

We are devoting much of this issue to a speech delivered on 17 July to the South Africa Society in London by A R K Mackenzie, former British Minister for Economic and Social Affairs at the UN. His subject was 'How soon will South Africa change?', a theme which was more productive, he told his listeners, including the South African Ambassador, than the title of a recent book, 'How long will South Africa survive?'

Many speak on South Africa either to defend or to attack its policies. This speech goes beyond both approaches and deserves a wider audience. Mr Mackenzie, who was a member of the British delegation which drafted the UN Charter and served on many continents, including three years as Ambassador to Tunisia, speaks not only from wide diplomatic experience in many lands, but also from a deep moral conviction about the changes of attitude that are required from his own country. The British diplomat has recently spent three months in South Africa, South West Africa and Rhodesia, and is currently working for the Brandt Commission.



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'The real battle is between the bridge-builders and the bridge-wreckers in all the parties.'

HOW SOON WILL SOUTH AFRICA CHANGE?

I WENT TO SOUTHERN AFRICA on the invitation of African leaders, black and white, whom I had met at the MRA world conference in Switzerland last year. I am no expert on South Africa and I speak only for myself.

I assume that change in South Africa is inevitable. I went to South Africa admittedly with the impression that the speech of my fellow countryman, Harold Macmillan, about 'the winds of change' had been distinctly unpopular. It was therefore a surprise to me to find that the word 'change' is now one of the most hard-worked words in South Africa today. It is not only the Opposition parties who call for change. It is the Government publications and spokesmen who are incessantly saying: 'The trouble is that you outsiders don't know how much change is going on in South Africa today. The situation in sport is changing. The purchasing power of the black population is changing. You just don't give us credit for all the change that is going on.'

In fact, it seems fair to say that the key questions about South Africa now are—What kind of change? Change by whom? Who begins the change? And can the right kind of change come soon enough?

There is one other assumption behind my speech—that South Africa cannot live indefinitely in splendid isolation from trends in the rest of the world. I know that 'South Africa First' was a popular slogan in last autumn's elections. That recalled to me the slogan of 'America First' in 1939. I will remember being upbraided by an irate America-Firster who said: 'Why should we help deadbeats who never even paid their war debts? We're not getting involved this

time.' This was not unlike the scorn with which a young MP in Cape Town spoke to me about the decadence and inconsistencies of Britain and America today. Yet, whatever justification there may be for such castigations, the fact remains that South Africa, will not, any more than America 37 years ago, be able to live in isolation from the outside world.

What, then, are the factors affecting change in South Africa? One can distinguish external and internal factors. Externally there is, first of all, the force of world Communism. Russia is now a new military factor in Africa and around the shores of South Africa. In addition, the Cubans are present as an active military and ideological force in a way that would have been inconceivable ten years ago. And whereas America called the Russians' bluff at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, there is no sign that Washington can or will remove the Cubans from Africa today.

Nasser says no

I recently came across another striking example of how times have changed in reading Haikal's book, *Conversations With Nasser*. When Che Guevara visited Nasser for the last time, he admitted that he was disillusioned by events in Cuba and announced that he was leaving and coming to work for revolution in the Congo. Nasser listened and then replied in effect: 'No, you won't. Africa is our continent. The Africans will deal with African problems.' And it was at that point that Guevara changed his plans and went to Bolivia where he died. But who is prepared to say 'no' to the Cubans today? Many African leaders must be uneasy about current trends.

I, personally, do not think that the Russians

and Cubans represent a serious military threat to South Africa—not unless they are ready for a new global war. But there is no doubt that their military forces add an extra dimension to the ideological struggle in the sub-continent. Nor is there doubt about the kind of change they are out to achieve.

In this ideological struggle I think it is wise to recognise that the way we live often becomes a sharp weapon in the Communists' hands. That certainly applies not only in South Africa. For example, I was asked to address the students of the University of Rhodesia on world affairs. In the question period, to the surprise of the white people present, most of the questions from the black students amounted to: Why should we not try Communism? And it was quite clear from what was said that their reasoning ran like this: 'The white man hates Communism. But we hate the way the white man lives. Therefore, maybe there is something in Communism for us.'

The other interesting thing to me that night was that, long after the meeting had ended, two groups of the most militant Rhodesians, both of whom until two years ago had never even talked to an African except their servants. It was obvious that the change in the lives and attitudes of these two whites arrested the attention of the Africans far more than any amount of propaganda opposing Marxism.

