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## Commentary

### The Race for South Africa

Paul Fohnson

THE campaign of economic attrition now being waged within the United States against the Republic of South Africa, which is summed up in the word disinvestment, is an outstanding example of the power of political propaganda. That the United States, the richest country in the world, should deliberately - set about destroying the economy of what is in some respects still a developing nation is an absurdity in itself, and a cruel absurdity. Such a policy might make some kind of brutal sense, in terms of Realpolitik, if it were to America's economic and political advantage to wreck the economy of South Africa. In fact the reverse is true. The United States has absolutely nothing to gain, and a good deal to lose, if disinvestment inflicts radical damage. The truth is, the campaign makes no practical sense at all, as South Africans of all shades of political opinion except the men of violence have tried to explain to the American public. In no sense is it justifiable. It is, however, explicable on the assumption that the South African regime is a unique moral evil, whose wickedness is so great that the necessity for its destruction transcends all the rules governing relations between states and, indeed, the dictates of elementary common sense. That, in fact, is the assumption behind the campaign; and that is its moral basis. Therein lies the triumph of propaganda. For South Africa is not unique. In many fundamental respects it is a typical African country. The problems which confront its government, and the way

it responds to them, are typical too. Let us look at

six ways in which the Republic is an African archetype.

First, like every state in Africa, it is undergoing a very rapid population increase. Africa is the last of the continents to experience what is termed the population explosion. It occurred first in 19th-century Europe, which accounts for the phenomena of European emigration and colonialism. It then spread to Asia and South America, both of which (like Europe after 1918) are now emerging from the phase of fast growth. In Central America the explosion is at its height and that is one prime

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reason for the turmoil we find there. In Africa it is just beginning, but the curve of population growth is rising steeply and it is already producing Malthusian countereffects in the form of overcultivation, droughts, famines, and wars. So far, South Africa has avoided the worst of these, but it is feeling intense population pressure like every other African country.

Demographic growth exacerbates what is the most important single characteristic of the African continent: its lack of racial, cultural, and linguistic unity. No other continent is so fragmented. Before colonialism intervened, Africa was beginning to evolve larger units by a process of tribal imperialism, and the effect of the colonial century was to accelerate the process and to transform many thousands of tribal societies into about fifty superficially modern states, which are now independent. Scarcely one is homogeneous. Even small states like Rwanda are riven by racial fissures. In the first quarter-century of independence these divisions have produced appalling civil wars in Nigeria, the Sudan, Chad, Zaire, Uganda, and elsewhere. :

Here is the second respect in which South Africa is typical. It is a large African country and because it is large its racial problemsâ\200\224Ilike those of Nigeria, Zaire, and the Sudan, for exampleâ\200\224are particularly complex. At the level at which disinvestment is debated in the United States, the Republic is seen as divided between whites and blacks. The reality is much more complicated.

The largest racial group is the Zulu, with 5,412,000 people. In a way it is more a national than a simple racial group, because it is divided in turn into about 200 tribes, each subdivided into clans. The next largest are the whites, with 4,454,000, but these too are composed of diverse ethnic groupsâ\200\224Dutch, French, English, and Germanâ\200\224and have two distinctive cultures and languages, Dutch-Afrikaans and English. The figure also includes other important subgroups, such as the large Jewish community, Portuguese, Greeks, Italians, and â\200\234Rhodesian Whites.â\200\235 Third in size are the Xhosa, with 2,685,000, followed by the mixed-race group officially called Coloureds (2,556,000), the North Sotho (2,265,000), South Sotho (1,793,000), and Tswana (1,216,000).

In addition to all these, there are seven other

main groups, ranging from the Shangaan, with nearly 890,000 and the Asians with 780,000, to the Venda, with 185,000. This last is the most homogeneous group, but even it has 27 distinct tribes. The Asians are divided into Hindus (65 percent), Muslims (21 percent), Christians, Buddhists, and other cultures. As for language, there are four major and 23 minor African ones.

