leader, which gave him leisure to produce his book on "Holism", which, so far as I have been able to discover, has been read by only one of his

countrymen, and that is his biographer and would-be female Boswell, Sarah Gertrude Millin.

He lost the 1929 General Election against Hertzog, who used the African as a bogey-man and Smuts as "the apostle of a Kaffir dominion", and then departed overseas to catch up on his role of Elder Statesman and peddle a few nostrums on Africa in the form of the Rhodes Memorial Lectures delivered at Oxford in 1929.

These lectures, which were later published in book form, are not lacking in truisms. Smuts's ability to practise what Christopher Morley called the art of the columnist and "stroke a platitude till it purrs like an epigram" is one which has long endeared him to newspaper folk. These lectures, which included one on "Native Policy in Africa", abound in sentences like this: "What is wanted in Africa to-day is a wise, far-sighted Native policy. If we could evolve and pursue a policy which will promote the cause of civilisation in Africa, without injustice to the African, without injury to what is typical and special to the African, we shall render a great service to the cause of humanity."

That sort of platform piety can always be calculated to raise a round of applause. And it is rounds of applause that politicians batten on. Speaking in far-off Britain, or lecturing in America, Smuts can invisibly fold his hands and approve or deplore the course of events in Africa. He speaks as if he were an onlooker, someone above the battlefield. He looks at Africa—and his own South Africa—from the heights of Table Mountain (which he often climbs and sometimes refers to as "my cathedral"), and shakes his wise old silvery head at the follies and mistakes mankind is making there. From time to time, in case we, the audience, should imagine that the wings of his vision have taken him too far above his native heath, he mentions lines of progress. So in these Rhodes Lectures he tells his Oxford audience that "His [Rhodes'] provision of individual agriculture holdings has been a great success, and has been a principal means of Native advance when it has been adopted in the Union". The only success which has attended the Rhodes' scheme as it has worked out in the Transkei and elsewhere is that it has ensured that the plots are so small, and the system of tenure so constricted, that the young men are bound to go out to work in the towns. Glen Grey district, where the scheme first began, is one of the poorest in the whole of the poor Ciskei.

"The main object of the Glen Grey legislation," continues the sage at Oxford, "was, however, to give the Native his own institutions for his self-development and self-government." And "after the new system had worked successfully and with ever-increasing efficiency for 25 years I thought the time ripe in 1920 to extend it to the whole of the Union. . . ."

In 1947—that is, twenty-seven years after Smuts decided on this magnanimous step—the position is that among all the Transvaal locations there are nine district councils, and in all Natal and Zululand only two. The answer to this anomaly was provided in an earlier chapter by Senator Campbell, when he caustically referred to the annual bafflement expressed by the Native Affairs Department that the district council system has failed to spread outside the eroded Ciskei and the impoverished Transkei.

Smuts went on to describe how "schools for the training of chiefs in leadership exist in South Africa. . . ." At the time he was speaking there existed one—the Zulu National Training Institute, with a maximum enrollment of sixty. It failed soon after. It has not been revived, nor have any other such institutions been started nor are any likely to be started, because the kind of leadership which is required of a South African native chief anyway is at best not worth more than a few dollars a month. The local Native Commissioner is the real chief of the district, and the Africans know it, just as the Commissioner runs the district councils, which Smuts would like outsiders to believe are a system of educating African leaders in the arts of self-government. J. H. Oldham, a respected missionary publicist, answered all these inaccuracies in detail in his little book *White and Black in Africa*.

At a later point in the same lecture Smuts made a handsome confession: "In not setting aside sufficient areas in South Africa in the past, we committed a grievous mistake which is at the root of most of our difficulties in Native policy". However, things had been managed better for the urbanised Natives because South Africa had set aside Native villages or locations where the Natives "took part in or run their own local self-government". In practice these local Native Advisory Boards are completely effete.<sup>1</sup> Their chairman is automatically the location white superintendent, who, like the commissioner, runs

<sup>1</sup> The Board at Orlando, the biggest Native township in South Africa, adjourned indefinitely in June 1947 because its functions had never been defined.

the show. In the eyes of urbanised Natives they have long been discredited. The Non-European Affairs Departments of cities like Johannesburg, which are notoriously backward in their provision for urban Africans, are equally convinced about their futility.

Smuts passes lightly on to "unhappy attempts" to introduce a colour bar into South African legislation with the aim of confining the African to unskilled jobs only. The attempts, however, he says, failed. "The inherent economic difficulties of such a distribution of industrial functions, the universal objection of the native workers, and the sense of fair play among the whites. . . ." were the stumbling-blocks. The fact remains that despite these inherent economic difficulties and the undoubted objection of the Native workers—but not the sense of fair play of the whites—the Native is precluded from acquiring skill to lift himself out of the drudgery of doing all the heavy manual labour, and even of doing semi-skilled work, even when he proves his competence to perform it.

From this thin ice Smuts takes off in an airy excursion into the possibilities of parallelism, which is another name for segregation, and which makes great play with the "sacredness" of African institutions. At this point Smuts discovered a serious discrepancy. His first lecture had stressed the importance of creating a white "backbone" right up Africa as the most potent way to civilise the African. Now in lecture No. 2 he found himself arguing the need to preserve African institutions, organisation and social discipline. Smuts was not at a loss. So long as there was territorial segregation—"parallelism"—the African would be a migrant labourer, coming out of his Reserve to work for a white man and leaving his wife and family to flourish in the kraal on traditional lines. "The male adults, fathers and sons, will no doubt imbibe new ideas in their white employment, but their social system will not suffer on that account." This argument has been discredited, especially in recent years, on every plane from the physical to the spiritual, from the moral to the economic. It is a fairy-tale that even the conservative elements in South Africa no longer believe in. But it makes nice listening over the water, except among those writers and experts, like Julian Huxley, who happen to have surveyed southern Africa with something more than a tourist's eye.

On Smuts' blissful picture of migrant labour as a policy for preserving African institutions and ensuring the supply of cheap labour Dr. Huxley says in *Africa View*:—



“I cannot imagine any proposal more calculated to hinder the development of a stable African civilisation than a system which would always ensure that a large proportion (for with intensive white settlement it would be a large proportion) of married Native men would be separated from their wives and homes for six or even three months out of every twelve, and that the Native villages would always contain a large proportion of grass widows.”

Dr. Huxley does not know South Africa's Reserves, where as many as 75 per cent of the able-bodied men are away for periods up to thirteen months, or he would have expressed himself far more strongly on the perniciousness of the Smuts' fallacy. The logic of the position, since segregation has failed so completely, is surely to accept as inevitable the destruction of the purely African way of life, and to try to ensure that in its place are implanted good understanding, respect and liking for white institutions. On this point Dr. Huxley has a passage worth repeating:—

“Europe cannot have it both ways. If we rule in Africa by virtue of some white superiority, we must expect the natives of Africa to take our ideas and methods as worthy of imitation: if we educate them to think for themselves about their agriculture and their trades and their local administration, we must remember that the different parts and activities of mind are by no means thought-tight, and must expect them to use their brains on other and more general topics; if by granting special facilities to Christian missions we give it to be understood that Christianity is the religion of which Europe approves, we must expect Native converts to take us *au pied de la lettre*, to try and puzzle out the application of Christian principles to their 20th-century African problems, and to put pressing questions concerning the Christian doctrine of the universal brotherhood of all men. When you have encouraged the child to grow up, you must not expect him to remain a child.”

But to get back to Smuts. The adulation of the academic world in England and lecture-minded America was a balm to a politician who had no new slogans to attract lost votes to his Party. But other influences brought him back into the African spotlight. Drought and the gold standard forced Hertzog into the position of treating with his old enemy, and in 1933, out

of that reluctant partnership, emerged the Fusionists, or United Party, with Hertzog still Prime Minister and Smuts as his deputy.

Hertzog could now prepare the ground for the passing of his Native Bills, which he looked upon as his lifework. Smuts went overseas again to accept the Rectorship of St. Andrews University in Scotland and deliver his famous oration on "Freedom". *The Times* greeted this as a "masterly survey" of the European scene. It was October, 1934. Hitler was beginning to show the hairy heel, and Smuts had some chaste rebukes to administer to the "new Dictatorship" which was "nothing but the old Tyranny writ large". Tyranny, he told his audience, was infectious, and quoted Burke. From his knowledge (and conduct) of South African affairs he might as easily have quoted Marvell:—

"Nature hath put this tincture in the blood  
That each man would be tyrant if he could."

Smuts said he was not against new experiments in government, but the Continental changes were wrong because "they are all based on a denial of liberty—not as a temporary expedient, but on principle. . . . The denial of free human rights must in the long run lead to a cataclysm. . . . To suppose that in the modern world you can dispense with freedom in human government, that you can govern without the free consent the governed, is to fly in the face of decent human nature as well as the facts of history".

Smuts returned to South Africa in good time to vote for the 1936 Native Bills of Hertzog, which represent, in the darkening pages of the statute-book, its muddiest effort to "fly in the face of decent human nature as well as the facts of history".

Came the war in 1939, when the loyalty and muscles of the patient African people had to be courted afresh. The State need not have worried. The Africans still had, and have, vestiges of a code of honour and obedience, too. They also were South Africans, and if their country was indeed threatened, they needed less prodding than a large section of the dominant white population. They answered the recruiting calls. They drilled readily, even enthusiastically. Not, of course, with guns. The section of the white people who were most vociferous for a Hitler victory made themselves hoarse over the possibility of Africans drilling with guns. So the Africans marched on the parade-grounds with spears. They went

where they were told. They did not withdraw when Smuts had to frame a new oath which would permit his couple of divisions of white volunteers to fight outside Africa. The Africans went north to the Middle East and Italy when required. They did the scavenging jobs and stretcher-bearing and lorry-driving. Their loyalty did not waver. Zeesen, the German short-wave station, nightly talked to them, urging revolt against their white overlords. But they produced no traitors, while the white population hatched a dozen or more. They went on with their lowly jobs, and, when the opportunity came—as it did in a number of war factories—they undertook work which sometimes involuntarily fell within the forbidden category of skilled. They flooded the seaports of Durban and Cape Town, seeking the higher wages of war-time industry. They squatted in their thousands along the Cape Flats below Table Mountain, and in the glens and on the hillsides adjoining strategic Durban. Emergency war measures were passed to check them congregating in certain towns. Half-hearted efforts were made in the Transkei and Ciskei to prevent them from buying rail tickets to the Cape. (But they could always walk all the way, as some do.)

The yeast of war fermented among them—among those who stayed behind and those who sailed north. Smuts, the handyman of the Empire, as his Afrikaans-speaking Nationalist opponents often refer to him, was busy between Pretoria and Cairo, and Cairo and London. He flew kites for Churchill. He dabbled in Middle East strategy. He was ready to say “ditto” to Churchill in 2,000 words at the shortest notice. He was a Field-Marshal now. The “old, hard-bitten campaigner”, as he liked to picture himself, was never out of uniform, and seldom out of the local news. Sometimes, indeed, to the South African who read his morning newspaper faithfully it seemed as if the war only proceeded in a series of interludes between visits of the seer of Table Mountain to his black cloth and crystal ball. With life tuned to this global pitch, the Native “problem” receded lower in the suspense account. But it did not disappear. There were several unpleasant new manifestations of its continuous existence. There was this awkward influx to the towns. There was this steep rise in the cost of living, which hit the poorest section—*i.e.*, the non-whites—with cruel harshness. There was still a shortage of labour, and a colossal lack of houses, hostels and compounds in which to herd the Africans together. And there was a growing

number of African trade unions that did not wait for the law to "recognise" them.

Segregation as a policy had failed, said Smuts. "Isolation has gone in South Africa and gone for good." The alternative? In one word, "Trusteeship". Not a new word, this time. An old word, really, going back to palmy League of Nations days of 1920, and even farther back. But a comfortable, respectable portmanteau sort of a word for all that. "The fundamental aspect is the responsibility which the trustee has towards his ward. The whole concept is meant, not for the benefit of the trustee, but for the benefit of the ward whom he has to look after. If the trustee exploits the ward, he breaks his trust, he denies his responsibility, he neglects the duty which rests upon him. . . ." It was a "sacred" trust. Thus the old peddler of words in 1942.

Smuts began his new series of miscalculations on the colour question in 1943, by pushing through what is known as the "Pegging Act", placing special property-buying restrictions on the Indian population of Natal. He should have been warned by his ancient feud with Mahatma Gandhi and his knowledge of the international situation and Far Eastern stirrings that he was dealing with a much more eloquent and subtle group of non-white countrymen than the Africans. Neither Smuts nor anyone else has tried to palm off the "trusteeship" pattern on the Indians. A better comparison of their status would be with the Cape Coloured. Like them, the Indians of Natal once enjoyed a number of the normal privileges of citizenship, which have been progressively stripped away from them. But, unlike the Coloured, they have not sunk into apathy. Rather they have been galvanised into action by new repressions. They come of a nation of 400,000,000, whose shores are washed by the same seas as fringe the African continent. They are a nation with an ancient civilisation and a centuries-old history of struggle against the white man to achieve independence. Smuts might do as he willed with the African people, and the world would hear little of it. When he set about tightening the legal handcuffs on the Indian element, small though the group was, he was caught in the spotlight of world disapproval which found its full voice in the United Nations in New York in 1946. Dr. Jekyll Smuts and Mr. Hyde Smuts were at last revealed to the assembled delegates of the nations as one and the same man.

This exposure on so brightly-lit a stage, and so late in Smuts'

career, emphasised that his blunder over the Indian question in 1943 was as nothing compared to his tactics with the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill of 1946 (melodramatically labelled "Ghetto Act" by South African Indians). This Bill, which Smuts himself piloted through the House in April—four months before the United Nations' first meeting—was a rushed job. It was made law with one eye on the United Nations Assembly. It was, by South African standards in anti-colour legislation, a gesture. By any other yardstick the Bill reeked with the spirit of repression and intolerance. Smuts' speeches during the debates on the Bill reveal how far his schizophrenic tendencies were beginning to take total possession of his mind. How else can one explain his declaration that the Bill was based upon the Union's "successful" Native segregation policy, when in 1942—four years before—he had made the belated discovery that segregation had failed? One critic pointed out how Smuts used the same tactics as Hertzog employed so effectively with the 1936 Native Bills.

"By working together two unrelated subjects (land tenure and Parliamentary representation) he hopes to hold his Parliamentary majority together sufficient to carry two measures, either of which alone will not be sure to have enough supporters in his own party. Had he introduced the restriction on Asiatic Land Tenure as a separate Bill, it is likely that the Prime Minister would have had to rely upon Opposition support—which would be only too eagerly given—to carry it. By offering Indians a form of political representation on the same principle as the representation given to Africans, he has placed his liberal-minded supporters in a dilemma. They fear that, if this opportunity of establishing the citizenship of Indians is not grasped, it may not recur (this was Hofmeyr's concern) and the status of Indians in the Union will continue to deteriorate. So they decided to vote for the Bill."

After the public dusting-down he received from the Indian delegation at the United Nations, Smuts returned to tell white South Africa that the United Nations Assembly was full of emotionally-minded coloured people who did not believe that the world was made mainly for the benefit of the white man. The United Nations, all fifty or so of them, had made foolish mistakes over the South-West African mandate and Indian

issues. But he would try to forgive them. They were young. They would grow up in time—if they did not go bust. But they must not try preaching democracy to South Africa. No one was entitled to do that. We knew our business. We knew how to handle Africans. We must not be daunted because the world misunderstood our missionising purpose in Africa, and the gallant stand we were making to preserve an island of white civilisation in a black sea.

Dr. Jekyll Smuts was the centre of much sympathy. I do not think he has ever enjoyed such a measure of fellow-feeling among white South Africans as that which immersed him after his return. No Crusader home from the wars with the infidel Saracens could have had his bruises more tenderly treated and the dents in his armour removed more expeditiously than Smuts back from New York. If he had felt chastened by his experience, the unexpected welter of back-slapping he received on his return braced him afresh, and by the time the adjourned Session of the House of Assembly reopened in January, 1947, just prior to the visit of the English King and Queen and family, he was fully restored in ego.

Of course there were one or two aspects of the "problem" which had to be straightened out. The Native Councillors were still adjourned, awaiting a more satisfactory reply to their appeal for the removal of all discriminatory legislation. That, however, could remain in the suspense account till after the Royal Visit. And there was this old familiar demand—renewed each year, oddly enough—for the recognition of African trade unions. That also could wait till South Africa had paraded to the full its old-fashioned, warm-hearted brand of hospitality.

The Councillors—a selected half-dozen of them, which did not include Dr. J. S. Moroka, the man who had proposed the original resolution of protest—were summoned to Cape Town early in May, and received the avuncular talk to which I have already referred. The timing of this pronouncement took into account two factors: (1) Session was nearing its end, and the Bill for the recognition of Native trade unions had not been even scrutinised, as required by law, by the African Councillors before coming before the House: (2) the second meeting of the United Nations was beginning to cast its shadows long before, and there was a clear prospect of more grilling over the Indian and Native questions. Smuts was preparing alibis for that new meeting. The Bill for the "recognition" of Native

trade unions (which has been examined in Chapter I) was part of it, should inquiries be made.

This had nothing to do with any change of heart, as the Councillors soon found out, but was purely a matter of tactics. Let the Councillors say what they liked. Let them exhaust every eloquence—and some of them spoke finely and feelingly at their meeting with Smuts. They made no new convert. The *Oubaas* was still the *Oubaas*, as, blinking over his gold-rimmed glasses, he told these black men:—

“As that Black nurse has carried the White baby, so the White baby, as it grows up, must in turn look after that Black nurse.”

South Africa, says one critical admirer, is a first-class country for second-class brains. In the political field, which is the field in which Smuts has dominated the scene for so many years, the question of grey matter seldom, if ever, obtrudes. The Party divisions in the 2,300,000 whites follow broad sentimental lines. Smuts' party—the United Party—is composed largely of English-speaking South Africans with a strong hold on the financial, industrial and gold-mining world, and which embraces also the commercially important Jewish element. It has a valued section of Afrikaners, too, made up of those who are not so racially purblind that they cannot see the folly of trying to exclude or penalise the English-speaking part of the white population. The second largest Party—the Nationalists, led by Dr. D. F. Malan—are avowed Republican Afrikaners. With its eyes on the next election, this well-organised group busied itself during 1947 rounding-up such lost sheep as Havenga—a Hertzog Party man—Oswald “New Order” Pirow, an out-and-out Fascist and ex-Minister of Defence and the Ossewa Brandwag—Ox-wagon Sentinel—movement and its inner core of Stormjaers—fighters—who were responsible for numerous paltry deeds of thuggery and sabotage during the war years. The Labour Party, which has exhausted the wells of sophistry in trying to explain why its Socialist ideals do not include people whose cheeks are not pink, has suffered so many defections and casualties that few of its electorate know from one day to another who is its leader. There remain one or two Independents and the three white representatives of the 7,750,000 Africans.

Politics in South Africa have yet to advance beyond the “follow-my-leader” stage. Personalities, not principles, count.

Botha and Hertzog played it this way. Smuts has reinforced the pattern. The Afrikaner element like it thus, and they are easily the more politically-conscious of the two white sections. It is a continuation of the manner in which the trekkers played at ruling themselves before Britain came on the northern scene. Pique was the foundation of half a dozen little Republics in the good old days. Summing up this juvenile aspect of our politics, Mr. G. H. Calpin, author of *There Are No South Africans*, says: "The Union has never known a political division of parties based on economic ideas and political theories other than those that derive from concepts of race and colour."

I labour this point in order to underline the traditional and unique personal prestige which Smuts has wielded with the maximum of autocratic power during all the years of deterioration in Native policy. To me this neglect and drift are all the more pernicious when one concedes that a Liberal approach is not an innovation in Native affairs. The Cape created such a body of opinion. That goodwill towards the African still exists: indeed, I maintain that it has increased in many directions among ordinary folk who have some normal sensibilities left in them and who are not so selfish or fear-stricken as not to be ready to do more justice to the African who has made their ease of living possible. It exists, this goodwill. But only a man with Smuts' monopoly of power could have translated it into practical form. And that has never been done. Instead, if you go to the statute-book during his long periods of holding the highest office, when he had every opportunity of furthering the democratic cause on behalf of non-whites, you will search long without finding a syllable on the credit side for the African people. Go to Hansard's Parliamentary debates; go to the newspaper files for his speeches, and you will uncover a ton of precept, and not an ounce of practice. Never has a statesman spent more time warning his people against the conditions he has steadily assisted in creating. He has lived in a world of great change, and the biggest of all—the social change and the need for the recognition of adult non-whites—he has never turned round to face.

