

"ON SOUTH AFRICA"

Waterford, Conn.

Dear Sir: After reviewing "The Darkening Clouds of Africa" (*worldview*, September 1964) and the exchange in the same issue between Thomas Molnar and Messrs. Ferwerda, Reissig and Houser, I am all with Dr. Molnar. Your editorial writer, and Dr. Molnar's critics, appear indifferent to several factors profoundly basic to any discussion of white attitudes, either in South Africa or in Africa as a whole. Apartheid's dreary outrages and redneck rationalizing are revolting, but beneath them flows a stubborn vitality. I offer some considerations:

1. Comparisons (a) of South Africa with Mississippi, and (b) of African nationalist movements with our own struggle for independence, are attractive but superficial.

a. Though Negroes outnumber whites in parts of Mississippi, they are only a tenth of the U.S. population. This will safely backstop whatever they accomplish in Mississippi, a fact which Negroes and whites know and depend on. South Africa has no backstop.

b. Our War of Independence transferred power from one group of mature, sophisticated, Protestant Englishmen to another group of mature, sophisticated, Protestant Englishmen. When the dust settled the undergirding assumptions of government had shifted hardly at all. Contrast this with, say, Ghana.

2. Under a government of "one man, one vote," how long would today's South Africa be safe for European property or even life? White experience under a number of African governments—and in U.S. cities of late—has not been encouraging. In fact, how long would South Africa itself stay viable as a growing, prosperous, producing contributor to the West's economy?

3. With acknowledged exceptions, the prevalent attitude of new African governments toward European-owned property, from Algeria southward, has been "This ours. We take. You go." No matter that the property owes its value to a dozen colonial generations who hacked it out of a no-man's wilderness and poured into it three hundred years of blood, sweat, tears, hope and love—this counts for nothing with the expropriators. No amount of sloganeering about anti-colonialism or self-determination can whitewash this banditry or compensate its victims. Does property belong, morally, to those who have

earned it by faith, by risk and by sacrifice—or is this assumption outdated?

4. By what logic should all sub-Saharan Africa descend "by right" to people who, until Europeans opened the country, had sparsely inhabited some disjunct areas, and whose lives, unless colonial governments had ordered them, would to this day be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short"? The territory of South Africa itself was settled by Europeans as early as by any others; Mr. Ferwerda to the contrary, no one was there "since time began." The African nations owe their boundaries, their identities, their national wealth, all they know of economics and politics and progress, to those they now dispossess.

Shall we coldly tell white people, who have known no home but Africa for generations, that the above considerations are "irrelevant," that "today we accommodate today's realities, not yesterday's values," that "great changes sweep aside the old order's hold-outs"? Nonsense. Brutality and looting are brutality and looting, whatever sheep's clothing they wear and however massively they are perpetrated. They can be considered normal only in an atmosphere where envy, avarice and hatred are somehow validated as grounds for nationhood by the fact that ten million people share them.

White South Africans have not far to look for their destiny under any equal franchise in the near term. Their Gordian knot cannot be cut because (to stretch the metaphor) it is all that holds them to their moorings. Both whites and responsible Negroes know at bottom that any instant "solution" will bring blood and ruin. The knot can however be slowly and painfully untied: a gradual loss of fear and change of heart by the whites, a change of leadership in Cape Town, a long, trying, complex growing-up by both sides until "one man, one vote" becomes "one mind, one vote." This is distant; few adults living today will see the outcome, but if the parties cannot muster patience for it, they and we shall suffer. Boycotts, threats, fist-shaking, from inside or outside Africa, can only deepen fears, stiffen resistance and heighten the mounting danger. Yet South Africa has the resources and skills to become the alabaster temple of racial harmony for generations now unborn.

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