This analysis, moreover, excludes the people of the quasi-independent states created within South Africa: Transkei with 2,500,000 people, Bophuthatswana with 1,300,000, Ciskei with 636,000, and Venda with 358,000, making about 4,800,000 in all.

THI-: third way in which South Africa is

typical is that population pressure on

the land is driving people into the towns, and especially into the big cities. All over Africa traditional rural societies are breaking up. Towns like Lagos (Nigeria), Johannesburg (South Africa), Dakar (Senegal), Nairobi (Kenya), Khartoum (the Sudan), Kinshasa (Zaire), and Harare (Zimbabwe) are expanding at terrifying speed. Most of the new arrivals live in shantytowns. The statistics of

crime, and especially murder, are deeply depress-

ing. No place in South Africa can rival the murder rate in Lagos or half-a-dozen other big black African cities, but the 1984 figures were pretty alarming all the same: in just four police districts in the Rand (the gold-mining region which includes Johannesburg) there were over 2,700 killings last year. Soweto, perhaps the best known of the black townships in the Rand, had 1,454 killings classified as murder. The average police district has between three and seven murders a day. The number of reported rapes is also enormous.

These burgeoning and ultraviolent giant cities pose growing problems to the authorities in all African countries, and here again South Africa is typical. Governments have found that, unless they respond ruthlessly, the shantytowns quickly become no-go areas for the police and are ruled or partitioned by rival gangs; soon the whole city becomes ungovernable. -

So governments respond with what has become the curse of Africa—social engineering. People are treated not as individual human beings but as atomized units and shoveled around like concrete or gravel. Movement control is imposed. Every African has to have a grubby little pass-book or some other begrimed document which tells him where he is allowed to work or live. South Africa has had pass-laws of a kind since the 18th century. They have now spread all over the African continent, and where the pass-book comes the bulldozer is never far behind. Virtually all African governments use them to demolish unauthorized settlements. Hundreds of thousands of wretched people are made homeless without warning by governments terrified of being overwhelmed by

lawless multitudes. In the black African countries bordering on the Sahara, the authorities fight des-

perately to repel nomadic desert dwellers driven south by drought. When the police fail, punitive columns of troops are sent in.

South Africa has the most efficient (though not the largest) repressive apparatus on the continent, much admired and imitated by other African governments, who buy South African police hardware when they can. All these security forces are ruthless and liable to act with unpredictable violence. But many are ill-paid and undisciplined, unlike the South African police, and therefore far more savage. The bloody cost of social control and engineering in black Africa goes largely unreported. South Africa, by contrast, has a large, varied, and in many ways excellent press, so we know exactly what goes on there.

African social engineering is, perhaps inevitably, given the lack of homogeneity, conducted on a racial basis. Here again South Africa is typical. All African states are racist. Almost without exception, and with varying degrees of animosity, they discriminate against someone: Jews, or whites, or Asians, or non-Muslim religious groups, or disfavored tribes. There is no such thing as a genuinely multiracial society in the whole of Africa. There is no African country where tribal or racial origins, skin color or religious affiliation are not of prime importance in securing elementary rights.

African countries vary in the extent to which their practice of discrimination is formalized or entrenched in law codes and official philosophies. Most have political theories of a sort, cooked up in the political-science or sociology departments of local universities. Tanzania has a sinister totalitarian doctrine called Ujaama. Ghana has Consciencism. There is Zambian Humanism, Négritude in Senegal, and, in Zaire, a social creed called Mobutuism, after the reigning dictator. All these government theories reflect the appetites of the ruling racial groups.

Apartheid, cobbled together in the social-psychology department of Stellenbosch University, is a characteristic example of the distinctively African brand of political theory which has developed in the last half century. Apartheid is not a concept which divides the Republic from the rest of Africa: on the contrary, it is the local expression of the African ideological personality. No continent has ever suffered more at the hands of its politically-minded intellectuals, and here again South Africa is very typical.

THOSE, then, are six important ways in which the Republic is a characteristically African state. But in four respects it does differ from its neighbors, and these must be examined too.