He has seen South Africa rise in prosperity and in economic stature without seeing what such a rise could mean in terms of human values. He has sat in the nation's forum and watched the laws being passed that have crippled and malformed the natural upward march of a people. He has seen generations of urbanised Africans growing up in the foulest of slum conditions.



He has seen thousands of them struggling for the prize of a civilised condition of living—and passed by on the other side. He has seen the degeneration wrought in their manly tribal code by the herding into compounds—those “zones of compulsory homosexuality”, as one writer calls them. He has watched crime become a commonplace among them, who are not a criminal people—seen the scrambling, the lying, the cheating, the roguery, the hypocrisy by which they are learning to keep themselves alive in the cities. He has seen the malnutrition and the disease degenerating a once-robust people. He has looked on, in brief, at the bastardising and brutalising of a whole nation of dark South Africans moving out of their tribal barbarism into the unclean barbarism that poverty and a nation’s laws have thrust upon them in the name of “white civilisation”. He has watched these things, and he has kept them steadfastly in the suspense account.

This is the indictment against him in Africa. He should not need me to tell him that in this country and this continent there is only one real test of a man calling himself a statesman, and that is the manner in which he measures up to the adjustment and advancement of white-and-black relations.

What South Africa has needed most is not a Smuts, but an Abraham Lincoln. It was an African who passed the saddest and most cynical judgment I have heard on Smuts. He said to me: “I think there is one too many ‘A’s’ in the second name of Jan Christiaan Smuts”.

## CHAPTER X

### THE NATIVE—IS HE HUMAN?

“We laugh at the haughty American nation because it makes the negro clean its boots and then proves the moral and physical inferiority of the negro by the fact that he is a shoeblack.”—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

I WAS STANDING in a big field of young maize in the Eastern Transvaal with a couple of Native Affairs Department officials when a photographer in our party asked for an African labourer to pose in the picture.

“They’ll do, man,” said the local agricultural overseer, pointing to the adjoining field. “There’s a couple of piccanins,” and he raised his voice to summon them in Afrikaans.

The “piccanins” were two hefty young men of about twenty

(taxpayers, therefore), powerfully muscled, very sheepish, and very ragged-shirted. No one else in the group seemed to notice anything odd in calling two large adults "piccanins". It stayed in my memory, that small scene, as a perfect sample of white South Africa's deeply entrenched attitude of seniority. The rural areas, where the traditional master-servant complex—and laws—are supreme, seemingly take an even lower view of their man-power than do the towns.<sup>1</sup> Had this trivial incident occurred early in my travels it is possible I might have registered surprise that an official of the Department should speak thus of workers upon whom his livelihood depended, even though for me to have made the comment would have stamped me instantly as a *rooinek*.<sup>2</sup>

I confess that my original impression of the Native Affairs Department was of a State body full of white officials earnestly devoted to the welfare of such of their African countrymen as might need their help. Closer acquaintance showed that, like any other Government department (and South Africa has a higher proportion of Civil Servants than any other British Dominion), it had more than its quota of time-servers who spend their days ravelling and unravelling themselves in red tape—a pastime which ranks high in the list of national sports. Never have I seen so many brown files as when I was at the headquarters of the Department. Never, in the course of my three years' experience of Government work, have I met a body of men who believed more fervently that the right clerk or departmental head should cross the appropriate "t" or dot the relevant "i".

I knew enough about the Civil Service to accept this mentality. I did not know enough about Departmental outlook, however, not to be surprised when, soon after my secondment, I found myself involved in a long-drawn-out and inconclusive argument with an official on whether Africans were human. This arose out of a discussion on the business of shaking hands with various Native chiefs, clerks, teachers and the like whom we met and talked to en route.

"I don't do it if I can help it," said my official companion, almost truculently. And then, very seriously: "Haven't you

<sup>1</sup> A Boer commando offered no impediment to Livingstone the missionary provided he promised to teach the Natives that the Boers were a superior race.

<sup>2</sup> "Redneck", a term of contempt used by the darker-grained Boers for sun-flushed British soldiers.

noticed their skin? Something peculiar about it—snakey-like, or lizard. You look at the backs of their necks, too, man. Maybe they crossed with a water-turtle some time.”

There was nothing abnormal about this man himself. Perhaps he was pinker and whiter than the average South African. Except for an extra dash of Old School Tie-ism, which is uncommon in South Africa, I took him to be a typical Civil Servant. By that I mean that he was thoroughly bilingual, and spent a large part of each morning making a mountain of his daily molehill, and the rest of the day basking in his own approbation at having circumvented the molehill. He had travelled a little, possessed a good standard of education, and had a smattering of scientific knowledge.

On this occasion I reminded him of his past contact with simple biology and anthropology. But I had reckoned without what Mencken would call his ultra-South African “national juices”.

“You can say what you like,” he said—and he was as awkward as a man trying to explain his religion. “It may be pathological, but I definitely feel a revulsion touching a black skin.”

I had diverse opportunities of studying this commonly met pathological “revulsion”. Over a period I found that it varied according to the status of the African to whom we were introduced. If it was a headmaster of a school, handshaking was possible. If it was a mere form-master, then the pathological revulsion took charge. This colour fastidiousness, which so many South Africans flaunt as a peculiar virtue, can be seen operating on a higher plane with General Smuts. Although I have never seen him sharing a platform with any African leaders, he was on parade in 1945 when His Highness the Aga Khan dropped in to dine with a handful of his followers who live under the Union flag. The caste system is not exclusively dependent on pigmentation.

Once I had fathomed the deeps of this official colour trepidation I made a point of injecting extra warmth into my handshakes with those lower groups of Africans against whom the pathological revulsion operated.

The official who propounded to me his “is-the-Native-human?” creed was a consistent man. More than once the Indian question cropped up, and he spoke very feelingly about the ungrateful noisiness of the 220,000 voteless “coolies” living in Natal. I asked him if he thought of them *all* as “coolies”,

and whether he could find nothing admirable in some of their leaders, and such men as Gandhi, Tagore or Nehru.

"I don't care whether they're coolies or not; you won't find any of 'em coming into *my* dining-room," he declared, and never have I seen suburbia wearing a more virtuous air of proud, prim rectitude than his at that moment.

"What baffles me," I told him after he had been riding his Aryan horse longer than usual, "is how you come to be in the Native Affairs Department, holding your kind of views about South Africans who aren't blue-eyed, blonde-haired and freckled."

He answered pityingly, as to a non-understanding child, "It's because I hold the view I do that I'm in the Department. My attitude is the average South African attitude."

In many ways it was. How easy for the Department to accept the current race antagonisms! How difficult is it to resist doing so without being regarded as a traitor to your white-skinned brethren! No qualms about inadequacies of treatment need trouble you if you accept the African as an inferior being. You catch him whichever way he turns. If he is backward, you say that is characteristic. If he is upstanding and bright, you say, as Dr. Johnson said about the woman preacher: "Sir, it is like a dog standing on its hind legs; the marvel is not that it does it well, but that it does it at all."

I was not surprised to find a universal distrust of the scientific approach to race matters among officials. Science takes insufficient notice of those human foibles, group-attitudes and prejudices that guide Departmental conduct. Yet how crude is this Departmental picture, as I had it thrust under my nose, of officialdom battling with a black, heathen Africa bowed down by its own stupidity, ignorance and sloth! This theme, as I heard it embroidered so many times, is of a lazy, child-like, shiftless, over-sexed, over-drinking, brutal, unpredictable African male who is only propped up into a semblance of manhood by the bottomless generosity of the Department. The generosity displayed itself in a series of little show-pieces made up of irrigation plots, Trust depot farms, vegetable gardens, a few schools and clinics and the like—all poured forth by the everlasting bounty of "Government" which had no need to do these things, but just did them to try to lift the heathen out of that state of raw Nature which Hobbes once described as "no arts; no letters: no society: and what is worst

of all, continual fear and danger of violent death: and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”.

Even if I had had no powers of judgment, this eternal plaint, which varied between downright contempt and sly insinuation, would have forced me to take a little of the opposite view. The truth is that there was not a single charge of veniality, cupidity, laziness and barbarism that I heard levelled against the African people which I could not refute with an example showing the contrary to be also true, or, if necessary, which could not be matched by similar aberrations from the norm by white South Africans.

Yet this is a standard frame of mind in European South Africa when it discusses its black countrymen. Although 99 per cent of Africans start life with every known handicap that a man-made society can devise, white South Africa insists on judging that 99 per cent by standards just this side of heaven. We can get drunk, but not the African. We can be immoral and promiscuous, but not “Jim Fish”. We can commit murder or rape, and the law will rap us on the knuckles (figuratively speaking). Let it be an African who does these things, and he will be lucky to escape the noose. Meanwhile the whole nation of 7,750,000 stands indicted.

More than once in my dealings with Native Affairs officials I tried to turn the argument about the African as a lazy, ignorant sub-human by inquiring whether this alleged debasement was not itself an indictment against their own methods of administration. They looked at me strangely, as if I was hinting at a heresy. Slowly it became clear that these men, the bulk of them, did not sincerely believe in the uplifting of the Native at all. To them such a conception must have appeared as distasteful as being asked to dig their own graves.

They had no goal, no set plan, no conviction, about the future of Africans. They see daily examples of the deficiencies of their methods. But they go on accepting them. Here is Hertzog’s “higher law” operating again, for the more ignorant their “wards” remain, the more justified are officials in their role of eternal guardians. In this sense they were undoubtedly reflecting the viewpoint of the average Herrenvolk white South African.

The headquarters of the Native Affairs Department in Paul Kruger Street, Pretoria, have a homely double-storeyed, double-bay-windowed façade. A larger, more modern block

of offices is slowly taking shape behind. Eventually it is quite likely that this administrative nerve-centre for the African people may include in its accommodation a waiting-room for the Africans who daily have to come to consult it and hear its dictats.

An official who told me of this in 1944 became as near lyrical as he is ever likely to be developing this theme. "Why shouldn't they have a room to sit down in, and big chairs, perhaps, to stretch their legs?" He sketched with his arms a picture of a man relaxing in an armchair, reading a paper. "They might like to look at a paper or smoke a pipe. I reckon we should give 'em that, man."

I said it seemed to me a good idea. From time to time I heard more of this revolutionary plan. Clearly, in the mind of the planner, it was a *beau geste* the like of which had rarely been made in his long years with the Department. And when you come to know this organisation and how it carries on its mole-like, uninspiring routine you realise that the idea of Africans coming into a white man's office and being able to sit down while they wait is, in its own way, a rare innovation.

Inside head office it would hardly occur to you that well over 1,500,000 Africans are detribalised town-dwellers. On the walls you see occasional photographs of Native tribal types in their beads and feathers, playing their primitive instruments, dancing the old heathen dances and baring a comely breast. The real vanguard of African progress—the urban African who wears the same clothes as the white man, catches trains and buses to office daily, carries books, reads newspapers, likes the same kinds of food (when he can afford them), wishes to send his children to school and go to the cinema—does not appear on Departmental walls.

This rural outlook is old-standing and deliberately preserved. And the staffing of the Department follows the same pattern. It still looks backward, wishfully thinking of the African as an eternal ward held in rural chancery. Its agricultural section outnumbers the urban inspectorate group literally by hundreds. Yet even a schoolboy can see that the urban side to the Native question is the spearhead of the "problem", and the Department's greatest headache.

When I was with the Department it had five inspectors urban areas. These positions were created by the terms of the original Native Urban Areas Act. That was made law in 1923. *Twelve years later* the first inspector was appointed! By 1938 the

number had risen to three. Is it any surprise that in 1945—*i.e.*, twenty-two years after the Act was passed—the inspectors had visited only a fraction of the 450 local authorities who fell under their scrutiny? I doubt, either, if one could honestly say that these men I knew were steeped in the intricacies of the complex urban situation.

Strong recommendations for the strengthening of this section of the Department came in the 1942 Smit Report. It was still woefully weak when I knew it three years later. The inspectors I knew were hard-working, conscientious men whose earlier experience had been largely gained in the rural areas as magistrates and commissioners. (Incidentally the nation's leaders like Smuts, Hertzog and Botha each had their roots deep in the country, not the town. South Africa has yet to produce a Prime Minister who is a product of the new industrial bias which the country is developing.)

In the top Departmental jobs a rural-cum-mission background is common. The present Secretary is the son of a Transkeian missionary. His understudy is of Norwegian Zululand mission stock. The sons of missionaries naturally tend to gravitate towards Native administration. They are brought up in predominantly Native areas. And they usually speak one or more Bantu tongues fluently. They have inherited a genuine urge towards this work. On the whole it is a good influence, though its limitations are obvious when political strategy has to be used.

A State report issued by the Social and Economic Planning Council in the middle of 1947 points out that in the past the Department has been strongest on the legal, linguistic and anthropological sides. Modern conditions have changed all this, and the report recommends that "the Department should be strengthened by the addition of trained economists and sociologists as advisers on its staff and should keep in close touch with economic and sociological trends of thought in other departments and throughout the country".

The same report underlines an argument I have already advanced in connection with the backwardness of agriculture in the Reserves. After accepting the conservatism of the Native, it says, "But no analysis of the present Reserve situation would be accurate or adequate if it did not face the question of whether the Agricultural Section of the Native Affairs Department itself should be strengthened and made more effective"

The same sober report (No. 9) has a word to say about the  
F (Kaffirs are Lively)

overlapping with other State Departments which is so frequently used to explain neglect or lack of reforms. Some critics say: "Abolish the Native Affairs Department. The ordinary State Departments should operate as much for the African as for the white man". Others argue that each Department should have a black shadow section making virtually a duplicate public service for Africans. That the Department cannot, in fact, control the affairs of the African people from cradle to grave (as it once liked to believe) has been debunked both by events and by African spokesmen. Without the experience or the staff it has tried to reserve to itself the administration of everything connected with Africans, from the "Pass Laws" to education, from agriculture to trade unions. This itch to separate the inseparable is all part of the popular segregation outlook. If I had to quote additional proof that segregation cannot be made to work in practice, I would cite the Native Affairs Department itself, which, for all its conservatism, is constantly stepping on the corns of impinging State Departments, and being rebuffed.

Native leaders are well aware of what they miss as a people by being left to the mercies of the Native Affairs Department. That is why they fought so long and hard to wrest the financial control of Native education out of the Native Affairs Department's hands and place it on the general national estimates.

Up to 1924 and the advent of the Hertzog Nationalist Government the Native Affairs Department was considered to be something of a *corps d'elite*. It is that no longer. Hertzog rapidly put into operation a policy of "white-ising" the lower ranks of the public service. Scores of Africans were fired to bring in Poor White types and Afrikaans-speaking personnel. That policy, which has never been officially rescinded, has cut educated Africans off from what properly should be an outlet providing employment for hundreds of them. Not only Native Affairs, but Justice, Commerce and Industries, the Police, and especially the Railways, have to deal with many thousands of African customers every day of their lives. The contemptuous manner with which white public servants treat Africans causes daily irritation and bitterness. Assaults are frequent. The official is usually exonerated if the case comes to court. No real effort is made to employ Africans on the railways in order to deal with African passengers. There are no jobs there ranking above unskilled for them. The Native Affairs Department itself is little better. Out of 136 Natives who had passed



matriculation and had applied for posts in the Native Affairs Department in 1946, only eight were given jobs.

The following figures, given in the House of Assembly during the 1947 session, are worth looking at, for they include a reference to South-West Africa, and reveal that in that territory, so fortunate as to be under South Africa's mandatory eye, out of its 330,000 Native peoples and 30,000 whites there is a solitary African matriculate in the Government administration!

Department.	No. presently employed in the public service.	No. who applied for posts in the year 1946.	No. of such applicants accepted during 1946.
Native Affairs . . . . .	65	136	8
Justice . . . . .	1	6	—
Commerce and Industries . . . . .	—	1	—
Posts and Telegraphs . . . . .	6	35	3
South African Police . . . . .	15	13	5
South-West Africa Administration . . . . .	1	—	—
Health . . . . .	10	—	—
	<hr/> 98	<hr/> 191	<hr/> 16

During my trips round the back-blocks I came across a number of instances of the unhappy, stultified lot of educated Africans doing Departmental work. Some were interpreters—men who had been fifteen and twenty years in the service and who had a reputation for integrity, intelligence and good work. Yet they had to submit to the orders of a teen-age white clerk six months in the game, and with nothing but a pale skin to commend him. In wages, too, this juvenile could more than match their earning power in his first month. There are little out-of-the-way magistracies and police-stations, too, which are virtually run by the experienced African staff. That is the unofficial position. Officially they only do the “chores”.

I have no quarrel with the general run of white Native commissioners and agricultural officers and overseers whom I met in the country districts. I met some fine types among them, not very well informed about the world, perhaps, but pleasant, open-air men who were fine company round a camp-fire or for a hike across the veld. Most of them were rude about head-office. And most of them saw their job in a routine light, and gave little thought to policy. That, after all, was not of their making. They kept the files, they made their reports, they

interpreted the law, they collected the taxes, they assessed the punishments for those who had transgressed. I repeat: they don't make Native policy. They only administer it.

When I was discussing this chapter with an expert on Native Law and administration, I told him that I thought of calling it "The Mind and Face of the Native Affairs Department".

He looked puzzled. "Who said they've got a mind?" he asked. "I know they've got a face. But since when have they been cultivating a mind?"

## CHAPTER XI

### "TEN STROKES WITH A LIGHT CANE"

"The African is all the time a prisoner in the land of his birth, although he might not be confined within prison walls."—JUDGE F. E. T. KRAUSE.

"The legal position to-day is such that the police can arrest any African walking down the main streets of Johannesburg at any time of the day or night, and any competent prosecutor would have no difficulty whatever in finding *some* offence with which he could be charged."—JULIUS LEWIN.

**DURING 1942** a couple of young white South Africans, seeing a Native pedalling his bicycle towards them along a quiet suburban Pretoria road, hid behind a bush and waited for him. When he came up, they leapt out, knocked him flat with blows in the face and body, beat him with a knobkerrie—heavy, knobbed stick—and left him lying dead. He had offered no resistance. They did not know him. He was just another Native. In due course there was a court case. The young men were rebuked, and indeed found guilty of culpable homicide. The court ordered that they be given ten cuts with a light cane.

Pretoria Juvenile Court in this particular month of January, 1943, dealt with three such cases in three days. The third concerned an eighteen-year-old white soldier who, as he walked past a Native night-watchman sitting outside a jeweller's shop in the capital, kicked the stool from under the man and struck him. He was interrupted in his sport by some Civil Protection Serviceman, but returned later to satisfy his lust by attacking the watchman, hitting him on the head and kicking him in the stomach. The watchman died on the way to hospital.

Presently the court found the soldier guilty and he was punished—ten strokes with a light cane.

South Africa, while it sometimes preens itself on its lack of

lynch-law and Klu Klux Klan, is not without a tradition in manhandling black men, and the law takes due cognisance of such tradition when it dispenses justice. About twelve months ago I started a cutting-book of assault cases. Shortly I shall be starting a second volume. Among the prize pieces in Volume One is an affair which caused something of a national flutter because, as political commentators pointed out, the second session of the United Nations was shortly due and questions might be asked.

The pother, which stirred some attention in General Smuts' own office, started in Bethal, a tiny *dorp* in the Eastern Transvaal. Here in the magistrate's court in June, 1947, a farm foreman was found guilty on four counts of common assault, and one of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm. The complainants were Native labourers. The foreman was proved to have variously assaulted the first four plaintiffs with his *sjambok*—hippopotamus hide whip—with his fist and boots, and set his dog on one or other of them. In the fifth instance the plaintiff and another Native had been made to undress and had been beaten by the boss boy in the presence of the foreman. The plaintiff had received a number of wounds from the beating, and he and the other Natives had then been chained together and, naked, driven to their compound, where they had to sleep chained together that night.

"The whole affair," said the magistrate, "is sordid and reminiscent of slavery." He fined the foreman £75 or four months' imprisonment, a further three months' prison sentence being suspended so long as he did not offend again in the succeeding twelve months. In case anyone felt that these atrocities were isolated and had no precedence, it was reported in the Johannesburg *Star* that the Native Affairs Department "has been keeping the closest possible check on abuses of Native labourers in that district for many years, and is able to report that the conditions recently disclosed apply to, at most, thirty farms, and are in defiance of both public opinion and Government policy". According to a welfare official who had worked in the Bethal district, the ill-treatment of Native workers and the exploitation of their labour had been going on for twenty years. He recalled a case of murder in 1929 involving a labourer and his employer. At that time General Hertzog was Premier, and also holding the portfolio of Minister of Native Affairs. He insisted on a welfare officer being appointed to the district, but, said the retired official, "for political reasons,

however, the Department of Native Affairs had not encouraged the instigation of proceedings against farmers for the ill-treatment of Native employees”.