Another external force for change is the pressure of Western governments and Western public opinion. That is not pressure for a class war, or for the dictatorship of the self-promoted leaders of the proletariat. It is pressure for the application of the social,

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economic and political rights which South Africa herself helped to write into the UN Charter—as I have reason to know, having seen Field Marshal Smuts in action at the San Francisco Conference. It is my opinion that this pressure is going to be maintained, and I think it would be unwise for South Africa to expect that an election here or in any other Western country will change the pressure very much.

Sometimes, of course, that pressure takes forms which irritate South Africans, and which they vigorously reject as hypocritical and unfair. For example, last December the UN General Assembly passed 14 anti-apartheid resolutions in one day. This was simply a case of runaway verbal inflation. If you ask who supported these 14 resolutions, the answer is, to say the least, revealing. Did Uganda and Russia and Cambodia? The answer is 'yes' every time. The truth is that the UN would probably have done more for its own reputation, and would certainly have done more to hasten change in South Africa, if it had passed one single motion, balanced and reasoned in tone and sponsored by a reputable group of states who had the honesty to admit where they, too, were falling short of the standards laid down in the Charter and the Covenants on human rights.

Rough seas

A third outside force making for change is the other African countries—and particularly South Africa's neighbours. Here, the picture changed dramatically in 1974 with the collapse of the Portuguese empire. The popular impression is that South Africa is now totally isolated and that the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall are nothing as compared with the gulf that separates South Africa from other African states. However, despite the posturings at international conferences, I quickly found that the reality is different.

To give one example, I found that every day in the year a planeload of white South

Africans flies into Mozambique to run the port of Maputo, with Cuban crane drivers working under them, and flies out again every evening. The truth is that the rest of Africa desperately needs help of every kind from South Africa—her technological skills, agricultural products, financial wealth. Some of these things are filtering through today, moving by subterranean channels, but the tragedy is that so little is being done when the needs in other parts of Africa are so great, and when open partnership between equals could be so fruitful.

Many a time I have thought of what it could mean for Africa and the whole world if the Voortrekkers' strength of character and courage, modern South Africa's technical skills and the black man's warmth of heart and forgiving nature could be united behind a common aim.

Fortunately, there are two gleams of light in South Africa's relations with her neighbours which may have important consequences for the processes of peaceful change inside South Africa itself. I refer to South West Africa and Rhodesia. The Administrator-General of South Africa, Justice Steyn, was undoubtedly one of the impressive personalities I met on my travels: and of course it was reassuring to reflect that he had been selected for this job by the present South African Government.

In less than one year he has dismantled a substantial part of the whole apartheid structure in South West Africa and—what is even more remarkable to me—has carried a large part of the white population (who were reputed to be very conservative) with him in his policies. One could not totally suppress the question: if that can happen in South West Africa, why not elsewhere?

I went to Windhoek (the capital of South West Africa) because a South African politician thought that MRA might somehow be able to help in the situation there. When we called on Justice Steyn he spoke to us very

soberly and very openly. He said: 'The rapids through which this ship of state is passing are growing infinitely rougher. My biggest problem is how to create trust. The most elaborate constitution which we or the UN can devise will not work unless we can create a new spirit of trust. You could not have come at a more important time.'

The ensuing days were, I think, the most fascinating of my whole time in Africa. We met with leaders of every shade of political opinion and found almost everywhere real questing for a new way of working in teamwork. Of course, since then there have been assassinations and rough seas, as Justice Steyn predicted, but as I speak a task force of MRA is still at work in Windhoek helping to produce the moral infrastructure of the new state.

It was, therefore, with much gratitude that I read in the papers last week that, at official level, the almost interminable inter-governmental talks about South West Africa have reached a positive conclusion and a road seems to be clearing for the new state to come into existence in peace rather than in blood and violence. This could not fail to help the processes of peaceful change inside South Africa.

Helicopter

Before leaving Namibia/South West Africa, I must add a word about the role of the South African Army on which so much misinformation is circulating. My knowledge is necessarily limited, but all I can say is that we were given every opportunity to ask questions and to go where we wanted. We made one helicopter trip to see the 41st Battalion in action training, the nucleus of the new Namibian Army, and I formed the most favourable impression of the dedication of the South African officers and of the spirit in which they were carrying out their work. The only tragedy is that it only started last August, whereas it could have begun five if not ten years ago.

From Windhoek we flew to Rhodesia and landed there on 3 March, the date of the

Two-way traffic

TEN YOUNG SOUTH AFRICANS from the African and Coloured townships of Cape Town and the Transvaal spent two weeks of their holidays working with Moral Re-Armament in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe in June. With them were Billy Marivate, the teacher of some of the group, Sam Pono from Queenstown, and Pieter Horn who comes from an Afrikaans farming background.