The first concerns its wealth: South Africa has by far the richest and most varied range of natural

resources of any African country. Its settlements were originally poor, wholly agricultural, largely pastoral; but since the discovery of diamonds in

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quantity in the 1860â\200\231s it has emerged as the richest depository of minerals in the world, exceeded in quantity only by the Soviet Union. About 85 percent of what it mines is exported. It is the largest world supplier of gold, platinum, gem diamonds,

chrome, vanadium, manganese, andalusite metals,

vermiculite, and asbestos fibers. It is the second largest supplier of uranium and antimony, and among the top ten suppliers of nickel, copper, tin, silver, coal, and fluorspar. South Africaâ\200\231s mineral reserves are prodigious and seem to expand paripassu as world demand makes them worth exploring and exploiting. Even as things stand, the country is known to have 86 percent of the West's platinum-group metals, 64 percent of its vanadium, 48 percent of its manganese ore, 83 percent of its chrome ore, and nearly 50 percent of its gold.

There are a number of critical metals in which South Africaâ\200\231s only real rival is the Soviet Union. The two countries between them control 99 percent of the worldâ\200\231s platinum, 97 percent of its vanadium, 93 percent of its manganese, 84 percent of its chrome, and 68 percent of its gold. There are many other metals in which the two are paramount. [t is impossible to name any country or class or racial group which would materially benefit from the destruction of the South African economy, with one notable exception. The Soviet Union would be an outstanding beneficiary if South Alricaâ\200\231s mining industry were put out of action and, still more, if it were placed in hands the Soviet government could control.

The second way in which South Africa differs is that its mineral wealth has become the basis of a modern economyâ\200\224the only modern economy in the whole of .\[rica. South of the Sahara, South Africa has less than 25 percent of the population, but it has nearly 75 percent of the total Gross National Product. The core of its economy is mining. Again after the Soviet Union, it has the largest mining industry in the world, employing over 700,000 people as opposed to 470,00 in the United States, 140,000 in Canada, and 70,000 in Australia. In many important respects the South African mining industry is the most efficient and technically advanced in the world.

THE strength of the mining industry accounts for the third way in which South Africa differs. Except for the Ivory Coast, Kenya, and Malawi, all the black African states have experienced falls in real incomes per capita since independence. But only in South Africa have the real incomes of blacks risen very substantially in the last quarter-century. In mining, black wages have tripled in real terms in the last decade and are still rising, despite the recession through which the South African economy has been passing since the second quarter of 1984.

This helps to account for the fact that there are more black-owned cars in South Africa than there are private cars in the whole of the Soviet Union.

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The Republic is the first and so far the only African country to produce a large black middle class. In South Africa the education available to blacks is poor compared to what the whites get, and that is one of the biggest grievances the black communities harbor; but it is good compared to what is available elsewhere on the continent. The number of blacks matriculating (i.e., completing secondary education) is about to pass the white total, and so, more surprisingly, is the number of black South African women with professional qualifications—now over the 100,000 mark and rising fast. Almost certainly there are now more black women professionals in the Republic than in the whole of the rest of Africa put together.

Thanks to mining, again, this modest but rising prosperity is not confined to blacks born in South Africa. About half of South Africa's black miners come from abroad, chiefly from Mozambique, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Botswana. Most of their wages are remitted. About 10 million people, in half-a-dozen countries, are financially dependent on South Africa's mining industry, and its breakdown would thus be an unimaginable catastrophe for the whole of southern Africa. Black Africans, like other people, vote most sincerely with their feet. South Africa is the country where they most want to work and (if open to them) live in.

That is one reason Bishop Tutu of Johannesburg was manifestly wrong when he declared last year that South African blacks would welcome a Soviet occupation. The Soviet Union has often been admired from afar, but no one goes there to work in its mines. Nor do South African blacks emigrate, legally or illegally, to neighboring black-run countries like Angola, Mozambique, or Zimbabwe. The security fences South Africa is now rather anxiously erecting are designed to keep intended immigrants out, not—like the Berlin Wall—to keep people in.