The Government agitation and inquiry at the scandal of Bethal conditions brought some changes to impress onlookers for an I.L.O. mission was expected and the second United Nations meeting loomed up in New York. The real scandal is that so long as you have the method of indentured farm labour practised here, so long as you have farmers expecting their labour to work from sun-up to sun-down for 10s. a month, and then be locked up in a shed at night to sleep on cement bunks, so long as you have agricultural labour unrecognised by proper wage determinations and without the protection of a union, and so long as you have master-servants laws and Natives are “inferior beings”, South Africa will continue to hatch Bethals in its back-blocks.

A good proportion of fatal assaults by white men on blacks take place in the Transvaal. But the old Dutch Republic has no monopoly. Farming districts generally manage to keep alive the sturdy pioneering technique of thrashings and occasional shootings. One such case in 1947 concerned a farmer in the Harrismith district of the Orange Free State, who fired his gun “in the general direction” of a Native in order to frighten him, and scored a grievous bull’s eye. The Judge—Mr. Justice van der Heever—took time out in his summing-up to put the public and the Press straight about the affair. “There may conceivably be the usual outcry in the Press that there has been a miscarriage of justice because the accused is a member of the privileged class and the complainant a member of the less privileged class. If it should occur I want the jury to know that I completely concur in their finding which, to my mind, is correct both in fact and law.”

On the attitude of juries in white-black assault cases a lawyer who had been connected with the notable brutal “Louis Trichardt” murder case in the Northern Transvaal postulated the following axioms:—

1. No white man should ever be hanged because he has killed an African. Hence, as hanging is the only possible sentence for murder, a jury ought not to find a white man guilty if he is charged with the murder of an African.

2. If the verdict is such that the white man in such a case is sentenced to a short term of imprisonment, the jury has

performed a laudable action, and one calculated to meet amply the ends of justice.

3. Native evidence is frequently unreliable. Hence in the case of direct conflict between Native evidence and European evidence, the latter should prevail.

4. Natives do not regard rape as seriously as do Europeans.

5. This fact may be taken into consideration of mitigation where the complainant is a Native girl, but not otherwise.

Mr. Justice van der Heever was not raising a lone voice when he distinguished between the sort of protection a member of the privileged or less privileged class might expect from the law. In the Rand Division of the Supreme Court shortly afterwards Mr. Justice Naser awarded a Native labourer £16 damages in a case in which he claimed £600 after being shot by a white man.

"I am of the opinion that in awarding damages for pain and suffering one must take into consideration the standing of the person injured," said the Judge. "For instance, in the case of a Native, as is the plaintiff, who is earning a sum of £2 a week, I should most certainly not award the same amount for pain and suffering as I would for the same pain and suffering of a person who had more culture. For example, I would award a larger sum for damages in the case of an injury to a European woman than I would to a Native male. Similarly in the present case, if it had been a European of some standing I would have awarded greater damages than I now propose to do."

I find a quaint contrast in the humanities of this assessment and another case reported in the same paper, which was an inquest on a Native nurse-girl who, on seeing her eighteen-month-old charge fall from a fifth-floor balcony of a Johannesburg flat, flung herself after it in a frenzy of futile and fatal devotion.

Not all Judges share the approach of the two men I have quoted. Here and there you find one who is not so thoroughly educated in popular prejudice, and who can remember that Justice is supposed to be blind and to hold the scales evenly for all men.

Occasionally, too, you hear legal authorities complaining about the poor standards of interpretation in the Courts. Interpreters are an integral part of the white man's idea of how the "higher law" of self-preservation should operate.

In the queer hostile surroundings of the white man's court

the African looks around him and sees white faces everywhere—on the Bench, the prosecution, jury and police. Even the interpreter is usually white. His wages, like the standards of interpretation accepted, are deplorably low. Africans, who in the main have much greater abilities in learning other languages, are not used if a white interpreter is available. No special educational qualifications are required. Many European interpreters only speak the various Native tongues; they cannot read or write them. Their attitude is contemptuous; the bullying tone they favour maintains their "white supremacy" status throughout any cross-examination. Books could be filled with examples of justice miscarried through ignorance of procedure among accused Africans, and ignorance worse confounded by bad interpretation. To quote just two elementary examples of what can go on:—

A Native in the dock was asked by the white interpreter whether he was "Guilty or not guilty". He replied in Xhosa: "*Ewe, hayi, hayi*". So far as the interpreter understood this it meant "Yes and no". He got angry immediately and said: "You do not answer the question". And the African kept saying: "*Ewe, hayi*". Anyone who knows Xhosa thoroughly would have known that "Yes and no" was a plea of guilty with extenuating circumstances.

In another case of rape, the complainant, a Native woman, was asked whether she had screamed. She replied she had been unable to scream as the accused had choked her. The expression "choked her" was too much for the white interpreter. He paraphrased her: "The accused said she was alone and she did not shout", and so the case was thrown out and the accused discharged.

It has to be recognised, too, that apart from the quick-triggered, big-booted brand of private justice which farming districts can exercise with considerable impunity, the police themselves quite often steal a headline for the way they carry out their duties of protecting the public. One magistrate went so far as to inquire: "What confidence can the public have in a police force when such things occur?" This was in the case of a Native arrested by a railway policeman and taken to the nearby charge office. After being questioned, the Native was hit in the face and on the body till blood came out of his ears, and when he fell down he was kicked till he stood up again. He was assaulted continuously by these methods for an hour and a half, with three intervals, during which he was given a drink of water.

The drinks of water were a refinement omitted by a Pretoria dairyman who had to deal with Jacob, a Native seeking work, and who had the audacity to ask for £4 10s. a month. Aided by a brother, the dairyman pursued the insolent Jacob, hauled him into his car, and took him into a back room. Only the brothers will ever know what happened in that back room. Jacob, when a policeman arrived, was lying on his stomach. Asked what was wrong, he said his leg was off. He still had his legs, but presently he died. One of the brothers was found guilty of culpable homicide and fined £10 or one month's imprisonment.

I do not detail these cases for any lurid effect. They are cases which can and do occur with regularity. Ten strokes with a light cane or £10 should not cause anyone sleepless nights. These cases will go on happening, I presume, until South Africa learns one day that there are tears in heaven even for the Jacobs who have died under the boots of the white man.

As in America, the most savage public (and ergo legal) reaction to white-black court cases is reserved for those involving sex crimes. White South African opinion was aptly summed up by one learned judge sitting on the case (in 1926) of a European found guilty of raping a fifteen-year-old Native girl when he said: "We know generally that Natives do not consider rape as seriously as Europeans do". The guilty man was given eighteen months with hard labour. By contrast, a Native found guilty at the same period for assault on an eleven-year-old white girl with intent to commit rape received seven years' imprisonment with hard labour and seven lashes. "Had you succeeded," said the Judge, "I would certainly have sentenced you to death."

For comparison purposes another two cases from 1925, and also from the Transvaal, are quotable. The first concerns a white man who was charged with the offence of assault with intent to rape two Native girls in a public street. The jury found him guilty of indecent assault, and the Judge gave him one month's gaol. In the same year a Native who was found guilty of having carnal connection with a white woman with her consent was given twelve months' imprisonment and five lashes.

Lashes, be it noted, are almost an exclusive privilege of the African. One legal investigator points out that "in the not

inconsiderable number of cases where a Native was found guilty of carnal connection with a white woman with the white woman's consent, lashes were imposed without exception. This type of crime cannot be described as in any way a crime of violence. Hence the usual rule that lashes are reserved for crimes of particular brutality has become in South Africa the rule that lashes are reserved for crimes committed by Natives".

Rape statistics over the last six years, proportionate to population, show that the greater percentage of offenders in black-white cases are Europeans.

An examination of Roman-Dutch law, which is Common law in South Africa, would reveal, apart from the habitual race distinctions exercised, that it takes an entirely out-moded view of the gravity of certain types of crime. Punishments for stock theft and crimes connected either with gold or diamonds, for example, are almost as ludicrous in their severity as the old English laws against sheep-stealing.

The presence of two codes—Common law and Native law (which applies as between Natives and mostly in rural areas)—enhances the complexities of the law for many urbanised Africans. Yet in a doomed effort at preserving a kind of "legal segregation", the Native Appeal Court has, according to one authority, been showing an increasing tendency to favour the application of Native law to the exclusion of Common law. Mr. Julius Lewin, in his latest book, *Studies in African Native Law*, quotes the following anomaly:—

"A plaintiff claimed damages for the killing of his stallion by defendant's cow. Under Pondo tribal custom damages are payable for injuries done by bulls, but, according to the Native assessors, from time immemorial no damages have been paid for injuries caused by cows on the common pasture lands. The Court accordingly decided that the plaintiff could not succeed in his action for damages, refusing 'to allow Common law to oust Native law'.

"Notice what this implies. If a few months later a cow belonging to the unsuccessful plaintiff in the above case were to injure a stallion belonging not to another Native but to a European the latter could obtain damages under the Common law. So we have the position: when a black man's stallion is injured by a black man's cow, there is no legal redress because Native custom applies: when, however, a white man's stallion is injured by a black man's cow, there is



legal redress available to the injured party because the Common law applies!"

South Africa's ordinary treatment of its urban African population has been so busy making criminals out of them that the public is apt to forget that the Native people are essentially a law-abiding folk. So far I have only made reference to serious crimes—to murder, rape and violence. Under this heading "Serious Crime", the 1946 figure was 75,316, an increase of 9.50 per cent on 1945, but the total crime-sheet listed 968,593 prosecutions and 861,269 convictions. The greater percentage of these were Africans convicted under laws specially designed for them, among which the Pass Laws, urban areas legislation and the liquor laws produce the richest harvest.

The Pass Laws easily come first in prison-catching. Every morning on the way to my office in Johannesburg I pass the Fort gaol and see a Black Maria loaded with human freight drive off slowly down the hill to the magistrate's court. It has a series of tiny barred openings high up in the otherwise blank sides, and you can see fingers clutching these bars, and occasionally the flash of the whites of a prisoner's eyes in the interior gloom. Each morning in the Johannesburg court anything up to 120 Natives are found guilty of not having their passes in order.<sup>1</sup> Some sign admissions of guilt and pay a fine. Most of them, lacking money, join the gaol-gangs which can be hired out by the "span", like oxen, to private persons and public bodies anxious to use a bit of cheap labour.

The annual average of Pass Law convictions over a period of years is on the 100,000 mark. It is only a matter of years, if the time has not indeed come, before the African who has not seen the inside of a gaol will be an object of curiosity. Successive State Commissions have condemned these laws. But they continue. They are, in fact, something more than laws. They are a prized and traditional instrument of Native policy originating among the farming folk who did not like their labour to run out on them without due ceremony. A pass then was a scrap of paper stating that the owner of it had been freely released by his *baas*. From such a humble beginning has been raised the formidable Pass Law system, which has kept the gaols full for years past, and turned them into Universities of crime where

<sup>1</sup> Week-end arrests among the Native population on the Rand maintain a steady average round 2,000.

ignorant, illiterate Africans can meet older, experienced, genuine criminals and exchange uplifting thoughts on the white man's ways. Municipalities, employers, housewives, Native Commissioners—they all are part of the Pass Law conspiracy. They can all issue a pass of one sort or another. In a town like East London, which is a "proclaimed area"—i.e., no Native can enter unless he carries a written authorisation from his future employer, a Native is required to carry on his person, in terms of the proclamations and regulations framed under the infamous Native Urban Areas Act, one or more of the following documents:—

1. A residential or site permit.
2. A lodger's permit.
3. A night pass after 11 p.m.
4. A permit to seek work.
5. A permit to be in the proclaimed area for purposes other than seeking work.
6. A service contract.
7. A receipt for *togt* (casual labour) licence.
8. A document of registration for male Natives following occupations, not under contract of service.
9. A temporary visitor's permit.
10. A registered voter's certificate.
11. A permit to attend school.

Other types of pass have been invented by the Transvaal, which in all things connected with the African does not like to lag behind in repressive zeal. Not many pass-bearers can read. Even if they could I doubt very much if they could get very far through the maze of amendments and proclamations enshrined in Urban Areas legislation.

There are, however, I must not omit to point out, a number of Africans who do not carry the types of pass I have listed. They are "exempted" Natives—and they carry a letter which is really a pass saying that they do not require passes.

To qualify for this rare status in the land of his birth an African must conform to the following rules:—

1. He must be over twenty-five.
2. He must have been in employment for the past three years.
3. He must have a clean police record (*sic!*).
4. He must have a fair standard of education.

5. He must be recommended by his present employer for such exemption.

With an alert police force about, it does not follow that exemption will protect you. An African friend of mine on the Representative Council who left his house hurriedly in his shirt-sleeves in order to fetch a doctor for one of his children was smartly hauled in, and spent some time at the police station explaining that he was one of the rare exempted species.

Nightly the pick-up vans prowl the streets seeking their prey.<sup>1</sup> Nightly they fill up with their dark cargoes. And when the pick-up vans are not on the job, mass raids of locations and hostels keep the gaol-yards choked. Some day, perhaps, when Natives take more to writing books, one of them will describe for us the joys of his childhood in a South African urban location and the heart-stopping panic of sleep broken by heavy footfalls, the swift burst through the opened door, the torch-lights, the short, sharp questions, and the long, chill aftermath of quivering fear when the white strangers have gone.

I know the official version of these Pass Laws. I have heard how they are not really aimed at making criminals out of Africans at all, but mainly to "protect" them in case they get lost, or forget their names, or what part of the country they were born in. In 1943 the Minister of Native Affairs told the House of Assembly that no fewer than 831 Africans had been traced by the system.

Stirring though these figures may have seemed to him, one Parliamentarian pointed out that the gaoling of 100,000 Africans in the same year for contravention of Pass Laws was a stiff price to pay for the "protection" of so few. The rawest policeman knows that the Pass Laws do not catch criminals. No Native criminal on the prowl fails to have his passes in

<sup>1</sup> The Zulus have a song which is universally known in the urban locations about the "pick-up". Like "colour bar" "pick-up" is an expression that the African people learn very young. The words in italics appear in the original. The rest is a translation.

"There comes the big van,  
All over the country,  
All over the country.  
They call it the *pick-up van*.  
There is the *pick-up*  
There, is the big van,  
There, there is the big van.  
'Where's your pass?'  
'Where's your tax?'"

order. One Senator representing Natives has worked it out that these Laws, with their queues and journeyings for permits, means a loss of at least 2,000,000 working days a year. Magistrates do not like the drain on their time. Nor do responsible policemen. Resentment among Africans has burned very deep as year succeeds year and all that comes their way is a fresh amendment to the Urban Areas Act and another Commission (the latest is Native Laws Commission of 1947).

Why, then, are they retained? They are kept alive because, as I said earlier, they are a traditional part of Native policy. They spell "white supremacy". And anything that spells "white supremacy" in South Africa is not easily cast aside, whether it be the original slave laws of the Cape or the notorious "apprentice" system of child-labour practised by Boer farmers of the Transvaal.

A Native Councillor, pleading in vain for the abolition of the Pass Laws in 1947, used the words of Charles Dickens: "But gentlemen, gentlemen, dealing with men like me, begin at the right end. . . . Give us kinder laws to bring us back when we are going wrong. And don't set gaol, gaol, gaol, afore us everywhere we turn."

If Pass Laws and the "white supremacy" policy behind them were not enough to ensure manufacturing criminals out of black South Africa, life in an urban location would provide an absolute guarantee. White South Africa can easily be stirred by talk of a Native crime wave. The slums which breed the infection do not distress them unduly. Their average attitude was summed up for me by a Native Affairs Department official as we picked our way among the puddles and filth and diseased humanity of a Sophiatown back-yard. "It's as good as they've been used to," he said. And he meant it.

Lacking the picturesqueness of the Reserves, urban locations have no tourist appeal except when they erupt and produce (as they have done) a rash of *sakkiedorps*—sack-towns—or Shanty Towns on the nearby veld. Even these can hardly be called quaint. They merely smell. On the whole, the spectacle of urban South African life is depressingly ugly. The people—jostling, ill-clad and uncouth of speech—are the New South Africa. For those who remember the country as a place of prospectors, hunters, colourful rogues, "*Taakhaar*" farmers, and naked, brown, respectful, athletic heathen under the eternally

summer skies, New Africa is a mess. But it happens to be the reality—much more real than the kind of Africa the country's law-makers wish to accept. The black proletariat whom the Chamber of Mines fears has arrived. So have the black middle and lower-middle classes to whom the nation refuses to give citizen rights. And there is no turning back the tide. Cities put their locations out of sight. But they want their servants, their errand-boys and their labourers who live in them to be punctual in the morning. The location may fester; but they want their labour to be clean. It may be a cess-pool of crime; but they expect their black people to be shining honest.

Putting the locations over the horizon cannot entirely put them out of mind. Certain laws have been enacted which require municipal authorities to make provision for their African town-dwellers. But only a rare urban authority like Port Elizabeth regards the poor—and black poor at that—as anything but a dispensation of God whom God (and charity organisations) can take care of.

Consider some of the legal aspects of South African black urban life. This section of the population, which totals more than 1,500,000, has actually no legal right to live in or near a town. Black men and their families are only allowed to settle as a "privilege" conferred by an official, and which can easily be withdrawn. You enter a location by a gate. And a man guards it and checks on your reasons for coming there. If you fail with your rent, lose your job and grow too old for work, you are liable to be put outside. If you leave your home to seek work elsewhere—whether on a farm or in another town—you and your family can be prevented from returning, either through outright exclusion from the urban area or by refusal of a permit.

Describing the effect of this legal-handcuffing, which is characteristic of dozens of regulations affecting Africans, Mr. Donald Molteno, a Parliamentarian, writes;—

"I have witnessed with my own eyes old people, crippled with rheumatism, lying on the commonage of another platteland [flat-lands] town with nowhere to go. They had daughters living in the location but had been refused permits to join them. They had been lifelong farm labourers but were far past work on a farm or elsewhere. The magistrate was issuing them with pauper rations. The police were telling them to move on. But they had nowhere to go and no-

where to lay their heads. After a life of toil, poverty and the laws of their country had reduced them to the straits in which there was not a square inch of soil of their native land on which they could lawfully set foot."

The Urban Areas Act prevents Africans buying property or leasing it. They only rent places. (Even in the Reserves—the only place where any normal transactions are allowed—the acquisition of an arable plot requires the consent of the Native Commissioner.) Africans born in urban areas have no right to demand accommodation from the local authority. With anyone else not black his right to occupy premises depends on his economic ability to pay. African "rights" depend on official discretion. According to Mr. Molteno, who is a lawyer as well as a Parliamentarian, it would require in law a Cabinet decision for an African to be permitted to buy land in an urban area. As for trading, there is a part of the Act which enables licences to be refused on racial grounds, even for Africans in African locations.

Town-living proceeds by permits. You may get a site permit in order to build. You may get a residential permit if a Council house is allotted to you. You may get a lodger's permit if you want to stay with another householder. The latest set of regulations regarding residence includes a clause about "fit and proper persons". The ingenuity of an official can soon dispose of anyone it does not wish to regard as a "fit and proper person".

The bald, simple basic fact about this national scandal of African urban living conditions is that the law, proclamations and regulations make up a jig-saw puzzle from which only a mental Houdini could escape and which bear no relation to the evolutionary changes taking place in South African life. That is true of many aspects of Native policy, but never more so than in the urban areas. It is the living proof of what was prophesied in 1903 by Lord Tweedsmuir (then John Buchan, and unknown either as novelist or administrator) when he wrote:—

"If by violent methods economic laws are checked in their play, a subject state in a low state of civilisation is checked on the only side which development can reasonably be looked for. The harder and lower forms of toil will fall in Kaffir hands for good: the white population will become an

aristocracy based on a kind of slave labour: and with the abolition of an honest hierarchy of work, degeneration will set in with terrible swiftness."

The play of economic laws has been twisted out of normal recognition (for white South Africans) by a double exodus to the towns. There is this black steam of potential proletariats. And there is the white stream of mainly Afrikaans-speaking farm youth drawn into the industrial vortex. Both are ignorant. Both are unskilled. Both require training and housing and have much to learn about the mansuetude of civilisation. But one has a black skin, and the other has white. So economic laws are given an extra twist in favour of the white, and the normal advancement of the black man receives a further setback in order that his competitive abilities shall not embarrass a portion of white South Africa.

