

SOUTH AFRICA: THE U.S. POSITION

U.S. ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE
TO THE 38TH SESSION
U.N. COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
February 16, 1982

...Over 80 per cent of South Africa's people, solely because of the color of their skin, do not share equality under the law. There is pervasive democracy for whites, but discriminatory treatment and unequal standing for blacks, mixed races, and Asians. The apartheid system is offensive to the fundamental principle of "liberty and justice for all." This system is an embarrassment to all free and democratic peoples, a betrayal of the ideals for which we stand, a mockery even of its best dreams. A house so divided cannot stand. It cannot thrive and grow, for its foundations are always being corrupted from within. Mr. Chairman, it is vitally important to all free and democratic peoples that there be genuine equality in South Africa....

Mr. Chairman, in situations of great complexity and historical entanglement, it is most important to recur to first principles and to grasp the simple, truthful ideals with perfect clarity. The law exists to make men free. The use of law to bind men to inequality is a double betrayal—a betrayal of those whose lives are crushed and a betrayal of the very principle of justice.

Because we respect justice, Mr. Chairman, my delegation supports due process and lawful change. Because we support justice, we abhor the apartheid in South Africa. It is a betrayal of justice to classify persons and rights by skin color or genetic relations. It is a betrayal of justice to impede the free association of individuals. It is a betrayal of justice to cripple or to weaken free trade unions. It is a betrayal of justice to block persons from exercising the full

range of their talents and responsibilities. It is a betrayal of justice to ban, or to jail, people solely for the truth as they see it. These things are a betrayal of justice wherever they occur.

Mr. Chairman, we have heard it said that the organization of society is an "internal matter." But any organization of society which violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a universal matter. When one man's rights are infringed, the rights of all are by that much suspended.

Mr. Chairman, my delegation believes that the true principles of law come to fruition under three main influences: (1) the spreading of the ideas of liberty and democracy, which fan the spark of free conscience in every person of every race; (2) the progress of education, which prepares individuals for self-reliance, economic activism, and political responsibility; and (3) the growth of commerce and industry, which places a firm economic base, above and beyond mere subsistence, under the expansion of religion, the arts, and free expression of every kind.

This is why, Mr. Chairman, both in South Africa and in many other places, my country places such great emphasis upon the same three strategies. In many places, we have extended many forms of financial assistance, private and governmental, in the hopes that prosperity, or at least the diminution of hunger, misery, and penury, would encourage liberty. In South Africa, we recognize that economic sanctions are likely to increase misery. Instead, we favor a more constructive approach. The United States is providing funds to address the educational needs of black South Africans disadvantaged by the apartheid system.

There are many elements without South Africa which see the imperative need for change. The United States believes that we who view apartheid as unacceptable must positively support people of all races who are working for

The authors properly emphasize that the differences among the black groups are not trivial and that minority black groups cast as jaundiced an eye on Zulu nationalism as they do on white supremacy. One is inclined to doubt, moreover, the appeal to Sothos or Xhosas of such black opposition groups as Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha, even though he has attempted to broaden its base beyond the Zulu group.

But divide and rule is a workable strategy only when the rulers themselves are undivided, and the cohesion of the National party is no longer to be taken for granted. For one thing, the base of the party has broadened in recent years to include, for the first time, a sizable number of English speakers; for another, the old *verligte-verkrampte* split continues to exist within the party despite the hiving off of the diehard reactionaries in 1969 to

form the IINP. Any major issue related to race can exacerbate this split, and there is one issue above all others that could bring this about.

That issue relates not to the blacks at all but to the conferring of some political rights within the Republic on Coloureds and Asians. Since they have no tribal identity as such, these groups, which constitute about 12 per cent of the population, are caught in the middle: They do not fit in with the blacks, they have been rejected by the whites, and their very existence points up a fundamental inconsistency in the government's separate development scheme. Now there is talk that a presidential commission may well recommend some form of parliamentary representation for these two groups. Were this to happen, it would precipitate an unprecedented debate within the ruling party and within every institution of Afrikanerdom, from

the Dutch Reformed Church to the Broederbond, that semisecret directorate of the Afrikaans-speaking community. At this point the cohesion of the Afrikaners would undergo its severest test, for at stake would be whether or not the political community of South Africa will embrace nonwhites.

