

I AM an Afrikaner. My ancestors came from Holland in 1743. They settled in the Cape where at the time there were few indigenous people.

Around 1800 Britain occupied the Cape. The Dutch settlers moved eastward and clashed with the Xosas who were coming down from the north. At the same time they fought a running battle with the British Governor in the Cape and finally, in defiance of his law, they headed north in the Great Trek to establish their own republics independent of Britain or Holland.

Some crossed the mountains into what is now Natal, where they fought the Zulus and sought to settle. But Britain annexed Natal and they crossed the mountains again to found the republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

Then gold was discovered near what is now Johannesburg, in the Transvaal, leading eventually to the abortive Jameson Raid aiming at a British coup and finally to the Boer War of 1899-1902 which ushered in the century of guerilla wars and concentration camps.

Women and children died by the thousand, ravaged by disease. The Boers were finally defeated but did not give up their struggle. They formed a secret organisation, the Broederbond (band of brothers), dedicated to carrying on their battle which continues to this day.

This life of adversity and struggle formed the Afrikaner people — closely knit, resolute, beleaguered. The ultimate sin in Afrikaner lore is to "split Afrikanerdom". The one thing they regard as not negotiable is their right to be masters of their own fate.

If you say "in the long run that means war", many will reply "then war let it be".

They concede that if the whites have the right to self-determination, others have it too. This is the ration-

THE AGONY OF AFRIKANERDOM

Seeds of hope for a divided society

By BREMER HOFMEYR*

"English churches broadly oppose [apartheid]. But of more importance, perhaps, is the ferment of questioning in Afrikaner intellectual circles — the universities and theological colleges. They have rejected the old view that there is biblical justification for apartheid. They accept that up to now the white has dominated the black and it is unjust and has to stop".

ale of apartheid — that ultimately the whites will rule the whites, the Zulus will rule the Zulus, the Xosas will rule the Xosas and so on.

Almost all whites share the longing for self-determination and there are other groups such as the Indians who oppose apartheid but who would on no account settle for black rule. Uganda and Kenya are of too recent memory.

Some of the elected heads of these "homeland" governments have opted for becoming independent States but they are the minority of all blacks. Men like Chief Buthelezi of the Zulus will have none of it, nor will the urban blacks who are in the vanguard of the black struggle. So the white minority continues to rule the black majority and the tension continues.

English churches broadly oppose the system. But of more importance, perhaps, is the ferment of questioning in Afrikaner intellectual circles — the universities and theological colleges. They have rejected the old view that there is biblical justification for apartheid. They accept that up to now the white has dominated the black and it is unjust and has to stop.

But what is the new dispensation in which the black will not in turn dominate the white? They do not feel it is just to ask the Afrikaner

after centuries of struggle to hand over his destiny to others. But is there any concept that will provide justice for the black and survival as a people for the Afrikaner?

This is the agony of Afrikanerdom. Few would claim to see the way out. But in this burning issue of conscience lie seeds of hope.

There are large numbers of ordinary people who believe simply that we are all South Africans and meant to walk shoulder to shoulder as sons and daughters of God.

My wife and I are typical of many. Thirty-three years ago we established our home in the heart of Johannesburg. From the beginning we decided it must be a home for all races where all people could meet and break bread together and build the human links that must be the

infrastructure of any new order. At that time it was unusual. Today it is quite normal.

Also we pioneered large interracial assemblies. Thirty years ago there were raised eyebrows. Today it is normal. The Security Police know everything that goes on in the country. From time to time they have called on us but we have not been harassed.

Industry is in the forefront of the battle to break down barriers and is an illustration of how intelligent action overseas can improve the lot of black South Africans.

The Reverend Leon Sullivan is a black clergyman in America. The plight of black South Africans was on his heart and he came to the country with an open mind to see what would help them most. Invest-

ment? Disinvestment? Boycott? What?

He formulated the "Sullivan Plan", encouraging Americans to put pressure on companies with subsidiaries in South Africa to adopt a code of conduct dismantling apartheid within the industries through a five-point plan:

- (1) Equal pay for equal work.
- (2) On-the-job training for blacks to help them up the economic ladder.
- (3) A commitment to trade unionism for all races.
- (4) Removal within the plants of all separate amenities based on race.
- (5) Responsibility for the social conditions of blacks in housing, etc.

All big American companies have accepted this and agreed to an inspection every six months to see that the commitment is put into practice. Likewise the big South African corporations have accepted the code.

Certainly industrial development has done more than anything to break down racial divisions and improve the economic lot of the black. Also industrial taxation supplies most of the money for black social services such as free medication, hospitalisation and surgery, services also available to whites in the low-income bracket.

Does this invalidate the argument



Chief Buthelezi

for economic boycott? For the casual person of goodwill I believe it should.

But there is a deeper strategy in the minds of the real ideologists of boycott. For them economic development that improves the lot of the blacks is not to be supported but to be blocked.

They accept that despite all the hardships and indignities suffered, the climate is not ripe for all-out black violence. This must be produced by mass misery and unemployment to which boycotts would contribute. But it raises the question whether whites, in the comfort of Europe for instance, have the right to decide for the blacks that it is for their good to be forced into misery and violence.

Or is this still a relic of the white man's besetting sin, the arrogance that believes he knows what is best for the black, and puts pressure on him to do it?

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