Wars have a way of precipitating social crises. The 1939-45 war helped to do this for South Africa. But only a clown would pretend that the seeds of the urban crisis were not already well and truly planted in the soil of the white supremacy creed. Yet cities like Johannesburg, Durban and others with African populations as big and even bigger than their white populations, who had hitherto made only rudimentary provision for the black section of their citizens, would like the world to believe that they are the victims of a phenomenon. If they had been sincere they could have done the same as Port Elizabeth did fifteen years ago, and used the State's cheap housing loans and slum-clearance laws to provide the necessary sub-economic houses for Africans.

Instead they turned their backs on such responsibility, pretended it was not there. Then when they had to face it they pleaded lack of materials, lack of land, lack of labour, lack of finance. Caliban was coming out of his corner. But they still thought they could make-believe about African urban needs. Johannesburg, the richest city in southern Africa, the gold metropolis of the world, thought so. It still thinks so. Johannesburg, the city with the annual gold output of £100,000,000, the city with the one-in-five car-owners, the city with the £20,000,000 annual civic budget, the city of broken accents, of first-generation *parvenus* trying to look like Old Nobility; the city of magnificent mansions where I have also seen old,

blinded Native women living in a disused lavatory in the slums, Johannesburg still thinks so.

Johannesburg, with its 400,000 Africans, has no solution to its urban African problem—except to run to the Government and complain that the problem is too big. Johannesburg needs 50,000 houses for its African people. It has four official locations. That leaves over 100,000 still needing houses.

Like an over-ripe boil, the Orlando Native Township, which contains 50,000 Africans plus at least as many lodgers, burst in 1944 and over-ran the nearby hillsides. Squatting on a mass-scale had started, and come to stay. There have been a series of eruptions from other Johannesburg locations since. So squatting has now become organised. Shanty towns of hessian sacking over a framework of poles have received civic blessing, and in lieu of uncontrolled squatting the Johannesburg municipality has now placed a large area at the disposal of squatters who want to luxuriate on stands measuring 20 ft. by 20 ft. For this they pay 15s. a month rent, and can join the queue-ups for the lavatories (one for every sixty people in an estimated 100,000 population), the forty communal showers and the 500 water-taps (one to every fifty families).

This beauty spot, which was condemned on hygienic grounds by the Minister of Health even before the 100,000 had taken shelter there or had time to erect their flimsy shacks, is an emergency measure *en attendant mieux*. Out at Pimville Location, a mile or two farther away from the city, you can see another emergency measure still flourishing: it is a series of half water-tanks planted here and used as houses since just after the Anglo-Boer War in 1903. In Durban you can see the infamous "Municipal Barracks" still swarming with Indian families, though it had been condemned as unfit for human habitation many years ago. Down below sea-level among the willow bushes of the Cape Flats you can see hundreds of legalised split-pole shacks with winter flood-waters lapping against the walls.

South Africa's urban areas large and small abound in "emergency measure" housing for Africans. Indeed, up to very few years ago all such housing could have been so classed.

Location life is of an unbelievable sordidness. Those who have houses cannot afford to pay the rents and buy enough food. So lodgers cram the rooms, the women fetch washing and make illicit liquor, the children scavenge the streets, learning the lore of the faro-dens, *marabi* beer-drink dances, the prosti-



tutes' hide-outs, the bookies' touts, the pimps, the gamblers, the thugs and the thieves.<sup>1</sup> Black markets in foodstuffs and essentials which the white shops reserve for their own customers before selling to the blacks flourish. Streets are not macadamised. Pavements are not lined. Street-lights are a rarity. Many houses have no electric light. Sports-fields are virtually unknown. (109,000 domestic and industrial workers out of Johannesburg's 371,000 Native population have two remotely situated sports grounds.) Buses are overcrowded and not frequent enough at the business-hour times, so that a man can spend an hour or two at intermediate points trying to get a lift to work and to his home. If the intention was to make the African feel a pariah, the system is near perfect. The African has no representation on the Town Council. He has no vote, and he stands every chance of being manhandled if he should happen to show ambition. All he has to kindle his civic pride is an Advisory Board which is a broken-down kind of toy with which Africans have ceased to play.

Urban African conditions raise the imperative question: What kind of a people is the white supremacy creed producing? I say that whatever they are now, they will be a tough, cruel people in the end. Those are the qualities which will survive amid the urban sinks and the feckless "emergency measures". Johannesburg has already proved this. It has its regular cycles of crime waves. I am amazed that there can yet be found in surroundings of such squalor and immorality young Africans who are still honest, still cheerful, still willing to co-operate.

What inducements are there for these young men to stay honest? Those who have managed to get some education higher than Standard VI cannot make use of it. The skilled trades and unions are closed to them. The municipal services ask only for manual labourers, whom they will pay a little over £5 a month. Office jobs are not freely open to them above those of janitor, cleaner, messenger and sometimes lift-boy.

Crime pays the urban African. We have made it that way for him by making him a social, economic and political pariah. He has lost much of his exaggerated respect for the white man and his laws. More and tougher laws will not, despite the

<sup>1</sup> At least one-third African children born in Johannesburg locations are illegitimate. This figure may be compared with a 1937 sample among the Cape Coloured which showed that 13,453 births out of 37,080 were illegitimate, or 36 per cent, and the Durban Survey showing that out of 5,465 Native couples living together only 1,923 were legally married.

national demand, give him back that respect. Respect has to be earned. And it has to be mutual. We have lost the African's respect because we have no respect for him. Any street corner will prove this. Gaol is no stigma to the African. He can get there any time for not carrying pieces of unintelligible paper. For a little risk the rewards are good. That attitude, which has taken strong root in Johannesburg, where the most criminal neglect and ruthlessness obtain, will not be dissipated by increased use of the lash (this is popular belief). The more brutal your prison system the more brutalised do its inmates become. If you cage men like wild animals, they will grow like wild animals. Belsen proved this. The slums of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban are proving it every day. This upward progress of recidivist figures for African crime, which have leapt from 17 per cent in 1933 to 35 per cent in 1945, gives the right clues. South Africa's prison system, according to the superintendent of one work colony, is "antiquated, obsolete, brutal, barbaric and unprogressive". Punishment that degrades is the essence of the system. Few Africans that I have met, even educated ones in town, think of the law as a State instrument that protects them. The law is their enemy. That is how they have been trained to think and feel by bitter experience. That is what "white supremacy" instils because, as one reformatory principal put it, "many of us are just as afraid of a stable, purposeful, knowledgeable, moral, temperate law-abiding non-European community as we are of a corrupt and lawless community".

How many Africans know that the police themselves are subject to law? How many white people, including officials of Justice, continue to think of the law in that way when Africans are brought into the legal conflict? Mr. Julius Lewin, who produced a pamphlet underlining this fact for the benefit of Africans, tells how one Native administrator, formerly in the police, after reading this heretical statement, took the pamphlet along to the police and inquired if such literature was allowed to be freely circulated.

Much baton-charging, skull-cracking, lashes, mob violence and race rioting, and many a hangman's rope, lie between South Africa and the day when an African will dare approach a policeman to ask him the way to a strange street, or if he has the right time.

## CHAPTER XII

### EDUCATION FOR WHAT?

"I am against this higher education. I do not think they [Africans] are fitted for it. I do not see how you can prevent it, but I would not encourage it."—MR. T. SHEPSTONE, C.M.G., Evidence to the Milner Commission, 1903-5.

"The fundamental business of government in Africa is education."—J. H. OLDHAM.

BEYOND THE drab little Transvaal hydro of Warmbaths, where even the African waiters speak a little Yiddish, owing to the week-end popularity of the hotels with Johannesburg's Jewry, is a white-gabled, black-thatched, Dutch Reformed Church institution called the Emmerentia Geldenhuys School. Here African students can matriculate. It is one of the few schools conducted by the Dutch Reformed Church in the Transvaal where anything approaching higher education is provided for Natives. But that is not the point I wish to underline. During a stroll round the classrooms I loitered here and there to hear questions put to the students. In Form I, or the Upper Sixth Standard, the students were asked how many acres there were in a morgen. The question was put in Afrikaans by an official of the Native Affairs Department, and we received a remarkable variety of answers—so remarkable that the principal of the school suggested we ask the question in English. English, he said, was the language in which they were being taught weights and measures. So the question was repeated in English, but with only slightly less hazy results. In Form II students looked blank when asked questions in English about mealies and crops. The principal proposed that we ask such questions in Afrikaans. They were being taught agriculture in Afrikaans, ergo they were only expected to understand rural questions when put in that tongue.

This was my first real introduction into the Babel that is Bantu education. I discovered that apart from the two official languages of South Africa—English and Afrikaans—Bantu students received instruction also in their mother language, which might be any one of the five main tongues (Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu, Tswana and Pedi), and were usually also acquainted with (and often taught in) at least one dialect of the main groups.

I wonder how many school children in any other part of the

world are expected to acquire knowledge and develop their faculties in so many languages? I wonder how the IQ of white South African children would show up under such multi-lingual instruction—assuming all other factors were equal? Of course the “other factors” cannot, except in the rarest instances, be compared. “The education of the white child,” summed up the 1935 Inter-Departmental Committee on Native Education, “prepares him for life in a dominant society, and the education of the black child for a subordinate society.”

In 1934–35 primary and secondary Native education was costing £605,000. By 1946–47 the figure had risen four times to £2,540,000. Admiration over this ascension is shared by the Native Affairs Department and the appropriate Minister, the Native Affairs Commission, and the United Party of General Smuts. Who shall say that South Africa ill-treats its African population in the face of these great sums? To preserve the reader from giddiness let me quote some other figures for comparison. In 1934–35 the national income was £38,000,000. In 1946 it had risen to £138,000,000. Thus while national income had increased by £100,000,000, expenditure on Native education had gone up £1,900,000. In the same period educational expenditure for the minority European group rose from £8,471,877 to over £20,000,000.

When South Africa talks about how much it is doing in education for its non-whites the following facts are worth keeping in mind. Between 70 and 75 per cent of its Coloured and Indian populations and about 80 per cent of its adult Natives—*i.e.*, about 6,000,000—cannot read or write. Furthermore, 90 per cent of its schools for non-whites were not started by the State at all, but are the result of missionary enterprise and largely overseas capital. Those mission schools which are accepted for registration with the Province obtain subsidies in the form of classroom rentals. And the teachers' salaries are also paid. There remain, none the less, scores of mission schools out in the *bundu* which have waited in vain for years for registration and State aid.<sup>1</sup> Native education costs the State under £3 per head per year. The average for white children is nearly £23 each. Primary and secondary education is compulsory for white children. It remains optional for Africans.

Seventy-one per cent—*i.e.*, well over 1,000,000—of African children of school-going age are not in school, and cannot get

<sup>1</sup> One version given is there are not enough school inspectors to go round. If these jobs were open to Africans there would be no shortage.

into school. Only 8 per cent of those who do attend pass Standard II. "How much of the time which the other 92 per cent spend in schools is productive," comments an educationist, "and how much is sheer waste is a question that admits of no clear-cut answer, but that the wastage is considerable is beyond doubt."

During my travels I visited dozens of "bush" mission schools out in the back-blocks. Some were held under trees. Others were in mud-and-wattle huts. Desks were a rarity; partitions and school-books even more so. Children in different classes usually shared the same room and squatted haunch to haunch on the floor. Three different lessons might be chanted aloud simultaneously in a cheerful chaos of young voices. Only a modicum of knowledge could thus be imparted, and that only parrot-fashion.

Standards of teaching were shockingly low. A fair proportion of teachers possess no qualifications at all. In a 1939 survey conducted by the Union Education Department a questionnaire on the academic qualifications of 1,729 Native teachers in the Transvaal revealed that only 1.5 per cent possessed the Native Primary Higher (2) Certificate and only 12.9 per cent had gone beyond Standard VI. An aptitude-tests expert, Dr. S. Biesheuvel, comments:—

"As the African Standard VI level is equivalent to the European Standard IV level and the N.P.H. (2) falls very far short of the lowest educational certificate issued to European teachers in the Transvaal (two-years post-matriculation course) these figures throw in striking relief the poverty of the African teacher's educational and professional equipment.

"Two-thirds of the teachers have not proceeded beyond Standard VI: less than two-thirds possess the lowest truly professional certificate issued. Though the Cape figures are a little better both on the academic and on the professional side the median level of attainment is probably identical. The majority of teachers, those possessing the Native Primary Lower (2) certificate are, therefore, academically worse equipped than the average European child who has passed the Junior Certificate examination. . . ."

After my first-hand impressions of primary Native education the expert criticism of the warden of one of the oldest and big-

gest mission schools in the Ciskei did not seem to me an overstatement. A couple of weeks before I was at his school there had been a serious riot. One teacher was stoned and injured, buildings had been damaged, and the warden himself had had a narrow escape. The warden admitted feeling thoroughly disillusioned. He had been in charge several years; had built up what he thought was a fine *esprit de corps*, improved the athletic standards of the young men, and initiated new courses of teacher-training which promised fine results.

"The foundations of our Native education system are completely bogus," he said as we sat in his book-lined study-cum-lounge after dinner. "This riot I've had is only a symptom of a much wider and deeper unrest. We're not the only place to have trouble in the Ciskei. At least twelve of the older schools have had similar experience over a period. And there'll be more to come.<sup>1</sup> Of that I'm certain. We've gone on without regard for the foundations. The superstructure of higher education is badly underpinned. It's on the primary schools we should concentrate. That's where a child's mind is made or marred. Our primary schools are a shocking mess—poor buildings, overcrowded—terribly so, and a fantastically low calibre of teacher on starvation wages. That's our primary education for what it's worth. We think that will do. We don't worry about what happens to a Native in the first sixteen years of his life, then we pile on two or three years' higher education, which gives him a sort of veneer, and he's supposed to be qualified to teach. Compulsory education for children should be our first aim, not increasing higher educational opportunities.

"The present type of teacher in these infant schools is a menace. His knowledge is half-digested. He has a distaste for work outside book instructions. His morals are low and his ideals nil."

Presently he spoke about the dire lack of school books and their general unsuitability. He quoted the subject of hygiene, which, he said, was taught in the lower forms from a book compiled in England and based upon a way of life as remote as the moon for kraal-born children. He recalled that just previously he had received a visit from a party of British Members of

<sup>1</sup> A year later in 1946 Lovedale Mission School, the oldest and biggest of all Mission schools for Africans, had a revolt which led to over 400 pupils being sent home. An official inquiry cited, among its several reasons for the outbreak, the feeling of frustration of students against Colour Bar restrictions and repressive legislation.

Parliament, one of whom had inquired what percentage of the qualified teachers passing out obtained jobs as such. He had undertaken a quick survey of the last 2,000. But after a time he gave it up in disgust and despair. Only 2 per cent of some hundreds of records he had examined were teaching.

"I don't blame 'em," he said. "Look at the filthy salaries they get. We're creating a Babu class among them like India has—men of some education who when they cannot get the jobs and money they think they're entitled to become malcontents and agitators."

Down in Natal at Adams Mission College, which was founded more than 100 years ago by an American doctor-missionary, there was a serious outbreak in mid-1947, which provoked illuminating comment from another leading educationist. He pointed out that African students in secondary schools or training as teachers were usually older than Europeans. They were less like children and more like men. But they had had little opportunity to grow into responsibility. They were usually asked to acquiesce, seldom to take part, in things. The result, visible in a wider field than Native education, was a resentful attitude towards all authority, however benevolent.

Public authority, he declared, was very short-sighted where Natives were concerned. South Africa lacked a steady supply of men trained to the task of handling the emerging middle-class Natives. Britain and France, who between them governed a large part of the African continent, gave men special training in colonial administration. The Union Native Affairs Department was simply one of the many departments for which the Public Service Commission tried so unsuccessfully to find reluctant recruits. Few English-speaking young men had yet realised that careers in Native administration were open to them. Unless big changes came soon, conflict faced South Africa in the future.

This expert ended: "These are the tranquil years. I greatly fear that the repression and frustration due to past and even current Native policy will leave us a legacy of bitterness and hatred hard to cope with. If the sky is dark it is with the wings of chickens coming home to roost."

Not all South Africans feel that full educational facilities should be freely available to Africans. No South African

Government at present in sight will provide compulsory primary education for Africans in measurable time. Farmers say bluntly: "Education spoils the Kaffirs". So do any number of townfolk who think of Africans only as cheap servants. The more knowledgeable an African the less likely it is you can bully him into accepting £2 10s. or so a month as adequate wages. Another school of thought which I was surprised to find had many supporters in the Native Affairs Department says you can only educate the African so far; after that its waste of time and money. This is, of course, another effort at rationalising a national prejudice, and maintaining the African as an inferior being because (they say) that is where he naturally belongs.

One Afrikaans-speaking official said over a pint of beer: "The Kaffir's mind is like his woolly, chicken-wire hair, man. You can pull it out and stretch it like that—but once you let go it curls up again to what it was."

Others quote a booklet written by a South African psychologist and educationist who died tragically by his own hand, which set out to prove the marked mental inferiority of the Native to the white child, and concluded by declaring that only a very few Natives could benefit from education "beyond the rudimentary". By such jugglings with truth, scientific and other kinds, do the true-blue South Africans defer an honest, wholehearted non-colour campaign by the State aimed at educating and uplifting the greater mass of the population.

I have mentioned three schools of thought on African education. There remains the fourth hurdle over which all the education in the world will not carry you: that is the barrier put up by the Afrikaner Nationalists when they say that no matter how educated you are, no matter how civilised and cultured, if you do not officially belong to the white race you cannot take part in public affairs in South Africa.

Before I am accused of painting the educational picture too dark, let me show what happens to that 8 per cent of school-going African children which continues past Standard II. By the time Standard VI and the Junior Certificate examination are in sight, the 8 per cent has become a still lower fraction, while only a decimal-point percentage ever carries on to study for a degree at Fort Hare Native College in the Ciskei. Fort Hare can cope with about 250 students, male and female. It stands, a solid grouping of white, gabled buildings, a mile or so from Alice in the Eastern Province and within sight of



Lovedale Mission School from whom the land upon which it is built was obtained.

African students come here from as high as the Equator to take a degree. Its Principal and most of the staff are white. But it does include an African or two like Professor Z. K. Matthews, who in public life is better known as chairman of the caucus in the Natives Representative Council.

A surprising number of professional men, including doctors, are not strictly in favour of academic careers for blacks. They would prefer to see them trained as agriculturists or as a labour force. Even this scheme, which has been worked out in detail by at least one State official, comes up against snags. If you train Africans to use their hands as, say, carpenters, bricklayers, tailors and leather workers, they cannot be properly apprenticed to such trades because "colour bar" restraints preserve all organised skill for the white man. Vocational and technical training courses, however, continue to be a part of the instruction which a fair proportion of senior boy students take in the mission schools. That they can make good in these trades has been demonstrated beyond disproof all the way up Africa. It was students from Lovedale, for example, who built some of the biggest blocks of modern buildings at Fore Hare, working under a white foreman. Given an average chance, the African can master the ordinary trades. Therefore, says the white trade unionist, the African must not be allowed to qualify. Then he will not be able to compete and maybe undercut the white worker. Thus is the traditional role of trustee preserved for the white man.

Still, the mission schools rightly cling to their vocational courses. And students still hopefully take the courses against the day when the white man will decide to allow the "ward" to grow up a little more. The State attempted to break vicious custom by initiating in the post-war a small building trainee scheme for Native ex-volunteers in Johannesburg. But any chance of the plan measuring up to its job—*i.e.*, the provision of 300,000 cheap houses for urban Africans—was stifled by the truculence of the main building unions. The output of men with a modicum of training is merely a token number.

The Native Affairs Department through its Trust funds has worked to give schooling an agricultural twist in the country areas. Schools have vegetable gardens, and here and there a school has a special agricultural course for girls and boys. Some good has thus been achieved. But few children that I ever

spoke to thought in terms of a career on the land. The poverty of the Reserves from whence many of these scholars come, their overcrowding, their lack of any kind of amenities, and the impossibility of making more than a subsistence gives education the glamour of an "open sesame" to a much more beautiful outer world. Education means escape from the drudgery and monotony of kraal-living. Education is something found in books, something you learn by heart from a text-book so that you can recite it off pat or copy it out by the page from memory when an examination looms up. Education means clean hands, a sit-down job, a few dollars a month with status, and a pleasant savour of autocracy about it. Education is the white man's *muti*—medicine—which makes him powerful, which enables him to rule.

When the missionaries first brought the gospel and schooling in the nineteenth century they made few converts.<sup>1</sup> The Africans respected the white man's fire-power far more than his Good Book. They would listen gravely by the hour to discourses on the Christian faith, and then, when there was a pause, they would work the conversation round to the art of making gunpowder and where one might buy the little sticks that went "Ha! ha!" with such fatal precision.