The trade-offs here are all too clear: the continuation of a whites-only polity when whites are a diminishing proportion of the total population; or a diversification and expansion of the electorate that gives nonwhites a stake in the system and thus brings about a loss in the homogeneity of the electorate. To choose the former is to hasten the alienation of the Coloureds and Asians; to choose the latter is to necessitate a virtual redefinition of what it means to be a South African. The first choice propels South Africa

peaceful, evolutionary change leading to a just, stable and nonracialist South Africa. If there is no dialogue, the international community will not be heard within South Africa. Confrontational rhetoric might encourage those prone to violence or further alienate those in South Africa who hold steadfastly to the status quo. Neither of these groups will enjoy our support, for all they do is exacerbate the problem, increase the suffering. We cannot and will not aid or abet terrorism or terrorists, nor will we assist those who consistently stand in the way of change.

We should consider the fact that there are those in every nation who stand for change which will benefit all citizens of their society. At times, they must swim against the tide of events and at times undergo personal sacrifice. As a result, there are voices in South Africa among all its racial groups which must be heard, those who call for evolutionary, dynamic change. Will we turn our backs on those people and take the easy way out—by relying on unconstructive criticism? Will it serve the purposes for the people of South Africa or the principles of this organization to constantly speak against abuses of human rights without attempting to encourage a process of change and support those who are seeking constructive change? We ask others to consider our position, and to join us in working toward the solutions which we can all agree must take place in South Africa so that a government in Pretoria, representing all its citizens, can take its place as a respected member of the international community.

In South Africa, probably the largest and strongest of all black organizations, next to the churches, are the labor unions. We note with sadness how the authorities limit and confine these unions, arrest their leaders, inhibit their free association and free expression. Labor unions are a primary institution of free societies. They stand between the lonely

individual and the powerful state. They are social in nature, and yet not statist. They are free, independent social agencies, which, with other similar independent social agencies, form the flesh and blood which gives real body to the human rights of individuals. They protect individuals. They guarantee the steady advance of liberty and justice by constant vigilance to see that laws are just and fair.

Mr. Chairman, we oppose the practice in South Africa of detention without trial. We oppose the dreadful practice of banning. This inhumane practice means the administrative separation of a person from his loved ones and the normal duties of his life, and his displacement into some "neutralizing" environment where, like an uprooted plant, it is expected that he will wither and in effective human terms live as one who is already dead. What a cruel administrative practice this is, in South Africa, or wherever else it may occur. We oppose the forcible displacement of peoples.

All these things happen in South Africa because, under apartheid, blacks are kept out of the free circle of opportunity for education, for advancement and for normal responsibilities and normal rights. These practices deprive South Africa of enormous talent and enormous creative energy. We believe that South Africans are beginning to acknowledge that their country has realized at present only a small fraction of its full human potential. Mr. Chairman, in such matters it is important to dream. For humans do not live by bread alone but by the ideals that move their hearts and shape their societies. South Africa must unleash its dreamers and idealists. It must place its national life upon a new and full basis, excluding no one. Excluding no one, Mr. Chairman....

The statement was written by Michael Novak, head of the U.S. delegation, and delivered by Warren Hewitt of the U.S. State Department.

toward the unthinkable; the second raises questions that have been ineffable. The truly somber part of all this is that a political accommodation to the Coloureds and Asians would not solve the black-white problem, and certainly the policy of separate development as presently pursued is no solution.

While *South African Politics* offers no solutions, what it does accomplish may be just as important at present: a thorough and balanced description of this complex and tormented society that allows others to draw their own conclusions and make their own adjustments. If all that the educated layman has at his disposal is Thompson and Prior's book, he has all he needs to arrive at an intelligent assessment of South Africa's politics. Polemics and apologies we have in abundance; solid and informative books like this one are much rarer. **WV**

**ESSAYS ON FRONTIERS
IN WORLD HISTORY
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and Stanley Palmer**

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John O'Sullivan

In July, 1893, a young University of Wisconsin professor named Frederick Jackson Turner presented a paper on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" at the American Historical Association meeting in Chicago. It met with a muted response from his assembled colleagues but soon was exerting extraordinary influence on how they interpreted the American experience. Turner had insisted that the distinctive qualities of American life were formed in the crucible of the frontier encounter. Historians should be look-

ing inward at the social, political, and economic environment of the frontier rather than at the transplantation of European institutions in America.

Turner published comparatively little during his scholarly career, but he trained a generation of historians of the frontier in his graduate seminars at Wisconsin and Harvard. His frontier thesis with its passionate defenders and dogged critics generated the longest-running debate in the American historical profession. As John Higham has noted, Turner's thesis "offered the only comprehensive, distinctive interpretation of the whole of American history, so the controversy about it touched every scholar and reacted upon every view of the historical process."

One of the most discerning scholars engaged in historical analysis of the frontier was Walter Prescott Webb of the University of Texas. In