Eight of the group came from Soweto and Atteridgeville (near Pretoria). Some had spent time in detention. Others had been criticised or beaten up by their fellow-blacks. Some had faced both experiences.

'Although from such different backgrounds and points of view,' they write in a report of the expedition, 'we are united in a commitment to find God's plan for our

country, rather than pursuing man-made ideologies of either extreme.' They had raised the money for the journey through film shows, sales of books and through gifts.

The young men were received by members of the Interim Government and officials of the other nationalist parties, by a white trade unionist and the South African diplomatic representative. They stayed with families—for some it was the first experience of living in a white home.

'The most fiery meeting of our whole tour was with a group of ZAPU (Nkomo) youth leaders,' they write. 'We noticed a considerable shift in their attitudes when they realised that we shared their passionate commitment for change. "What is the true freedom that we are fighting for?" we asked them.'

In Salisbury, 12 out of the 15 white high schools sent groups of senior pupils to meet the South Africans. At a similar meeting in

Gwelo, only one of the 40 white sixth-formers present said he had met an African on equal terms before. Discussion continued until the master had to turn off the lights.

Unity between black and white was challenged by events during the trip. The group was in Rhodesia at the time when 13 white missionaries were murdered. On the return journey they were stopped, searched and questioned by white security police.

'Many things go through you when this sort of thing happens,' they write, 'but we tried to keep our hearts open. We have made changes in our own lives and are prepared to pay whatever price God may show us.'

A similar expedition went from Rhodesia to South West Africa/Namibia in May. The venture was organised by last year's white Vice-President of the students of the University of Rhodesia and by a young African.

signing of the Internal Agreement. Here is another situation on South Africa's borders where *in spite of everything*, I believe there is still a ray of hope relevant to South Africa herself. I am not referring to the Internal Agreement as such, though I count myself amongst those who argue that, while stopping short of recognition, the British and American Governments could, and should, have been doing more than they have to build on this foundation and to encourage the participants to demonstrate that a real transition is in progress.

Classy

I am thinking rather of the spirit of change which I detected in the air in Rhodesia. It seemed to me that the real battleline there is now not *between* parties but *within* parties—between the bridge-builders and the bridge-wreckers in *all* the parties. I detected three classes of whites in Rhodesia and two classes of blacks. There are whites who still resist change: those who acquiesce in change: and those who accept change and are ready to make it work. On the black side there are those who are simply out to benefit from change—and those who accept the need for change in themselves as well as the whites, with the same standards applying to both.

The hope for Rhodesia—and maybe for all Southern Africa—lies in uniting the third category of whites and the second category of blacks.

Hands

One of the latter, whom I met, was a prominent African leader on the fringe of the political power structure. He said: 'My father-in-law has just been so badly beaten up by the security forces that he is in hospital. My wife has had a heart attack because of what happened to her father. And two of my African farm managers have just been abducted by the guerrilla forces because they say I am collaborating with the white man. But I know that bitterness will

make things worse. I believe God has a plan for Zimbabwe and I still want to help to find that plan.' That man gave me hope. Nor is he by any means alone.

To me, one of the most encouraging aspects of the Rhodesian scene, despite all the agony and misunderstandings, is a gathering that takes place practically every Saturday morning, and which has been called a 'Cabinet of conscience'. It includes whites and blacks—the Prime Minister's son, a university professor, a senior government official, a landowner and ex-Cabinet Minister, African politicians, educators and clergymen. They have no official status but they meet together to see how in a spirit of honesty and co-operation they can bring the wisdom of the Almighty to bear on the practical problems of the hour.

To me that group brought to mind a notable phase in British history when a group led by William Wilberforce and his friends from the banking world and politics used to meet regularly on Saturday mornings in a house on Clapham Common to plan how to end the slave trade and introduce a new spiritual dynamic into British social and economic life.

So, in Rhodesia, the bridge-wreckers are obviously hard at work, but there is also still a chance that a new pattern of co-operation can be worked out that will bring hope to all those parts of the world—and that includes the United Kingdom as well as South Africa—where it is imperative that a multi-racial society shall be seen to work.