Past inhibitions about education have largely faded now among Africans. To-day they want schooling, and there are not half enough schools. The missions can take no more: they turn away hundreds each year. The missions are doing the job which is in reality a Provincial and State responsibility. The provision of education for all its citizens is the first duty of any self-governing sovereign State. South Africa thinks differently. It prefers to leave the missions to go on holding the baby. That it does not face up to its duties in this respect can be put down to two reasons. One is financial (the figure of £20,000,000 has been mentioned as necessary for the State to take over all mission schools). The second is implicit in what has been said already—namely, that in all measures for uplifting Africans the State and the national will can only be hauled along the royal road of progress like a reluctant mule. Obviously the correct step along that road must be compulsory primary education for Africans. But the mule jibs. Plainly teachers' salaries and qualifications have to be overhauled. But the

<sup>1</sup> Educated African opinion now says, with an eye to the State's duties: "It is not the work of missions to educate the people: they came to Christianise".

mule turns its head away. Clearly there have to be thousands more books made available and hundreds more classrooms, to avoid overcrowding. But the mule is too busy chewing its halter. Manifestly the opportunity for Africans to acquire degrees in medicine, law, chemistry and the arts must be magnified a hundred times above what it is now. At this the mule kicks its heels and tries to retrace its steps.

The obstacles between an African scholar and the full fruits of education are comparable with the twelve labours of Hercules. The whole African population has produced fewer than twenty doctors, and of these the first dozen had to go overseas to get their training and degrees. There is not a single qualified chemist among the 7,750,000. Nor a single dentist. This is not because none of them has the urge or because such positions are superfluous. It just so happens that there are no educational facilities in the country providing such courses for Africans.

By its very purpose, education more than anything else reveals the split-mind in the national outlook, and its calculated hypocrisy. The African people are backward and still heathen, many of them. But that is not an incitement for the State to intensify educational efforts among them. There are Provinces like the Orange Free State where you cannot find a single Government-built school. Education is a liberating force. That is why its dissemination among 7,750,000 people who are in great need of it is so half-baked, so casual, so parsimonious. Education makes people more conscious of what life can give them. Education makes them aware of themselves as individuals. It gives them ideas about the rights of man, of their rights as citizens of a nation in which they are citizenless. It makes them yearn for the many things they cannot obtain—for houses, for better clothes, for more and better food, for better train services and for responsibilities within the framework of their *dorp*, town, city, Province and nation.

Higher education, it needs to be said often and loudly, is not wasted on Africans, any more than it is wasted on Negroes in America. One hundred years ago Tiyo Soga, a kraal-born Native and heathen among a million heathen, showed what education could mean to an African. Soga was sent to Scotland by missionaries. He returned as a qualified preacher to "Kaffirland". He married a Scots girl and brought up a family. He did that rare and condemned thing. He did it in full knowledge of what it would bring down upon his head,

especially from white settlers. He did it, and he did not lose his dignity. Nor did his family suffer. Before he died he wrote out sixty-two maxims under the title "The Inheritance of My Children". No finer or more courageous words in their special context have ever been penned by a South African whose skin happened to be black than these words taken from the first of the maxims:—

"Among some white men there is a prejudice against black men: the prejudice is simply and solely on account of colour. For your own sakes never appear ashamed that your father was a Kafir, and that you inherit some African blood. It is every whit as good and as pure as that which flows in the veins of my fairer brethren. . . . I want you for your own future comfort, to be very careful on this point. You will ever cherish the memory of your mother as that of an upright, conscientious, thrifty, Christian Scotch-woman. You will ever be thankful for your connection by this tie with the white race. But if you wish to gain credit for yourselves—if you do not wish to feel the taunt of men, which you sometimes may be made to feel—*take your place* in the world as *coloured*, not as white; as *Kafirs*: not as Englishmen. . . . You, my children, belong to a primitive race of men, who, amid many un-amiable points, stand second to none as to nobility of character. The Kafirs will stand high when compared in all things with the uncivilised races of the world. They have the elements out of which a noble race might be made!"

Soga's descendants are worthy of their forefather. They are educated and have done well in different spheres of education. But they have not turned their backs on their people. They work among and for Africans as teachers, nurses and lecturers.

I do not say South Africa is full of Tiyo Sogas. But I do say that until the State acts towards its black countrymen as if they were all potential Sogas, there will not be enough justice and equity to go round.

Apart from Fort Hare a few Africans and non-white students are admitted to the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand. The Universities of Stellenbosch, Pretoria and Potchefstroom—all predominantly Afrikaans-speaking—pride themselves on keeping the black man out. Nor do the colleges of the Free State and Eastern Cape admit non-whites. When challenged they talk about a separate African university from

which the students when qualified will be able to work as professors, doctors, lawyers, architects and the like in some vague segregated areas never properly defined, where a kind of self-government for Africans will be allowed so long as the working classes come and do the heavy work for the white man. These Afrikaans universities are forcing-houses for racialism. The outlook of the teaching staff is such that the courses are guaranteed to stimulate anti-Native, anti-Indian, anti-coloured feeling. Their attitude and the attitude of the Dutch Reformed Church through its pulpits are a guarantee that a repressive race policy towards Africans will never lack blind devotees among white South Africans.

Anti-colour feeling is as sanctified in these seats of learning as it is in the religion of the Afrikaner people. This is the nation's insurance policy against the onset of the liberal spirit. This is the eleventh commandment, the Law of Self-Preservation, and the holiest of all laws for white South Africa. And this is the law which holds in it the seeds of certain conflict.

#### CHAPTER XIII

### "THE LITTLE GLASS OF DEATH"

"The thin, round-shouldered, flat-chested, pot-bellied child with spindly legs was such a common sight that it can only be concluded that many were on the border of starvation."—BANTU NUTRITION SURVEY, 1938-39.

WHEN THE white flag with the red cross flies from a stout bamboo pole on the hillock dominating undulating miles of the southernmost Native Reserve in Natal, the kraals round about know that M'Tanda ya Bantu—"Lover of the Bantu"—is in residence. Twice a week the flag-flier, old Dr. Goldsmith, drives up to this little clinic he started in 1944 in school buildings belonging to a Swedish mission. A couple more of his week-days are spent at two other clinics he has started in the same Reserve where live 30,000 Natives who before Dr. Goldsmith took an interest in them had no medical services at all on the spot.

Running "hobo" clinics was by no means Dr. Goldsmith's original plan when he had first come, eighteen months before, to this sultry, lagoon-laced strip of coast, after retiring from the post of Chief Medical Officer to a Rand gold-mining group. He had bought himself a handsome thatched residence over-

looking a wide lagoon, and there was fishing almost on the front doorstep and golf not more than a brassie shot away from the back. But he said good-bye to ease when he discovered that modern medicine had not yet reached his 30,000 mixed Zulu and Pondo tribal neighbours in the adjoining Reserve.

Dr. Goldsmith had known many thousands of Africans on the gold-mines. But then they had merely been "labour force", an anonymous mass of dark humanity—so many chests, muscles and thighs which paraded and were passed so long as they had their health and strength. Now he had a curiosity to see what the African was like in his own setting, to see for himself whether the rumoured high infant mortality among Bantu was indeed provable, and whether disease and malnutrition were, in fact, besetting them increasingly in their neglected rural backwaters.

To start his first clinic at Gcilima, Dr. Goldsmith used partly his own money, and the rest he borrowed unconditionally from friends. When I visited him he was being paid £15 a month by the grateful Provincial authorities, and the Public Health Department was subsidising his transport costs. Their support remained guarded, for during a smallpox scare, when he had vaccinated over 2,000 Natives because of the shortage of doctors in the vicinity, his bill for 10 guineas had been repudiated, since he had acted without official instructions.

After the first flush of enthusiasm, Dr. Goldsmith admitted to me he had an urge to withdraw from his self-imposed task. The enormity of it appalled him. The tribesfolk were dispirited, and at first suspicious. Their minds were dark and heathen; their habits unhygienic, their ideas on sickness ruled by a weight of superstitious awe of their own *inyangas* and *izangoma*—herbalists and doctors. At first he had few callers. Doubts about any white man's good intentions go very deep. Every missionary has the same kind of deep-down passive psychological resistance to overcome before he can gain Africans' confidence. The contrast between white men preaching brotherhood and white men insisting on absolute servility creates a complexity for Africans which is insufficiently appreciated by Europeans. There is, too, a legacy of bad faith left by earlier land-grabbing settlers and traders which is so profound that it will take many generations to live down.

Inevitably on the occasion of my visit to Dr. Goldsmith the official of the Native Affairs Department accompanying me made great play with the survival of tribalism and heathen

custom in matters of hygiene. But I was too familiar by this time with this official technique of underlining the ignorance and barbarity of rural Africa. It did not seem to occur to the men who plugged this line of talk *ad nauseam* to me that such backwardness was more often than not itself a downright condemnation of the policy which allowed it to continue year after year.

When I did make this point, officialdom took a new tack. Yes, it said, there was indeed a great shortage of clinics and hospitals and doctors in the Reserves and in the towns. But it was only in the last few years that the Bantu had really been converted to the benefits of the white man's medicine. This argument is valid only in the most backward areas. In the Eastern Cape Province, a Bantu nurse told me, the Native people used to speak of the white man's medicine as "the little glass of death". This referred to the phials of morphia used to ease the last hours of Native patients brought in in a dying condition. The Natives resorted to a white doctor only as a final effort to cheat death. Instead of cheating death, they complained the white man ensured it with his "little glass" of morphia.

But to return to Gcilima. Dr. Goldsmith soon found, once the people were convinced of his sincerity and power to help them, that his visiting hours were too short, his supplies of medicine too small, his capacity to cover the territory too strained. All he could offer was rudimentary medicinal practice. Gcilima, his first clinic, had no proper water supply; what he used came from neighbouring springs.

"V.D. and T.B.," he told me, "are not high in the district. Nor is malaria. We have many cases of dysentery, but it's the bacilla type, not amœbic. Pellagra is common, and one in ten has scabies."

Working on mass prophylactic lines, he had reduced his specifics to ten kinds of tablets and twenty kinds of medicine. Fees bore no relation to the medicine and treatment. They were merely taken on the assumption that "something-for-nothing" would not impress the Native mind. As an American Board Mission doctor pointed out to me, it was Bantu custom for the *izangoma*, or doctors, when approached by a patient to ask: "How much have you with which to open my bag?" (*i.e.*, his bag of divining bones). So the doctor kept a tin box—a child's money-box it was—on his table, into which the Native nurse who also acted as interpreter dropped the fees. More

often than not they were too poor to pay. When they did it was a few pence only.

There was a crowd of thirty or more women with little children outside the morning I visited him, and for a while I sat in his consulting-room watching him at work. I stayed long enough to hear the troubles of five patients. There was nothing posed about this inspection. Dr. Goldsmith was not expecting me, and certainly not the patients.

Let me summarise the five cases:—

*Case One:* Heathen woman with sickly baby; very constipated and under-nourished. Dr. Goldsmith, as a bit of mild mumbo-jumbo, flicked her hand with a leather dog-whip in rebuke for not caring properly for the child. To me he said: "Probably the witch-doctor told the woman: 'Don't feed the child'." Not one kraal in ten had milk for the family. They didn't milk their cows. And they had queer taboos, such as that which said a married woman should not drink milk in her husband's home, and that they must never give a child water. Prescription given was liquid paraffin, cod-liver oil and a pep-talk.

*Case Two:* Married woman (heathen) with brother. Had had six children, of which three were dead. This average held good throughout the Reserve, said the Doctor. The woman had a bad cough, had coughed blood and been coughing for two years. She was given more cough mixture and warned about four things—spitting, food, fresh air, and resting. After she had gone out the doctor spoke to her brother: "When you are in darkness," he said through his nurse-interpreter, "you must not be foolish and pretend it is light. Your sister is sick and may die. She must rest out of the sun, have milk, chicken's eggs, and do no heavy work."

*Case Three:* Heathen woman who had had seven children—four dead. Baby with her had whooping-cough. She was given luminol. The last medicine she had had was finished. She was given more, and told that it was stronger. It was the same, but had a yellower tinge. The doctor remarked on how in the kraal huts the women and children had the habit of sleeping with their heads covered with dirty blankets at night.

*Case Four:* Woman with baby—healthy-looking child of twelve months with head ringworm. She had had four children, two alive, two dead. Her sister was a syphilitic who had had eighteen children—seventeen dead:

*Case Five:* Mother and child both had whooping-cough,



also diarrhoea and pain. She had had six children—three dead.

I have spoken elsewhere of the lack of statistics about black South Africa. Obviously no proper health services can be started—assuming the State would vote the money or was ready to initiate overdue reforms—without a proper record of births, deaths and marriages among the 7,750,000 Africans. Officially, as one critic puts it, some millions of people in the Union are non-existent.

“Officially they are neither born nor do they die; the State becomes aware of them only if their span of life happens to cross one of our infrequent Native censuses or if they are found without a poll-tax receipt.”

On this question of infant mortality the National Health Services Commission of 1942 which was formed to investigate health conditions and prepare a blueprint for health for all races in the country says:—

“The consensus among medical officers of health and the evidence of several surveys is that the Native infantile mortality rate is not less than 150 (per 1,000) anywhere and in some areas is as high as 600 or 700.”

The Bantu were a robust nation before the white man infiltrated. V.D., which the Zulus call “the white man’s disease”, was unknown. Chest troubles were very rare. They affected a healthy semi-nudity. Their dietary achieved a rude balance. Their lives were spent in the open air and the sunshine. Tribal clashes were the main levelling influence on population with occasional droughts and famine. Disease or sickness, like misfortune, they ascribed to human agencies—magical efforts by ill-wishers only to be alleviated magically. This belief dies very hard. Indeed, it lives on in the minds of thousands of urban-dwelling Africans, from factory workers who have their homes in the locations to domestic servants who live at the bottom of the white man’s gardens in *kyas*.

Every mission which blends healing with education has had the same fight against superstition and the ancient powers wielded over chiefs by medicine-men, rain-doctors, “heaven-doctors” (as the Zulus call one species), and the rest of the specialist racketeers. In Natal the Province even issues permits to some hundreds of Native herbalists to allow them to practice. You see them squatting on waste ground near railway stations with their dubious mixtures displayed. Or perhaps

outside a trading store in a rural district. Or in a tiny, box-like, open shop in the municipal Native markets of Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg and Durban.

The contents of a Zulu herbalist's bag were once analysed thus:—

“There are baked insects and dried reptiles: the dung of lions in powders and the fat of the water-sprite in bottles: the shrivelled flesh of the whiteman and the hardened menses of the baboon: an incongruous assortment of oddities—Spanish-fly powder, asbestos, glass prisms, washing-soda, flint, spa, crystal, coral, rare geological specimens of every description: skins and bones of every conceivable animal, and hundreds of barks, roots, berries and leaves—in a word, choice selections, innumerable and wonderful, medicinal and magical, useful, harmful, and inert, from the whole range of mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, terrestrial and marine.”

In twentieth-century South Africa it is more useful to examine what has been done to wean the African people from their faith in the old heathen practices than to dwell on those practices, however picturesque they may be. As I have indicated, it is the missions who have done the bulk of the work. Take away their rural hospitals or their schools and there would be precious little to which the African country folk could turn in order to obtain the blessings of white civilisation. The missions are doing the work which the Provinces or the State should do. Control of general hospitals rests with the four Provinces. Each of the four finances and administers its hospitals under different ordinances. Infectious diseases hospitals are mainly the concern of local authorities, but the State subsidises expenditure on them. The Government contributes also to cases of open T.B., but not on expenditure for its prevention, and while it will provide expenses to fight a plague it will pay nothing to check epidemics. These divisions of authority inevitably have made a “crazy patchwork” of national health services. They are another administrative hangover from the time of the Act of Union in 1910, when the Provinces retained certain powers, including control of the hospitals, in order “to give them something to do”.

One expert sums up thus:—

“With their four histories, their four outlooks, and their four economies there have resulted four separate policies (in

the Provinces), four discordances, ever since, which all the ingenuity and goodwill of the Consultative Committee of Administrators has not been able to solve. There can be no comprehensive solution of the health problems of the Union under such a system. . . . I have for three years wrestled with this hydra-headed monster created by the fathers of our constitution. The chief sufferer is the unhappy cripple whom all desire to help."

Yet, in the face of protests from medical men up and down the country and the recommendations of the National Health Services Commission, the State has refused to place the hospitals under the authority of the Central Government along with the 400 Health Centres or clinics it has proposed building to provide medical treatment for all races.

Nowhere in my travels and talks did I meet a single doctor who spoke in support of this divided control. One superintendent in Natal said: "This is like being given half a bicycle. Obviously the Provinces should control the new Health Centres as well as the hospitals". Another doctor in the Transvaal was emphatic that one authority would sabotage the other. The new Government clinics would be flooding the Provincial hospitals with cases which the hospitals would declare should not have come to them. The patient would be tossed to and fro like a shuttlecock. It was an attempt to perpetrate a situation which Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr had already declared to be impossible—namely, of dividing the indivisible since a man in hospital with a broken leg which the Province would treat, could be found suffering from open T.B. which was the concern of the State.

In the Reserve where Dr. Goldsmith took compassion on the people he was the only visiting doctor among 30,000 (or more). This disparity is even more pronounced in other predominantly Native areas. The Transkei, where the percentage is one doctor to 22,000, and where there are less than 600 beds for 1,300,000 Africans, has fourteen small hospitals, of which nine are mission-founded and run. Compared to parts of Natal below the Drakensburg and Vendaland in the north-eastern Transvaal, where there is one white mission doctor among 150,000, it does not appear unusual. Mr. Heaton Nicholls, the then High Commissioner for South Africa in London, could tell an audience that hospital and medical facilities were within

walking distance of every African in the Union, which inspired an ironical Rand newspaper leader: "How Far Can You Walk?"

The only doctors found in these pockets of Native population are men with the mission spirit. Private practice in town is the short cut to prosperity which most doctors seek. Such State aid as is provided for rural doctors by giving them the title of district surgeon or assistant or additional district surgeon is not much more than a token payment. The materialistic approach in medicine is the modern approach among students taking their medical degrees at Union universities. The finest people I met in the Native areas were the doctors, hospital sisters, nurses and mission teachers, whom I found many miles from any town, living lonely lives with little companionship of their own kind, and maintaining an endless battle with their daily budgets in order to supply treatment, medicine, nursing, midwifery and schooling for the thousands of Natives in their district who more often than not were too poor to pay anything for benefits received.

"There's a kind of spirituality about this place," one official admitted to me when we visited a small mission hospital in the Kuruman half-desert zone which was the main centre of healing for a district containing 25,000 Natives. I found that spirit flaming up in a dozen off-the-map places, and nowhere brighter than in that child's ward full of T.B. spinal and spastic cases in the Mount Coke Mission Hospital in the Ciskei, who piped up so cheerfully with "Who Will be a Witness for my Lord?" for the visitors.

The Native peoples, as I have said, were once a fine healthy race. Such surveys as have been conducted of late years on a national and local scale show how seriously ill-health and preventable diseases have eaten into their lives. (Nor are the figures for white South African children very reassuring.) The following figures are the result of a Bantu Nutrition Survey among 7,000 children in the four Provinces which collected evidence in 1938-39. The percentages with obvious signs of ill-health and/or malnutrition were:—

	Boys.	Girls.
Pietermaritzburg (Natal) . . . . .	44·51	42·97
Pretoria (Transvaal) . . . . .	72·13	60·69
Bloemfontein (Orange Free State) . . . . .	76·81	75·60
Bochem (Transvaal) . . . . .	88·80	84·19
Letaba (Northern Transvaal) . . . . .	90·42	83·60

"The thin, round-shouldered, flat-chested, pot-bellied child with spindly legs," says the report, "was such a common sight that it can only be concluded that many were on the borders of starvation. The problem is thus not only one of providing this or that particular food factor, but rather to build up a healthy Bantu population, averting starvation as well as many more specific deficiency diseases." Out of this exposure arose the National School Feeding Scheme of 1942, a scheme controlled by the Department of Social Welfare and costing, for African schools, a matter of round £700,000 annually. The expenditure of food works out about 2*d.* per child per day. This is to the good, but when it is remembered that only about a third of the Africans of school-going age are in school, it will be seen that, as usual with such plans, it only scratches the surface.

Shortage of doctors, shortage of nurses (at least 5,000 more are required), lack of hospitals, lack of clinics, lack of training facilities, and, above all, the pinching and terror of minimum bread-line and below-bread-line living—these are the factors which make the future so grim for the country's labour efficiency and health bill. I have already indicated the anxiety shown in the Chamber of Mines in the late 'thirties over the lowered standard of physique and higher number of rejections at the recruiting depots of the Native Labour Recruiting Corporation in the Transkei and Ciskei.

Every employer of labour, from the housewife to the factory owner, has need to feel concerned about this steady decline. It ought to be a matter for serious concern, for example, that V.D. has continued to show an annual increase among the Natives. Dr. G. W. Gale, venereal diseases officer for the Union from 1939 to 1942, stated that between 25 and 30 per cent of urban Natives in the several surveys taken had syphilis. Sample surveys in rural areas were almost the same.

Routine examinations at Pass offices on the Rand in 1946 disclose that 28 per cent of all urban Native males have a positive Wassermann blood test. Over 40 per cent of Native and Coloured women attending Rand ante-natal clinics have been found to give positive Wassermanns. A medical officer with a mining group comments: "Few of these, males and females, are in that state of acute infectivity in which they would pass on the infection by mere superficial contact: but many of these men would pass on the infection to their women and each of the pregnant infected women (unless receiving full and regular treatment) will infect the infant lying in her womb".

Nor, despite South Africa's vaunted reputation for sunshine, are the figures for T.B. less alarming. "South Africa," said the Chief Tuberculosis Officer of the Union, Dr. B. A. Dormer, when he addressed a national conference on the disease in mid-1947, "has the dubious distinction of holding the world's record for the tuberculosis death-rate among its non-European industrial workers". And commenting on the lack of accommodation he said: "The Union has 40,000 active cases walking around, yet in Britain if there were more than 200 tuberculosics on the waiting list there are questions in Parliament".

The average number of deaths a day from tuberculosis in Durban, as in Cape Town, has been given as three. Of the thousands of African mine-workers who have picked up phthisis and tuberculosis working on the Rand gold-mines and coughed their lungs out in their distant kraals there is no record. Even now, when phthisis legislation and medical attention have greatly reduced deaths from phthisis and tuberculosis, and pension rights are on a comparatively generous scale for affected white miners, no such provision is made for African miners. All they get, once certified, is a grant and transport back to their kraals. What happens after, and whether—as is more than likely—the returned miner infects any other members of his family will never appear in any history of the gold-mines. But in the sixty or so years in which the mines have been employing Africans at the rate of so many thousands a year it would make a formidable total indeed.

In 1932 a Tuberculosis Research Committee of the South African Institute of Medical Research checked up on 348 repatriated Natives who, during the years 1926/7/8 had to be sent home because they were T.B. It found that 39.9 per cent died within a year of getting back home. Under the heading "Condition of repatriated boys at the end of two years" it records: Dead 60 per cent; alive, fit to return to heavy work, 4 per cent; fit for light work at home 26 per cent; alive, but unfit for work, 10 per cent.

How far disease, ignorance, under-feeding, long delays in their daily travel to and from their urban work, and, of course, the deliberate denial of opportunity each contribute to African inefficiency cannot be measured. They are all major factors and they are all preventable.

South Africa has other causes for alarm at the deterioration of its African population, especially in rural areas. Two or three years ago it started, through its Native Affairs Depart-

ment, paying blind pensions to Natives. By 1946 there were 24,442 registered cases receiving a monthly pension in the region of 10s. Nationalist Party spokesmen have more than once railed in Parliament at old Natives too feeble to work who receive this amount. In their view it is "spoiling" the Kaffir. Many more cases of blindness have yet to get on the books. The tragedy is that with proper facilities 95 per cent of these cases of blindness would have been cured and sight restored.

This is the finding of ophthalmic investigation, not a wild general statement. Colonel O. L. Shearer, who is both a medical man and a Parliamentarian, said during 1947: "Often the dread eye disease trachoma or Egyptian blindness is mistaken for conjunctivitis and the mistake discovered all too late. Trachoma in several forms is becoming more prevalent in the Union, especially among the Natives of the Northern Transvaal. Investigations have provided statistics which show that out of 3,000 cases examined 1,710 suffered from trachoma. A more alarming result was that out of a sample of 1,100 school children who were supposed to be normal, 59 per cent were found to be suffering from some eye disease, often in early stages and undetected."

I met the woman specialist who was responsible for this survey when I was in the Louis Trichardt area. She took me round the wards of a mission hospital and showed me the youthful syphilitics and disease-blinded cases. She was another of those devoted souls on whom the country trades—professional folk who have turned their backs on the comforts and rewards of city living in order to do a job of work in the backblocks.

The war of 1939-45 had one surprising by-product; it made many young white South African volunteers in uniform conscious that all was not well with their black fellow-countrymen. This revelation came to the troops during 1945, when they were campaigning in Italy. Part of the credit goes to the Army Information services. They did a fine job of work educating men behind the lines with lectures, talks and literature. Out of their new awareness of their own country's problems, and with the wider vision which travel had given them, a group of young officers started a movement among the troops to create, as a living war memorial, a national trust fund to promote health services among the Natives.

Support came from the top and from the bottom. The men

volunteered to forgo two days' pay to start the fund off. That meant a tidy sum in dollars. Thus was begun the National War Memorial Foundation, which expanded its purpose to include all sections of the needy South African people, white and black, and which declared that,

“without relieving the Union Government, any Provincial administration or Local Authority of expenditure which is its responsibility, the immediate programme of the National War Memorial Health Foundation shall be:—

1. To plan and initiate the establishment in every needy locality, rural and urban, of a people's centre or agricultural settlement where health-promotive work will be undertaken. To proceed as early as possible with the establishment of centres for the different racial groups of the population as pilot models on which others can be based. The National War Memorial will thus be effective over the whole country.

2. To co-operate with organisations, official and voluntary, which undertake health-promotive service work, such as:—

- (a) health education of the people;
- (b) food clubs for cheaper foods;
- (c) physical education of youths, adults, etc., etc.

3. To educate and organise public opinion on health and welfare matters.

4. To work with Central, Provincial and Local Authorities and press them to deal with fundamental causes of ill-health and to carry out schemes for health and welfare services.

5. To help men and women of all races to obtain ‘training to serve the nation's health.’”

That, to my mind, was the most significant occurrence in the modest South African contribution to the defeat of the German armies in Italy. When I heard of it I could not help recalling the words of the author of *Caliban in Africa* when he wrote:—

“It needed the Great War to produce the League of Nations and it will need an equally devastating local upheaval to induce the Afrikaner<sup>1</sup> to hand the Native question over to the scientific spirit.”

<sup>1</sup> The author, Leonard Barnes, makes it plain that by “Afrikaner” he means any white South African, whether of Boer or British descent.



## CHAPTER XIV

### “FOR EUROPEANS ONLY”

“The white man is determined to do all he can to remain, and what is more, to rule. This matter is to us in South Africa such a vital and fundamental matter that no ethical considerations such as the rights of man will be allowed to stand in the way.”—SIR THOMAS WATT, a South African politician.

ALL LIFE, when it is any class at all, is third-class for Africans in South Africa. The best of everything is reserved “For Europeans Only”. The seats on the railway stations, like the seats in Parliament, carry the same visible or invisible lettering: “For Europeans Only” and “Alleen vir Europeane”. The only places where they may achieve equality is in the courts when it comes to fines, and when they go into a shop to buy an article. Otherwise they are treated as inferior beings. This “For-Europeans-Only” outlook impregnates life to a degree which brands any white South African who formulates an independent and more generous estimate of his darker fellow-man as a traitor to his own kin and code.

But before indulging in any more generalisations let me give a few wayside snapshots from everyday life which are so commonplace that I warrant they would have passed unnoticed among most of my fellow-countrymen.

Opposite me in the fast electric train between Johannesburg and Pretoria sit two people. One is a sour-faced man who looks as if he has taken a bromide and doubts its efficacy. The other is a be-blazered schoolboy with his nose in a novel. A companion of the boy, similarly panoplied, sits beside me staring at the landscape. Like his friend and the other nine of the cricketing eleven scattered round the adjoining seats, he is of the clean-limbed Springbok<sup>1</sup>-to-be type.

The boys' conversation—such as it is—is well-modulated, their demeanour modest but eager, as befitting happy warriors heading for the joust. Presently the lad with the book-screen lowers it to look out of the window. Something catches his eye. He taps my companion on the shin and points and looks puzzled at the same time.

<sup>1</sup> Springbok: National emblem of athletic South Africa. Bernard Shaw's suggestion that the ostrich was more apt has never been taken up.

We are passing a little Native township graveyard of metal crosses, the grass cover blackened by fire—a dismal sight. The youth beside me looks at it and breathes one word across:

“Coons,” he said.

Bored, the young men resume their clean-limbed repose.

I am standing in the small, white-palisaded grass enclosure at Palmietfontein aerodrome, near Johannesburg, waiting for the London air-liner to touch down. With me is the local secretary of a world-famous youth organisation, who is on a similar mission—namely, to meet a well-known negro lecturer. A few yards behind us are two Africans. One is a sports organiser with the same youth organisation, and the other is the secretary's chauffeur.

A white-topee-ed young policeman in blue serge accosts us and points to the two Africans.

“Iss these two Natives with you?” he asks in a heavy Afrikaans accent.

My companion says they are.

“Well,” says the policeman, “I've told them they can't stand inside 'ere, see? This place is for Europeans only, man. I told them if they don't shift out I'm going to charge them.”

My companion, going a darker shade of red, tells the policeman that the two men are with him. They are in his party. One is a colleague of his. If any charge is going to be made—which he does not believe—it will have to be made against him, too.

The policeman persists. This small grass enclosure is, he says, “for Europeans only”, even if there doesn't happen to be a notice to that effect near the entrance. Educated or not educated, the place for Natives was outside and round the back of the building.

The argument takes wings and begins to embrace the rights of man. The policeman says, answering a criticism: “This country iss different to others, man.”

Higher officials are summoned. Confidential whispers are exchanged between them and the secretary. The policeman is called aside. He drifts away. The two Africans remained standing where they were—respectfully a few paces behind us.

I walk into the little shop attached to a garage and ask for the loan of a spanner. The man behind the counter looks at his shelves loaded with gadgets and samples and calls out: “John!”

A native garage-hand comes out from the repair-shop somewhere at the back: "Ja, baas?"

"Give me that spanner, eh, John?" says the man behind the counter, and points to the tool which is lying not more than nine feet away from his hand on a middle shelf.

A Native stands at the ticket booking-office window on a small Reef station waiting to be served. At the nearby window where the whites buy their tickets there is a clerk and plenty of service. After a wait of twenty minutes the clerk decides to come to the "For Non-Europeans" window.

*Native:* Please give me a ticket. . . .

*Clerk:* Shut up. What ticket? There's no train to Joburg before twelve.

*Native:* I know, but I want to get my ticket and rest on a bench until it comes.

*Clerk:* I don't care whether you want to rest or not. There's no train now, so you can wait till there is one.

*Native:* You ask me to wait for the train, but the train won't wait for me.

*Clerk:* Don't give me any cheek, you black bastard you. . . . (Retires.)

As the time for the train draws nearer, Europeans queue up for tickets and are served. Just as the train comes in the Native man and an old Native woman are issued tickets and rush off to get the train, which pulls out, however, before they can get aboard. The old woman finds then that in the rush she was given short change, and goes back to the ticket office.

When the ticket-clerk eventually comes to the window, he refuses to listen to her, tells her she should have examined her change before running away, and puts down the shutter to end the conversation.

A crocodile of Native school children under the charge of a teacher is returning from an evening concert on the Reef when it is cut into two sections by the traffic. The second section, which includes a number of very young boys, is arrested, taken to a police station two miles away, and put into the cells.

The headmaster of the school, which is a Native boarding-school, spends several unsuccessful hours looking for the boys. No steps are taken by the police to inform the school (which

was on the telephone) notwithstanding requests by the arrested boys.

The following is an advertisement in the leading national Sunday newspaper:—

“B—— P—— Kennels: Aristocrats of the breed: blood will tell. Book now for a pup from my well-known strain of big and fierce Dobermann Pinschers: highly pedigreed: sire ‘Pomposity’ (Reg. No. 54970) dam the splendid ‘Clementine’ (Reg. No. 53955): devils on Non-Europeans: humanly intelligent: absolute satisfaction guaranteed. Here are charming young animals. Litters due this month/ Book at once. B—— P—— Kennels, B——, Orange Free State.

Trivialities, you may say. But life is made up of trivialities. And it is trivialities such as these which are a truer reflection of South African life than quotations from blue-books or Government hand-outs about the theoretical rights which Africans are supposed to enjoy.

The gospel of the black as an “inferior being” has many more devotees than Christianity’s talk of the brotherhood of man. South Africa, and most of Africa where white settlements have taken root, have put the clock of civilisation back hundreds of years. Theories of equality, justice, of humanity and the duties and responsibilities of life in a civilised society which Europe thrashed out in blood, revolution and argument, are having to be thrashed out all over again in Africa because a pigmentation factor has been introduced.

White South Africa does not, and cannot deal justly with the African section of the population because it has barely started creating any precedents in law, industry, commerce, the arts, manners or anything else which can be quoted as a standard to measure up to. Nearly 100 years ago Mr. Peppercorne, a magistrate, in a Natal location wrote this of the place of the African in the national cosmos:—

“It would be very difficult to contemplate any kind of product of labour except skilled labour which does not involve that of the Kaffir in this district. On a farm he does almost everything. He herds the cattle, milks the cows, churns the butter, loads it on the wagon, the oxen of which he inspanns and leads. He cuts wood and thatch, he digs

sluits and makes bricks, and reaps the harvest; and, in the house, invariably cooks. There is little that I ever see a farmer do except ride about the country. In the town there are some familiar cases in which Kaffir labour is employed to a ridiculous extent: for in what quarter of the globe would male adults be found performing the offices of nurses to infants and children, or as laundresses of female apparel? These docile achievements are certainly not very congruous with their manly habits, nor compatible with the character given them of bloodthirsty savages."

That was the situation in Natal in 1852. It is the situation as you find it there to-day and in the other Provinces. And it is into this society, which is only one remove from that slave society, which was officially abolished in the Cape in the 1820's, that generations of white South Africans have grown up, and which the bulk of them regard as a proper and true relationship between white and black. Can it be wondered that General Smuts and South Africa as a whole were shaken to the core by the strictures of the United Nations in New York in 1946? "Those who are used to cramp liberty," wrote Dean Swift, "have gone so far as to resent the liberty of complaining: although a man upon the rack was never known to be refused the liberty as loud as he thought fit."

The hardest mental conflict facing a South African comes the day when he discovers that God did not create the African to be his wash-pot. If he emerges from that struggle with a realisation that the African can be other things besides a hewer of wood and drawer of water, then he is a soul to be saved. Too often the struggle either passes him by or he has been so conditioned by parental example, schooling (including the history books), University, church and life that he is constitutionally unable to think straight on an issue involving race.

But no society remains static. South Africa, for all its tortoise-like urge to hide its head under its shell, is not its own economic master, however else it may claim to be in command of its own destiny. The dynamics of change lie deep in economic laws. But before noting in what manner they are helping to mould certain rigid race-concepts there are some further distinctions to be observed in the externals of living in South Africa.

Race oppression is least in the Cape Province, where some normal political rights exist and where South Africa's only cul-

tural springs are found. The Cape is the happiest of the four Provinces because of this tolerance. In Cape Town seats on buses and trams are free for all. I know of no better way to inculcate mutual respect between different races than by making them observe the same laws when it comes to bus queues and seating inside a bus. White civilisation—that delicately preserved flower which the State would like the Africans to believe is a bloom only to be worn in the button-hole after centuries of tribulation—has not been undermined by the Cape's friendlier non-racial outlook for its transport. Bus tickets have not wilted because a darker hand has clutched them. The ordinary currency of the country has withstood the shock of indiscriminate mixing, and the virtue of a million white housewives emerges triumphant daily from the ordeal of propinquity—a propinquity which has never distressed the *huisvrou*, Dutch or English, in her own kitchen.

In Natal the best that that British descended segment of white South Africa has been able to agree to is a certain amount of "Jim Crow" seating on its municipal transport.<sup>1</sup> In the Orange Free State and the Transvaal the Boer outlook predominates everywhere, and finds easy supporters among new settlers anxious to please because it is so compact of human selfishness, intolerance and race superiority. The mental climate of these two ex-Dutch Republics is highly flattering to the human ego. Any nonentity from the tenements of Europe or the slums and suburbia of England makes the pleasing overnight discovery that he is a member of a master-race. In the crude materialism of a like place Johannesburg this spectacle of Tom, Dick and Harry backed by the full weight of law and the national outlook loudly asserting their new-found arrogance with the black man is one of the most familiar and least edifying spectacles in Africa.

Caricaturists with an eye for the Human Comedy have not yet given enough attention to these incongruities. My favourite is of the idle housewife in the £3,000-a-year class suburb of Houghton haggling with an old vagrant Native weaver whether to pay 2s. 6d. or 3s. 9d. for a finely fashioned basket which might have taken several days to make. Houghton invariably wins, whether it is baskets, pottery or flowers. The expression of triumph on the bargainer's face is at least as old as that of the money-changers of the temple.

<sup>1</sup> A 1947 by-law has stopped this practice to the deep resentment of Non-Europeans.

The effect of living in a subservient society brings rapid deterioration of such veneer of civilisation as the newcomers may have brought with them. Truculence and bad manners flourish where they enjoy greatest licence. And if you want a licence for both, Johannesburg provides it. I venture to say that any African who took his cue for conduct from the jolly, cut-throat commercial world of Johannesburg would be in gaol within a very few hours.

Natal reserves its hottest race antagonisms for the Indian. "Jim Fish," says the Natalian, in so many words, "is a decent feller—give me the ole 'munt' every time. But these coolies! They live on the smell of an oil-rag, and they'd cut your throat for tuppence." There is no oppression visited upon the Natives by the Boers in the Republics with which the British element of Natal would not cheerfully saddle the Indian. I have heard *rooineks* in Durban only a month or two out from England talking the same language and airing the same rancid racialism as the fourth generation of settlers. I met one of these in Durban in 1947, and within five minutes he had told me the Indians lived on the smell of an oil-rag and would swindle you the moment your back was turned. "I don't mind the Indian in India," he said with an air of being generous. "But not in Africa!"

I told him that there were quite a number of parts of the world which felt that though the Englishman also might be tolerable in England, abroad he was insufferable. The *rooinek* stared at me as if I was talking distasteful irrelevancies.

Better, perhaps, than any of the other Provinces Natal illustrates the truth that a ruling class, no matter how closely it preserves to itself the machinery of power, inevitably does reflect in time something of the quality of the subject people. The Zulus in Natal still retain a preference for that housework which Mr. Peppercorne, the Natal magistrate, earlier quoted as being incongruous to a manly people. They also take boss-boy jobs on the mines, they join the police, or they perform night-watchmen's duties. They have not lost their pride of race doing such work. They like to put themselves on the side of the white man when they deal with other Bantu. "We are two strong men," their attitude says. "We conquered these dogs, and you conquered us. We two are the masters—you first, us behind you." And their spokesmen have been heard to say: "The Government is a leopard. A leopard has white spots and black spots. We Zulu are the black spots. We hope that when

the leopard basks in the sun to lick his spots he will not forget to lick the black spots’.

The old Zulu contempt for work—a luxury they can only afford intermittently nowadays—has been transmitted to white Natal, whose reputation for lethargy has been christened “Natal fever”. It was the laziness of the Zulus and their refusal to do the heavy field-work involved in building up the Natal sugar industry which led to the importation of indentured coolie labour from India in the latter half of the last century. White Natal is not totally lacking in respect for the Zulus and Natal Natives (many of whom should not really be classed as Zulus). This respect dates from the days of the Zulu fighting prowess and the military genius of Tshaka, which made a nation out of them. The world used to have a weakness for a good fighting man. The Zulus, having been beaten, had unlimited admiration for the English—especially the sporting type of bug-whiskered Englishman who blossomed during Victoria’s long reign, and who made so many ardent and heroic efforts in remote parts of the world to perish for the honour and glory of the little White Raj. With these sporting types went also the code of British fair play and justice, which became healing balms for beaten foes in several outer parts of the expanding Empire. In the case of Zululand the code took the form of first deposing and then restoring the conquered Zulu king Cetuyayo. Unconscious of higher diplomacy or conscience-qualms behind this jugglery, the Zulu people were prepared to regard it as a piece of rare goodwill and well-wishing from their masters. And so the tradition of British fair play took firm root in this particular corner of the Empire.

How incongruous such gestures could appear in the eyes of Dutch South Africa I only realised casually when I happened to visit the stone monument erected on the flat plain of the Ulundi battlefield in the heart of Zululand. Here, in August, 1879, the spear-throwing impis of Cetuyayo learned their final lesson of obedience under the Gatlings, rifles and lances of Lord Chelmsford’s troops. On one side of the wall of the monument is an inscription and list of the three or four white soldiers who died in that fight. Facing it on the opposite wall is a tablet: “To the memory of the brave Zulu men who died fighting for the old order”.