And so we come to the question of the forces of change at work inside South Africa herself. And first we must mention the black militants. There is no doubt that this category are on the increase, especially amongst the young generation. The shocking scenes at the funeral of Robert Sobukwe were a manifestation of this new extremism. After it, a white South African farmer, whose judgement I respect highly, said to me: 'We are very near the end of our opportunities for change.' The dangers of guerrilla war-

fare, and especially urban guerrilla warfare, are undoubtedly present and are probably closer than many people would like to think. Moreover, events in other parts of the world have demonstrated painfully that this particular threat to modern civilised life is far harder to cope with than conventional warfare, no matter how well-equipped your security services may be.

Yet to me, as a newcomer to South Africa, while sensing this danger, the more remarkable fact was to find how ready the majority of black and Coloured leaders still are for a dialogue—in spite of the constant incitement to violence from people living in safety several thousand miles away.

I recall an evening spent with a group of leaders from Soweto. They arrived visibly dejected and defensive. Yet in the course of the evening a dramatic change of mood occurred and it took a surprisingly small thing to bring it about—an honest apology, simply made over the dinner table by a young white South African couple, for some of the things that had gone wrong in Soweto and elsewhere. By the end, the black leaders left saying: 'We came here with bitterness and without hope. We leave without bitterness and with hope.' But they added: 'But we are worried about our children. Don't forget that we are the last generation ready for a dialogue.'

One often wondered whether the white establishment have got that point. A Coloured leader put it even more poignantly: 'The tragedy is not just that you won't take the hand that is held out to you. It is that the day will come when you will stretch out your hand—and we won't take it.'

I recall another conversation in the beautiful office of a professor in the University of Pretoria. He had been drawing charts on his blackboard to show me how the racial situation in South Africa could be dealt with by new constitutional devices. I then told him that I had been meeting every morning at seven-thirty in the office of a black lecturer in

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Township jazz

Sam Pono—who led the South African group that visited Rhodesia—is one of those featured in Peter Hannon's book, 'Southern Africa—What Kind of Change?' (Grosvenor Books). His story is abridged from this book.

SAM GREW UP IN QUEENSTOWN on the border of the Ciskei in the Eastern Cape. Even before he was 12, street fights and knifings were part of his life. A talented saxophonist, he joined the most popular band in town and quickly absorbed the night club way of life. Each week his drink bill exceeded his salary, in spite of a good job by day and the band by night.

Sam grew increasingly politically conscious and anti-white. The lifestyle of the whites he saw in the clubs shocked him. It

never crossed his mind that his own was similar. The fact that the local white band, playing on the same circuit, earned more than his band, stoked his bitterness.

Sam was startled when a local social worker who had ineffectively tried to reform him in the past came to him with a new approach, apologising for her self-righteousness.

'She told me,' Sam said, "'I feel certain qualities in you which can contribute to the nation if they are harnessed rightly. But if wrong forces grip you, or you continue to destroy yourself with liquor and women, all that will be lost.'"

She told Sam of a force of men and women around the world, determined to put right what was wrong but with the courage to start with themselves.

Sam responded to this. His Christian upbringing began to become real for the first time. It involved changes. He told his father

that he had lied about his salary so as to contribute less to the family budget.

Sam's father was shaken. He had not been bringing all his salary home either. He had found it difficult to meet the cost of the younger children's schooling, rent, electricity and food. Now they pooled all they had, paid off their debts and started a joint savings account. They no longer had to fear light cuts or the children being sent home from school because of unpaid bills.

In 1973 Sam was invited to go to Europe to work with Moral Re-Armament. In the three years before he returned to South Africa he met and challenged Black Power leaders in the West Indies, white South African Rhodes scholars and black exiles in Oxford, trade unionists, even Prime Ministers.

Sam says now, 'Through all these experiences, I have learnt that God can use the most ordinary man in an extraordinary way.'

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the other university in Pretoria—the multi-racial correspondence University of South Africa—because this black lecturer wanted help in building bridges between the races. He lives in Atteridgeville, the African township adjacent to Pretoria, and he was the person who—in the face of intimidation and threats—had done more than any other single person to get the Atteridgeville students to return to their schools last year. That very morning he had had the thought that it was not enough to go and meet with white leaders on their ground in Pretoria. He should invite some of them to meet for dinner in his home in Atteridgeville and he should talk to the police to ensure that they got safe passage after dark. My professor friend, standing in front of his charts, said quite humbly, 'That's very interesting. You know, in all the time I've taught in Pretoria, I have never been in Atteridgeville.'

Never

Another person who impressed me was a leading African journalist, who, when I met him, had recently been released from detention. I found a man extraordinarily free from bitterness. He admitted that in detention he had become very depressed and seriously thought of leaving South Africa for good: and I knew from another source that he had in fact been offered a lucrative post overseas. But then he said that the conviction had grown in him in prison that, whatever the dangers, he must stay and—as he put it—'build bridges of brotherhood'.