With me was the Chief of Police for Zululand, a man with a historic Afrikaans name. He surprised me by pointing up at this tablet and shrugging his shoulders: “What d’you make



of that?" he said. For the moment I had forgotten I was in a country where its Professors could seriously tell a public audience that we could not afford to give the African a "square deal"—there was too many of them.

You will not find any tablets to the brave warriors and leaders of the Bantu who opposed the Dutch Voortrekkers in their settlement of the Orange Free State and Transvaal Republics. This is not to say that there was none. Only that the Afrikaner takes a different view of the Native. He fought the African for possession of the lands—when he did not obtain them by subtler methods. They were enemies. And so far as most Afrikaners are concerned the Bantu are still the enemy.

You have, in fact, not one, but two peoples in South Africa competing for the so-called benefits of Western civilisation. But one calls himself a European and carries all the arms, and the other is African labouring under the sedulously-fostered tradition that he is an inferior being. Both are pastoral people to whom the industrial transformation which is overtaking South Africa is a strange, frightening phenomenon. The Afrikaner wants this—like everything else which can prosper the country—to bear the stamp "For Europeans Only". So a new phase of the fight starts up, with all the laws of the country on one side and the African clinging hopefully and helplessly to those moral laws which a politician like General Smuts can become mighty fluent in when he wishes to be regarded as a statesman.

All power corrupts: absolute power corrupts absolutely. That is the price which white South Africa is paying for its handling of its darker majority. Its present corruption of soul was forecast unerringly for it back in 1903, just after the Anglo-Boer War, by John Buchan (later to become Lord Tweedsmuir) when he wrote in *The African Colony*:—

"A subject population to whom legal rights are denied tends in the long run to degrade the value of human life, and to depreciate the moral currency—a result so deadly for true progress that the consensus of civilised races has entirely condemned it. The denial of social and political rights is almost equally dangerous, since, apart from the risks of perpetual tutelage in a progressive community, there follows necessarily a depreciation of those political truths upon which all free societies are based."

The depreciation of moral currency confronts the unbiased

onlooker at every turn—in the streets, the courts of justice, and the Houses of Parliament.

By rearing up a structure of laws framed on colour-bar lines South Africa has attempted to check the free play of economic laws. No "honest hierarchy of work" has been built up. Values have been falsified so that the African can be prevented from rising. For myself I do not share the cultivated contempt which white South Africa has for the man who digs at the rock-face or the coal-seam, who hacks up the roads, and loads the trucks and the ships. I have what might be regarded, perhaps, as an exaggerated white-collar respect for men who earn their bread by sweat and by muscular exertion. I cannot avoid noticing also that in countries much farther along the road of industrial development than South Africa—countries like Russia and Great Britain—the miner and the heavy labourer have acquired new dignity and a much higher status of late years. Heavy labour in those countries is no longer cheap labour. In South Africa, and indeed all the way up Africa, it is.

Industry is not wholly to blame for the laws which cabin the natural expansion of African efficiency and capabilities. Industry, if it had its own way, would not mind what colour a man was as long as he did his job well and profits were kept up. It was the white trade unions, through the Labour Party, which is their political mouthpiece, that forced the passing of the Mines and Works Amendment Act No. 25 of 1926—the most notorious of all "colour-bar" laws. The main purpose of that law was stated very frankly by the Mining Regulations Commission when it advocated its acceptance in order "to secure the mineworkers generally an adequate measure of protection against accident and disease in the exercise of their highly dangerous and unhealthy calling *and to rescue the European miner from the economic fetters which at present render him an easy victim of advancing native competition*".

To prevent that inevitable tide of "advancing native competition" has become a major task of the central Government. This is the task which has brought the country into increasing disrepute down the years. It is a melancholy spectacle, seen from within. No sooner is trouble in the Native areas, such as famine, erosion, crop failure or typhus, attended to than other problems flare up in the urban areas or the industrial field.

If the nation's rulers were honest they would not discuss these as isolated and unrelated phenomena. They stem naturally from those numerous colour-bar repressive distinctions

which, as one writer has pointed out, "are the first official recognition of the mental equality of the races".

To accept Africans as fellow human beings need not mean the death of Western civilisation in South Africa. All it means is that white South Africa has to stop regarding the fruits of honest toil at the bottom end of the African continent as intended "For Europeans Only". If "Western civilisation" wishes to be accepted as an article for export far away from the West, it must not mind adapting itself to, and being adopted by, its new environment. The fact is, as I have mentioned before without underlining it, that older white South Africa, although it still speaks of itself as "European", bears only superficial resemblance to its ancient origins across the seas. This is true physically, but still more so mentally. Older white South African stock breeds men of Africa. "I am an African," said General Smuts, during the 1947 Session, when he was ragging the Opposition because it was trying to make out a case for forbidding the use of the designation "African" owing to its similarity in translation to the word "Afrikaner". So, too, are a million and more of his fellow Afrikaners. They are white Africans. And that is not a description which need be taken in any derogatory way.

If South Africa had not received small but regular infusions of new white blood from Europe over the last 100 years, the label "For Europeans Only" would appear even more ridiculous than it does now. South Africa has a post-war immigration scheme which has been launched partly to assist the technical needs of expanding industry, but mainly to reinforce the white population in what General Smuts calls "a great battle of civilisation at this end of the Continent. . . ." Making all due allowance for the General's love of clichés, there is no need for white settlement in those parts of Africa it favours most to be engaged in doing "battle" either with the country or the indigenous people. Unfortunately, Smuts' version of what organised white immigration is meant for cannot but be interpreted by black South Africans as yet another desperate effort to buttress up the *status quo* and put off the day when they themselves will receive those blessings which Smuts is so anxious to pour into the laps of strangers.

If this be the prime motive of immigration into South Africa—and the speeches made during the 1947 Session when Parlia-

ment adopted the necessary legislation clearly prove this is so—then it is doomed before it starts. It is doomed because the numerical disparity of four to one in favour of non-whites to whites is too great to be overcome artificially. It is doomed because the country's capacity to absorb new population is severely limited by its prevailing economy.

"White civilisation", or "Western civilisation", is not, in this year of grace, being "menaced"—to use the popular jargon—by the oncoming blacks. How can we say that we believe in the superiority of white civilisation over black and then deny the black man in Africa access to that civilisation when he is fitted for it? The black man does not attempt to deny the superiority of white civilisation, any more than he has ever seriously contested the superiority of the Lee-Enfield rifle over his spear. He accepted his own backwardness long ago, and, so far as we have given him the opportunity, he has proved that he can imitate our best example in any sphere of human activity which we ourselves regard as worthy.

Life in Africa cannot be made "For Europeans Only" beyond a little span in the history of the continent. Africa has no large pockets of permanent white settlement where can be built up the same kind of exclusive caste society as South Africa has achieved. Indeed, right in its very heart, as well as on its borders, the Union has three British Protectorates where the needs of the African peoples are regarded as paramount, and such white population as exists is largely there for administrative purposes, and not for gain and to exploit the people or the country.

These are some more of the black spots on the "leopard". They cannot be entirely ignored or licked away. Nor, despite considerable pressure of a discreet kind, can the Union hope that its immediate northern neighbours of the two Rhodesias, with their huge and backward black populations (huge, that is, in comparison to the white settlers), will be able to model their Native policies on the South African pattern.

I have spoken of the degradation of human values and depreciation of moral currency which South Africa's attitude towards its non-whites has bred. The damage to emotional, social and æsthetic values is no less profound. If you should ever marvel at the sterility of artistic achievement in South Africa and its superficial touristic level of output in literature, painting, sculpture, poetry and music, not to speak of sporting accomplishment, you must remember that it is part of State

policy to isolate, dam up, and even deride, the mainsprings of the African ethos.

South Africa has no interest whatever in the possible production of Booker Washingtons, Joe Louises, Duke Ellingtons, Paul Robesons, Washington Carvers, Jessie Owens and Marion Andersons. The emergence of such talent in a despised section of the people would be too embarrassing. It would rather suppress the likelihood than encourage it, which is a kind of purblindness guaranteed to make the country look foolish at regular intervals, such as when it refused to allow George Nepia, the brilliant (Maori) New Zealand footballer, to play in South Africa, or when it banned the film of Joe Louis' second triumph over Billy Conn. The same ostrich-like mentality working in reverse believes—as I discovered in the Native Affairs Department—that if you shut your eyes and ears to an obvious fact which may reflect adversely upon South African Native policy, then nobody abroad will ever hear anything about it. The latest handbooks for prospective immigrants from Britain are a perfect example of this kind of wishful-thinking. Only in passing do they refer to the existence of 9,000,000 non-whites on the map of South Africa, and although the brochures are liberally peppered with pictures showing industrial work, hardly hair or hide of an African appears among them!

The only way in which I can explain this kind of make-believe to an outsider is by pointing to white South Africa's habit of deliberately thinking in terms of its own numbers of 2,300,000, and only speaking of the 9,000,000 as an after-thought. (As late as 1943 it was possible for General Smuts to get a round of applause from a Cape Town audience by reminding them that the population of the country was, in fact, not 2,300,000, but something over 11,000,000.)<sup>1</sup>

In an imaginary conversation the poet Roy Campbell posed the question: "How do you propose to kill this Colour Fetish?" and answered it in these words:—

"It can only be killed by the individual in himself. That means it will never be killed at all. Britons and Boers have found it easy enough in the past to jump over the colour-bar to gratify themselves sensually. But they would never do it to gratify their consciences as by this they would endanger

<sup>1</sup> How often in the Union's Press does one read of South Africans' indignation after a trip abroad and the discovery that the rest of the world (quite rightly) imagines that most South Africans are black!

the most sensitive part of human anatomy—their pockets. It is this fond marsupial consideration that keeps us fenced in so carefully. No policy has ever been productive that has not accepted, encouraged and fertilised the utmost physical and mental resources that it can command; and probably the end will be that we shall break down the colour-fence ourselves out of sheer boredom and starvation of ideas. We shall soon get tired of playing Robinson Crusoe. Nature is a capricious goddess: she loves emulation, competition: she only pays interest on what is invested: she will not be wooed by an old-fashioned figure sitting inside a fence and ogling her with rhetoric about White South Africa. We shall merely be putting on fat while the native puts on muscle.”

#### CHAPTER XV

### AS BLACK SEES WHITE

“Never forget to fear the white man, for if you fear him you will be ready when he deceives you.”—GOSPEL OF A NATIVE MINE-CLERK.

DURING A TALK with a mixed group of Indian and African students at an inter-racial winter school in Natal, a sad-eyed young African rose and asked me if I could explain why white men always went out of their way to humiliate Africans. Clearly he was speaking from personal experience. And clearly enough, from what I have recorded in previous chapters, there is no guarantee, outside the grave, that a sensitive African will not feel humiliated and frustrated at least half a dozen times a day in his dealings with white people.<sup>1</sup> This is not necessarily because of deliberate rudeness on the part of the whites, although any pale face has a licence so to act. Quite often it springs from ignorance of, or indifference to, the effect your language, tone of voice or behaviour may have on an African. White South Africa, when it gives a thought to what the Bantu think, speaks of the “Native mind” as if it were something inferior, something dark, something incalculable. These clichés of thought are a handy means of absolving it from behaving along normal, civilised lines towards the African. I heard

<sup>1</sup> In Parktown, a fashionable Johannesburg suburb, on an evening in August, 1947, a Native head waiter was beaten to death by two unidentified Europeans “because he wore gloves and was too well dressed”.

much about the "Native mind" from officials of the Department. And many were the quaint stories they had to tell to show what an odd fellow the black man really was. I heard them still at this theme, months after I had left them, when I overheard spokesmen of the Department who were accompanying a travelling exhibit of window-dressing photographs which were ultimately intended to show America and Britain the kind of African Arcady the Native was basking in.

"The Native," I heard one of them ruminating to a gaping Cape Town student, "has an uncanny mind and brain. He can work out the most complicated facts and figures, but he will not apply it in practice. Above all, he has no ability to continue without constant example and without constant pressure."

A newspaper reporter who listened to a spate of this rigmarole wrote in his paper that it would be a great pity if the Minister of Native Affairs sent the exhibition overseas unaccompanied by his two voluble spokesmen, "for then the world, while being fully informed of the 'hotch-potch that goes on in the back of a Native's mind' will never have the opportunity of knowing what a hotch-potch goes on in the back of a Native Affairs Department official's mind. And the world will miss quite a lot of fun." It suits the Department, which has to rely on prejudice, not facts, to explain gaps in its policy, to maintain this idea of mumbo-jumbo and abracadabra. The more emphasis that can be placed on differences—derogatory ones, that is—the more they are consolidated in the national role of "trustees". Crudely expressed, this argument can be summed up in the words of a Natal politician, Sir Frederick Moor, when he said in 1909, "The history of the world shows that the black man is incapable of civilisation". But since there has accumulated too much evidence to disprove this, the argument has later become: "Higher education is all right for a few, but it's wasted on the majority". Senator Edgar H. Brookes, an educationist of long experience in white universities and Native institutions, comments on this revised tenet:—

"We are told by some that the Native tends to look at the remote and the supernatural, rather than to the immediate and natural, causes of phenomena. His animistic beliefs, his fear of witchcraft, represent ineradicable racial characteristics. But surely reasoning to the remote and supernatural is

known among all races and classes and its more pronounced manifestations are found among the less educated section of all people?"

It suits white South Africa to pretend that the "Native mind" is still a dark continent. My contention, supported by experience, is that the Native mind is no darker than you like to make it. But living on stereotypes makes it much easier to stick to the fabulous in upholding the elementary relationship of white master and black servant. The Native, we convince ourselves, is thoroughly accustomed to regarding himself as an inferior being. His lack of education and background—using that word in the fullest sense—only equip him for menial jobs. The law of the country ensures that he stays menial. How many people relaxing in the comforts of a caste society worry their heads about what their servants think of them—unless the servants should consistently walk out?

One expert—a Cape Town professor—who examined this question of how black looked at white, stresses the historical influences in South Africa, which, after the African's defeat in battle, had reduced him "to a state of virtual slavery in which he is dependent for his livelihood and his very existence on finding employment in the service of the European. The land into which he has been squeezed is totally insufficient to provide him with the bare necessities of life, and in addition to that he is compelled, by the laws imposed on him by the white rulers to pay annual taxes in money which he cannot find by selling the produce of his land. He has therefore no alternative to hiring himself out as a wage labourer for at least a portion of each year. At first, after the comparative freedom of childhood, he will resent his hard fate and may curse the white employer who exacts the maximum labour from him in return for the minimum possible pay. But his resentment seems to be fruitless, and after a time he tends to accept his hard lot with resignation. He gets into the habit of seeking work from the white man, and being glad to get even the miserable pittance that is offered. The pattern of his life is fixed, and in that pattern the white man is the means by which he is enabled to bridge the gulf between destitution and subsistence. When this stage is reached there is a tendency to look upon the white man less and less as a cruel oppressor and more as a superior being who must be approached with cringing humility, a kind of god who must be placated with plenty of hard labour if the worst



evils are to be avoided. This is the basis of the docility of the African, the 'patient ass' as General Smuts once called him. Docility is not his natural character; it is the direct consequence of the hard conditions imposed on him by his white rulers."

Before quoting any more of the Professor's argument, I must interpose a word about docility in African character. Undoubtedly there is a "Yes, *baas*" (or "*Ja-broer*" in the Afrikaans) trait in the African. This derives in part from the conditioning he has received since his physical defeat. It can be related also to his familiarity with autocratic rule under his chief. To agree with a superior is a form of African politeness. Yet, making all due allowance for these factors, I am still conscious that there is a deliberate kind of passive resistance in the attitude of Africans, especially in the rural parts, which is their way of insulating themselves against the shocks, rebuffs, insults, surprises, chicanery and dictates which can be visited upon them so swiftly by white men, behind each one of whom rears the gigantic protective machinery of the State, the law, and the powers, visible and invisible, between heaven and earth. What the Chinese used to do to their feet (and may still do for all I know) the Bantu are accustomed to doing to their psyche when they have to deal with the white man.

Docility was certainly not in the Zulu character, nor other Bantu tribes who acquired any power through homogeneity. Neither the Basutos, whom Moshesh moulded into a nation, nor the Swazis, nor the Bamangwato tribe of Bechuanaland which produced Khama, famous father of the present Regent Tshekedi Khama, are docile in the sense in which the Professor uses the word.

The simple truth is that African character is as capable of as many facets as European. And it is conveniently overlooked that even in primitive African society the same qualities of courage, endurance, faithfulness, honesty and unselfishness—to name only a few that we regard as desirable—are no less admired among them. Historical examples of mutual esteem are the friendships of Robert Moffat the missionary with Umzilikatzi, the Matabele tyrant, and of Tchaka, the Zulu tyrant, with Henry Francis Fynn, the hunter and trader. Sir Rider Haggard, the old romancer, was not just sentimentalising when he wrote: "It is an odd trait about Zulus that only gentlemen, in the true sense of the word, can win their regard, or get anything out of them".

I willingly support the argument that the pattern of tribal

society underlined certain traits and emphasised distinctions between the two sexes and between age-groups. Africans brought up in the cities are often very conscious of the loss of these habit-forming patterns. The more educated among them, however, are passing through a phase of severe revulsion from tribalism, chiefly, I fancy, because they see that the white rulers use the existence of the old heathenism in the Reserves as a stick to beat *them* with, and as yet another excuse to deny them more freedom of opportunity and human rights. The switch into an individualistic acquisitive Western society from the organic unity of tribal life is a psychological upheaval of the first magnitude for a town-settling Native, and it is a major tragedy that the African's sense of corporateness so fundamental to tribal living and which is so valuable a foundation for encouraging a social sense among new citizens has been allowed to go to waste simply because the cities have not been willing to accept Africans as an integral part of the community.

Sociologists like Dr. Hilda Kuper, who lived for more than two years among the Swazi people object, strongly to the "blanket terms" used by the Cape Town professor I have just quoted in defining black's attitude to white. Her argument, which I support, is that the reactions of each tribe are tinged by its own history of racial contact with whites. She quoted the Swazi people, who were overcome not by arms, but by concessions, a "type of warfare they did not understand", and adds:—

"The legacy of those early days is not a memory of open battles, and resistances, but of treachery and cunning, of broken promises and conventions that have resulted in a deep suspicion, mixed with contempt and fear of the white man's word, whether spoken or written. This African tribe have come to accept European domination but without any cringing humility . . . they regard Europeans as 'superior' in certain respects and inferior in others. . . .

"A very common attitude among the Swazi is that the Europeans are more skilful and less kind, more powerful and less generous, than the average African. The peasants in particular acknowledge the superior technical skills of the European but consider that they are inferior in 'humanity' (ubuntu). The mechanical achievements of the Europeans are regarded as linked, and almost part of the 'white man' and not as the culmination of years of experiment and toil.

'Flying machines', electric lights, books are 'White Man's wonders'. Towards these there is admiration mixed with fear. On the other hand, there is contempt for the human side of the European, and a vast and ever-increasing accumulation of myths, dealing with his cruelty, meanness and greed. Some are imaginary, many are based on actual episodes and personal experiences."

Very little exact study has been made of how the African views the white man, but such as is available shows that they also, like white people, tend to think in stereotypes. Dr. Kuper says that although sub-divisions are recognised, "a man is first of all a White, then he is an Englishman, Boer, Jew or German: an official farmer, trader or missionary. With these distinctions go emotive generalisations: the English are 'people with law'; the Boers 'hate Black people': the Jews are 'with money' . . .", and she goes on to quote a table of "rules" which a young Swazi mine clerk wrote down to govern Black behaviour *vis-à-vis* white:—

1. The first thing to remember always is that we do not know the hearts of Europeans.
2. Show respect: if necessary, agree to lies.
3. Never forget to fear the White, for if you fear him, you will be ready when he deceives you.
4. Listen carefully to what he says, and watch what he does and you will learn a lot.
5. Most Europeans and most Natives deceive but no Europeans can feel the pain of a Native.
6. Europeans hate us and show us no respect.

He ends:—

"I may be wrong. I agree that I do not understand Europeans."

I refuse to pander to any vague beliefs that there is a mystery and an unpredictable quality in African character which defies our analysis. Quite the contrary. What is much more significant, so far as future relationships and developments in South Africa are concerned, is that the African people, given education, given responsibility, given amenities and above all respect as human beings, can be a credit to Western civilisation.

Urban life has produced, and will go on producing in larger numbers, a race of Europeanised Bantu. This is one of the

several aspects of the evolutionary process against which Afrikaner politicians protest often and vociferously. From their speeches it appears that so long as there is a single African left in the Reserves wearing a *umutsha* and practising polygamy, they will go on whistling in the wind and talking vainly about the sacredness of Bantu institutions as an excuse for preserving to themselves the sacredness of dominant white institutions.

White South Africa, having infected its urban blacks with its own money-hunting, greedy materialistic view of life, now fiercely resents the possibility of sharing its old monopoly of purchasing power and high wages. South Africa has long been a paradise for the selfish white man not overburdened with conscience. The land-greed of old-timers like the Voortrekkers made short work of Native tribes in possession. The greed for diamonds and gold of the rogues and adventurers who came after—the Barnatos, the Rhodes, the Jamesons—made grist of black labour. The financiers who followed with their “cheap-labour” policy have lain heaviest of all on Africa, for, as Olive Schreiner wrote:—

“The Boer and the Englishman who have been in this land have not always loved mercy, nor have they always sought after justice: but the little finger of the speculator and monopolist who are devouring this land will be thicker on the backs of the children of this land, black and white, than the loins of the Dutchman and Englishman have ever been.”

The jugglings and trickeries of finance and the “Kaffir” gold-mining share-market have little meaning for the Bantu. But a knowledge of High Change is not strictly required to assess a low mind. The African people have had enough years of close, first-hand observation of the white folk to draw their own conclusions about the contradictions and adaptability of the ruling code. The rapid increase of crime in a place like Johannesburg, but more especially the type of crime in which Natives are indulging are a clear mark of the cynicism and unbelief engendered by a selfish and ruthless materialism. Respect, docility, subservience and lack of ambition have gone sour in the face of the ostentatious cupidity which is the most characteristic quality of Johannesburg life.

One by-product of education is that it has enabled Africans to assess at their real worth the value of the promises so often made, and as often broken, to the Native people. The disil-

lusionment is the equivalent of that of a card-player who finds his opponent has been using marked cards as well as his own pack of aces. For too many years the shadow of insincerity and double-dealing has lain athwart white-black relationships. The moment a Native Affairs Department official steps into a Native Reserve he is knee-deep in broken promises. The custom with officialdom has long been to tell the Natives so much when a change is planned, and no more. Rarely is the whole reason provided. Rural Natives have so often been hoodwinked into accepting the shadow for the substance in the past that they automatically seek for secondary and more selfish motives whenever they are confronted with a new plan alleged to be for their benefit. And the passive resistance outlook does the rest.

Suspicion of the white man is one certain common factor between the ignorant country African and his educated, or partly educated, urban counterpart. And if either of them followed the speeches of white politicians and the nation's Press their doubts would be doubly confirmed.

Educated Africans do, of course, study these mirrors of public opinion very closely. It was one of their Councillors who summed up for me what he felt about the powerful Nationalist Party Opposition and the Smuts' United Party, the party which has been in power since 1939 and which is supposed to be progressive-minded towards black South Africans.

"The only difference I can see is that the Nats. say 'we can't afford to give the Natives a square deal' and mean it, and the United Party says 'we must give the Native a square deal' and doesn't mean it."

## CHAPTER XVI

### WHITE SUPREMACY OR —

"If I am not a citizen of this country of what country am I a citizen?"—  
A SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVE MINISTER.

ONE CLEAR shining fact must have now emerged. South Africa's "problem" is not a coloured or Native problem, but a white problem. It is not a problem of whether black people can become civilised, but how to make an under-civilised white people accept the emergence of black people who may be as

good as themselves. It is not a problem of *how* to civilise black people—as is often pretended—but how to regularise their civilisation so that their numerical superiority of four to one does not deprive the white minority of effective voice in the State's affairs. All other versions of the situation are traffickings with the truth. "Trusteeship", "segregation", "the preservation of white or Western civilisation", "guardianship"—these are passing clichés to obscure the inevitable issue which the country *has* to face—the absorption and acceptance into fullest citizenship of civilised non-whites.

From what I have written and recorded, it is equally clear that white South Africa's capacity to advance towards this democratic goal must not be over-estimated. The mounting pile of restrictive legislation, the blatant parade of extreme anti-Liberal, Fascist doctrines on race in Parliament and Press, the continuous process of compromise and retreat, compromise and retreat which the Smuts' party in power has adopted in the face of Opposition sneers—these are all symptoms of a decay in principles which have confirmed the worst fears and suspicions of thousands of educated, and hitherto patient Africans. Through their spokesmen this considerable mass of citizenless population are flinging the slogans of war-time democracy back in the white man's teeth and demanding their birthright. They know not only the war-time language of democracy, but also its peace-time tenets. They no longer plead for crusts. They ask for bread.

White South Africa still wishes to regard this kind of talk as rank impertinence. Its understanding of the forces at work is dim; its desire to understand them negligible. The history of its past relationships with non-whites handicaps the growth of any proper appreciation. Its own peculiar composition is no less a drawback. South African character has some likeable qualities. But cerebration is foreign to it. Mentally it goes in short pants, and easily mistakes blood pressure for argument. It has a Boy Scout devotion to leaders rather than principles. It lives in the open air. It enjoys a gamble, and it has a large section of population that believes that tight collars, corsets, pressed pants and hard seats on a Sunday are a short cut to a heavenly mansion. Democracy, to this largely Afrikaner group, is a British importation appreciated for the licence it gives, but not for its spirit; for they are a people trying, at one jump, to pass from a feudal master-servant relationship with Africans to a Fascist master-race concept, and hoping to ignore all the his-

torical steps in between which elsewhere produced the Socialist revolution and the rise of powerful, united working classes.

The Afrikaner people severed the umbilical cord with Europe three centuries ago. Their gloss of Western civilisation melted under the African sun. They fought a battle of survival. They emerged a dark, doomed, fatalistic little people as desiccated spiritually and culturally as the biltong that sustained them in their saddle-bags in time of war. For them the fight with the Native has never ceased. They fight him now not with powder but with penalties, not with rifles (though weapons are unusually handy) but with restrictions, not with bullets but with bulletins, not with cannon but with conventions. Sometimes you will hear a note of plaintive wistfulness in the voice of the Afrikaner when he answers a charge of domineering the black by recalling what America did to the Red Indian and Australia to its aborigines. He forgets that the first people of Africa he encountered—the Hottentots—are now extinct and the Bushmen have survived only because they have been pushed into the remotest parts of the Kalahari Desert, where they exist tenuously, like a rare species of Royal Game. (I would not give much for their chances if gold was discovered there.)

The irrevocable Afrikaner outlook is the hard core of the "white supremacy" creed. And to it now cling most of the other European strains making up the ruling white society. The British element, to its eternal shame, has largely lost much of its civilised veneer, and more quickly and with less excuse than the Afrikaners, for it still has the rich and living force of the English tradition to draw upon. It has been content to prosper commercially and industrially, and leave politics to the Afrikaner. Only on sentimental issues, like the adoption of the Union Jack as a national flag, has this element ever—since the Act of Union—shown any readiness to make a stand. In the words of one Senator: "While English South Africans can threaten civil war over the question of the flag they are apparently ready to sacrifice some of the greatest things in English political tradition with equanimity".

White South Africa presents the ugly spectacle of a first and second generation of ostentatious bourgeoisie calling itself Society, a vast Civil Service which is a cherished conspiracy in petty corruption, inefficiency and sloth, and a political tradition since Union founded on the ethics of the street corner and the tap-room. Easy enough to see why new settlers from Eng-

land lose the fine edge of their political faith in the scramble for high living which is characteristic of an exploiting white society. That does not condone the collapse. What is needed is an aggressive Liberalism to match the popular and aggressive anti-Liberal forces mobilised round Afrikanerism and the "white supremacy" creed. Liberalism is a way of life more than a political label, and there is no need for it to be compromised with or cast aside merely because a man has come to a new country, and that new country happens to be trying to perpetuate futile Fascist doctrines of master-racism. Missionaries carried the torch in the nineteenth century. What Africa in this century needs is not more missionaries but more Christians who can view the progress of Africans without feeling a primitive urge to trample them down. It needs more economists who can view with alarm, not with smug surprise, the fact that out of South Africa's 7,750,000 black people only forty pay income tax (incomes of £360 a year and over are taxable; the average annual Native income is £15). It needs more doctors who will demand vehemently that the diseases and malnutrition which are making a fifth-grade nation of the Bantu must be checked. It needs industrialists who have enough vision to see that cheap labour is a myth, and that lack of training for the country's black working classes is a constant brake on progress. It needs more farmers who realise that low efficiency is the result of poor wages and poor working conditions, not the excuse for perpetuating them. It needs local authorities who can visualise the non-whites working in their midst as clean-living, well-dressed, useful citizens, not an under-nourished, slum-dwelling, frustrated, psychologically mal-adjusted desperately poor inchoate, unnamed mass of humanity. It needs judges who will uphold justice regardless of colour. It needs policemen, and Civil Servants who can remember that they are not appointed to bully, intimidate and abuse the African people. Above all, it needs more humanity and fewer politicians.

John Xavier Merriman once said, "This will never be a country until we hang a reporter". With a politician or two to keep the reporter company, South Africa might wake up sober one morning and start thinking clearly and afresh on bread-and-butter issues involving colour.

The Government's calculated side-tracking or ignoring of the aspirations of the African people has naturally enhanced



the attack <sup>n ill</sup> on the Communist Party. The Government is aware of this. It has not yet had to treat non-whites generally seriously enough to make radical changes in policy. Its counter, on occasion, is to indulge in a little "Red-baiting". This satisfies a section of white opinion. It accomplishes very little else for, so far as African leaders go, the threat of imprisonment and the stigma of a court case can hardly be expected to frighten people who can find their way inside a gaol any time of the day or night by omitting to carry the right pieces of paper.

Communism has undoubted glamour for awakened African minds. It has all the dynamicism which democracy lacks. It promises them everything that under what is called democratic rule is exclusive to men with white skins. The reservoir of hatred which Government tactics are building up against democracy among Africans is just as bad an augury for the future of such a system in Africa as from the other side is the unabashed Fascism of the Nationalist Opposition. Communism, Africans have learnt and are learning from the small partisan Press and platform, sets no limits to the privileges they may enjoy as an ordinary right. It recognises no Colour Bar. It would have all the skilled trades opened up. The right of a vote would be theirs. Transport and education, housing and hospitals, recreation and cheaper food—all these essentials for living would be put handily in their way.

Few under-privileged people in the world could resist such a programme. I take it to be a mark of the conservatism of the average African (the literate 20 per cent) that he has not flocked *en masse* to join under the hammer and sickle. This is no guarantee that such caution will last. The liveliness of "Kaffirs" is manifesting itself on many fronts. Their political awareness and their increasing race consciousness seek more active expression. They need consolation in their frustrations. They are demanding a platform where they can feel that their grievances will at least be heard and noted. They are in open revulsion against the futility of dummy State-promoted institutions like the Natives' Representative Council, Parliamentary representation by a trio of whites, the Bunga system and local Advisory Boards and councils. African opinion, in all future dealings with the Government, is going to set itself obstinately against every type of law and administrative practice that makes an invidious distinction between white and black. It has seen this distinction carried to such fantastic

lengths (cf. the Johannesburg Zoo, which has separate gates by which white and black enter) that it has now decided to try to introduce a note of sanity into those circles where policy is formulated.

White South Africa has only itself to blame for this hardening of resentment. Had differentiation between black and white not automatically come to mean unfavourable discrimination, African sensibilities would not be so tender. It is the whites who began "the skin game". We cannot be surprised if the dark skins react unfavourably when they see that all the good things in this world are marked "For Europeans Only".

Africans have a weakness for demagogues. Their capacity to organise has suffered from inexperience and lack of encouragement. But at odd intervals this organisational gift has manifested itself with remarkable vehemence, and is obviously a power to be reckoned with. If history maintains its habit of repeating itself, then the inevitable growth of the trade union movement among Africans, despite inhibiting State legislation, must, in its turn, tend to give their political faith a Socialistic bent. This is the progression the State has tried to hinder in its 1947 Bill for registering trade unions partly by excluding miners, domestic servants and agricultural workers (*i.e.*, something like 2,000,000 Africans) from registration as trade unionists, and also by declaring that any trade union which is refused registration is illegal and its organisers can be prosecuted.<sup>1</sup>

Such crude attempts to stifle a natural development are as doomed as is every other method which tries to make crippling distinctions between white and black. Black South Africa may not go Communist. It is equally certain that it will never cease from now on to plead for greater equality of opportunity and a cancellation of those numerous laws which either ignore it or treat it as an inferior.

When it suits public opinion, the Native in South Africa and the Negro in America are often compared. The South African uses the occurrence of lynch-law and race-riots to repudiate America's right to criticise South African non-white policy. "Perhaps we don't give them the franchise," he says, in effect, "but we've got no Klu Klux Klan. And anyway how many Negroes in the Southern States *dare* use their vote?" Average American opinion is probably more ignorant of the Native

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I.

situation in <sup>South</sup> ~~South~~ Africa than we are of the Negro question. Reputable <sup>new</sup> ~~new~~ York papers are still capable of printing paragraphs about <sup>but</sup> ~~but~~ lions in Eloff Street (Johannesburg's sky-scraped main shopping centre), and occasionally give the impression that the primeval, gorilla-haunted jungle begins where the Town's pavements end. The only kind of Africa much of America wishes to believe in is the Martin Johnson brand—the Africa of the loin-cloths, tropical heat and large carnivora anxious to have their pictures taken.

At the risk of upsetting the Hollywood fairy-tale doves, I must place it on record that no Tarzans yodel to their mates in the purlieus of Pretoria, and that the white goddesses stopped lurking among the more primitive Native tribes of South Africa the day that Sir Rider Haggard ceased twanging the long bow.

South Africa can certainly learn a little from America's history of black-white relationships. But it must not waste time seeking to excuse itself from working out its own new progressive social patterns by using the American analogy. The fundamental difference which South Africa cannot overlook is that the Native happens to be first and last an African living in a part of his own home continent. He belongs here. He is a man of Africa, and his roots go deep. He knows no other land but this. He was not sold in slavery. He retains, if he wishes, his own tongue or tongues. His past contact with the white man brought him defeat, but not disgrace. He succumbed to the white man's superior skill. He has scrapped his old gods. He is willing, and eager, to worship the white man's idols of money, motor cars, main sewerage and a Parliamentary system.

White South Africa cannot escape from the full import of this acceptance, any more than it can refuse to allow the urban African to wear lounge suits and trilby hats. Unavailingly it has struggled against Caliban's metamorphosis, and retarded and curtailed that change. But each year brings it up more emphatically against the inescapable fact that there is a civilised section of its black population knocking at the front door of democratic institutions and asking for admittance. This is the demand white South Africa has to face up to. This is the ultimate test of the white man's right to live in Africa.

If South Africa fails to create very soon a formula which does not clearly embody the hope of full citizenship for its African people, then substitutes for such a formula will be discarded before the ink is dry. Too many compromises have already

been tried. It is not only the white man's democracy itself that is on trial before black opinion. . . . has sep:

When General Smuts returned from Lake Suwa in 1946 he made several speeches to his countrymen which showed what an impression had been made upon him both by the multi-racial composition of the United Nations Assembly and its prevailing sentiments. He said: "A question to be seriously considered is whether we should not give a man of different colour who is highly educated and with outstanding qualities of leadership a chance. Why treat them all on the lowest level? <sup>1</sup> If we are wise and fair, we will study that aspect and decide whether the man of a different colour and who lives a European life should not be accorded a position higher than the lowest level of his own people."

General Smuts when he was in New York (and on his other trips overseas) met many men and women of a darker complexion than himself who conformed to this pattern. In his own country there are men of colour not less civilised and hardly less eloquent. But General Smuts rarely meets them, certainly not as partners in public affairs, and there are no records of Parliamentary debates to show that he has ever desired to legislate for their rights as civilised citizens.

Yet had he the mind for such advancement, as I have stressed, there were good precedents in the Cape Province for helping him to shape this key to unlock the door leading into the sacred democratic edifice. Did he never hear the late William Schreiner, brother of Olive, ask what could be done with cultured men of colour in South Africa and answer his own question by saying: "You cannot put them into local Councils"? Did he never hear or read his old British enemy, Lord Milner's, answer to the same question at the beginning of the twentieth century by declaring: "We should recognise that, for the civilised Native, a coloured man living among civilised men in a civilised way—not a labourer, but in some higher condition of life—at the least as an independent trader or as a teacher or professional man—all colour disabilities, political or otherwise, should be cancelled. . . ." And what about the words of his old idol Cecil Rhodes when that arch Imperialist cried: "My motto is 'equal rights for every civilised man south of the Zambesi'. What is a civilised man? A man, whether

<sup>1</sup> Was not this the main criticism at United Nations of South Africa's non-European policy and which General Smuts was at pains to refute?

white or black  
has some pro

education to write his name,  
a loafer."

To protect its white minority, Africa has to create a bottle-neck through which non-whites in all four Provinces can filter to citizenship. Non-whites will accept the bottle-neck so long as a channel into full freedom exists.

In this context, South Africa cannot ultimately overlook what is happening elsewhere on the map of Africa. In Portuguese East Africa and Angola when an African rises to a degree of intellectual advancement and acquires civilised habits, he is "an *assimilado*", and ranks with the whites. In French Equatorial Africa (whose late Governor-General was a Negro) and the Belgian Congo is emerging a type of civilised African who is called an *evolué* and enjoys superior rights. Kenya already has an African on its Legislative Council. Two Africans are to sit on the Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council in 1948. In the Nigerian Council (which this year sent a deputation to London asking for a ten-year plan leading to self-government) Africans are now in a majority.

Recognition such as this for Africans cannot go on living alongside non-recognition. Many other signs are manifest of change in Africa which must have bearing, in due course, on the kind of rights which Africans are going to look upon as their fair due. India's independence has switched the Empire spotlight upon the vast undeveloped economic and man-power resources of British Africa. Strategically, the loosening of British hold on India, Egypt and the Mediterranean has made a new defence bastion for Empire routes out of Kenya, the Rhodesias and West Africa. Recruiting drives are scheduled from the Zambesi in Northern Rhodesia to the border of the Sudan and throughout the West African territories (now the largest of British dependencies). A general raising of the standard of education is spoken of as a sop and as part of the main plan.

Linked with all this are the £120,000,000 Colonial Development Fund, much of which will be spent in British Africa, the practical steps taken towards federation between the neighbouring British territories of Kenya, Nyasaland, Uganda, Tanganyika and Northern Rhodesia, the flight of capital from Europe and America to Africa, where labour is so cheap, and the considerable State-sponsored flow of immigrants especially from Britain.

Some see in the reinforcement of many of the new hope for arresting the decline of British sentiment, has seen institutions and the English language itself, which have suffered so many setbacks in South Africa with the spread of ultra-Afrikanerism.

Educated Africans in South Africa view the prospect sceptically. They are wondering whether the full story of the white man's exploitation has been told, and whether Africa is on the eve of a new chapter being written. Their cup of bitterness will be full if this proves to be the course of events. No other people in recorded history have taken so long and tough a battering as the African and kept their dignity. The African is a man poor in worldly goods but rich in humanity—so rich that I still believe there are among them men who, even in their disappointments and frustrations, can say to the white man as Booker T. Washington said to an Atlanta audience in 1895: "As we have proved our loyalty to you in nursing your children and watching by the sick-beds of your fathers and mothers, so in the future in our humble way we will stand by you with devotion, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one".

Yes, there is still some of that goodwill left in Africa, or life would have been made intolerable for the white man in his efforts to maintain this continent as the last great citadel of racial prejudice. If Britain in its new role in Africa fails to capitalise that residue of goodwill, then it is certain that here, in this old continent, will be heard the last death-rattles of a great Imperial power. Britain, in her heart, has never subscribed to South Africa's treatment of Africans, however often her politicians may have perjured her. Inexorably in Africa—the Africa whose manhood she once sold to slavery in their scores of thousands—will her reputation of moral leadership in world affairs face its ultimate test. And not only Britain, but white Western civilisation.

If humanity itself is to have any meaning, then surely South Africa of the twentieth century must see the day of fulfilment for the words of William Pitt, spoken in support of the abolition of slavery 149 years ago:—

"Let no one say that Africa labours under a natural incapacity for civilisation . . . we were once as savage in our manners, as degraded in our understandings. Some of us may live to behold the Natives of Africa engaged in the calm

occupy  
comm  
philosophy breaking  
influence with that of  
that even Africa, though  
shall enjoy at length in  
ings which have descended so  
pursuit of a just and legitimate  
the beams of science and  
their land . . . and joining their  
. . . Then may we hope  
quarters of the globe,  
her days, those bless-  
plentifully on us."

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