As for Soweto, he insisted that what people there really cared about was not 'one man, one vote', but fair housing, fair education and fairly paid jobs.

If he is right, it should be possible to make progress towards a more stable society—if there is the will to do so. There is certainly a lot of money around South Africa. It is simply a question of how it is allocated. Fifty million rand was being spent on a new opera house for Pretoria: yet there was said to be

difficulty in finding money to put a proper electricity system into Soweto.

It seems to me that South Africa's racial policies can never be remotely defensible unless vastly greater sums are spent on the development of the black and Coloured elements of the population—even if this means more taxes of one kind or another on the white population. Just as I believe Britain should, in present circumstances, put more money into defence even if that means less on social welfare, so I believe South Africa should put more into social welfare even if that means less on defence. Both are needed for security reasons.

There is still truth in what Macaulay said: 'We know of no great revolution which might not have been prevented by compromise early and graciously made.' (The key words are, of course, the two adverbs.)

There is a saying that 'never is a long time in politics'. That one word 'never', used in June 1954 in relation to the possibility of Cyprus Independence, spelt the end of the career of a well-known British politician. Yet I heard more than one Cabinet Minister in South Africa use this very word with reference to the possibility of a dialogue with representatives of the non-white races on the whole future of South Africa. It made me recall what the late Dr William Nkomo once said to an Afrikaner friend of mine: 'Why do you whites assume that you always know what is best for me and my people?'

Don't abdicate

As a Christian, I have to believe that in God's eyes all races are equal. Yet I know, too, that racialism is rife today—in our own cities as well as in Africa. I believe that at its roots one finds the deep human emotions of fear and selfishness. Yet I believe that the risk in opening the doors to change (and there are risks) have to be set against the certainty of explosions if there is no honest dialogue. As Adam Smith said in *The Wealth of Nations* 200 years ago: 'No society can surely be happy and flourishing of which the

far greater part of the members are poor and miserable.' I believe that is true today, not just of South Africa, but globally.

And so I come to the last of the factors capable of producing change in South Africa today—those in power, the present white establishment. I am not suggesting that they should abdicate. I am suggesting that they should give more leadership, not less. I know that it is said that politics is the art of the possible. My reply would be that leadership is the art of making the impossible possible. That is certainly what Churchill did in this country in the war years.

I hope and pray that Mr Vorster will not miss his chance to give leadership. I believe that it is within his power now to take certain initiatives that would be as significant for Southern Africa as the initiatives of Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman were in bringing their bitterly opposed countries together after the war, or the brave initiative of President Sadat in opening up a new dialogue in the Middle East. The results would probably not be immediate. (They have certainly not been immediate in President Sadat's case, but he has started something new.) Opposition would certainly arise. But I am convinced that Mr Vorster would find more allies than he may realise he has, blacks as well as whites, and also inside his own party as well as outside.

In conclusion, I would like to commend to you—and, if I may be so bold, to Mr Vorster—words which a leader of South African industry used at an international monetary conference in Mexico City recently: 'It is better to try something difficult—even something as difficult as changing the minds of men—rather than to set out on a course which the facts and the figures show from the beginning must lead to a dead end.'

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Readers right

from Rev Arthur Burrell,
Ufton Nervet Rectory, Berkshire

HP ELLIOTT'S QUESTION, 'What about Britain?' (NWN No 34: 8 July), is surely addressed to all of us. Sadly, news reports from Rhodesia, now like those from Ireland, have this in common, namely that their readers have almost become incapable of

registering anguish any more. There is a danger of being anaesthetised into inactivity by the horrors, which we can hardly take in any longer. It is easier to adopt the role of those in the parable, who abandoned their beaten up brother in the ditch, and were content to 'pass by on the other side'. Our blood is ceasing to boil, no matter how much of others' is spilt, regardless of colour, race or tribe.

Is it not time for us, as a people, through our Government, to acknowledge with shame and sorrow any part of the blame for the crisis in Rhodesia that is rightly ours? Whatever other opinions are held, both

black and white in Rhodesia have every reason to feel that this country, on some matters, perhaps in different ways, has let them down. The policy of passing the buck and blaming others has utterly failed. If tragedy is to be averted, it has got to stop. Such an admission would be evidence of a new and humble statesmanship, to which HP Elliott refers, and by which alone the fires of bitterness and hatred can be extinguished, before they get out of control. We have recently rejoiced to hear of black men losing their bitterness. Where are the white men who are willing to lose their pride?

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