The fourth way in which South Africa differs from the rest of the continent is that it is in many respects a free country. Every other African country has become, or is in the process of becoming, a one-party state. None of them subscribes in practice, or in most cases even in theory, to the separa-

tion of powers. Both the rule of law and democracy are subject in South Africa to important qualifications. But it is the only African country where they exist at all. The emergency and security powers enjoyed by the South African government are so wide and draconian that they almost make us forget that the judiciary is independentâ\200\224 very much soâ\200\224and that even non-whites can get justice against the state, something they are most unlikely to secure anywhere else on the continent. The courts are cluttered with black litigants suing the police, the prison authorities; or other government agencies, or appealing against sentences. For instance, the circumstances in which the black leader Steve Biko died in detention have been sub-

jected to a degree of minute scrutiny in the courts which would be rare even in America, and quite impossible anywhere else in Africa.

South Africa has a parliamentary constitution with a limited franchise, rather as Britain had in the early 19th century. Like Britain then, and unlike the rest of Africa now, it has been moving toward democracy rather than away from it. The new constitution introduced last year gives parliamentary representation, though on separate rolls, to both the Asian and the Coloured communities. Asian and Coloured ministers now serve in the government. No one doubts that the blacks, who already have the vote in local government elections, will get it in some form in central government elections. The claim by opponents of the regime that these changes are simply cosmetic is evidently not shared by the extremists of the African National Congress (ANC), who have been doing everything in their power to murder or terrorize non-whites who participate in elections.

THERE is also overwhelming evidence that South Africa has been moving away from apartheid. Some of it was always a dead letter; other aspects are no longer enforced. The fact that over 10 million blacks live and work in areas officially designated white shows that the physical

core of apartheid has been surrendered. Now the:

scrapping of Section 16 of the Immorality Act, which made interracial sex illegal, and of the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act has destroyed its emotional core. It is quite clear that P.W. Botha, who became President (in the U.S. sense) under the new constitution, is convinced that apartheid has to go and has been dismantling it almost by stealth to avoid panicking the bulk of the regime's followers.

The view of Alan Paton, South Africa's greatest writer, now eighty-one, as expressed to the South African weekly, the Financial Mail, earlier this year, is worth quoting:

Since Union [1910] I've observed all our prime ministers closely, except Louis Botha, who died when I was about sixteen; and I certainly think the most astute of them all is this current chap who is now our state president. There's a word that I've decided to cut out of my vocabulary, and that's cosmetic. I believe that P.W. Botha with his whole heart wants to remain part of the West. And I think that P.W. realized that if we were once dropped by the West, it would be the end of us, and especially the end of the Afrikaner. . . . P.W. has said things that no prime minister has said before—not one, not even Louis Botha or [Jan] Smuts. He said that he

wanted a future for every child in this country, white, black, or brown. He said that if these - people are good enough to go and fight on our border, they are good enough to have a place at home.

What is happening within the political system

is that the real supporters of apartheid are moving out of the regime's National party and into the opposition Conservative party of Dr. Andries Treurnicht: and their places in the National party are being filled by more liberal English-speaking voters. The true voice of apartheid now comes from the Conservatives, isolated from power at the Right end of the spectrum. The voice of the regime itself is the voice of change.

At the end of February this year, Treurnicht proposed a motion in parliament rejecting the government's intention to extend the existing political integration and power-sharing to include blacks, and affirming that the only meaningful solution for South Africa was partition, a logical extension of apartheid. He used the same arguments which, until quite recently, were the stock government defense of the system.

Even more significant was the speech rejecting the motion from Chris Heunis, Minister for Constitutional Development and a key figure in the reform process. He said that Treurnicht is not seeking self-determination for all groups . . . [but] only for the whites, and in his terminology this means domination. Peaceful coexistence on this

basis was impossible and violence was certain. The

basic difference between the government and the Conservatives, Heunis added, was that the government accepted the implications of South Africa's multinationalism, of our multi-ethnic society, and these were that we are not just one nation here which can exclude and push all the others around. To refuse to accept these implications was to flee from reality and to bury the head in the ground like an ostrich.

Where have we heard all these phrases and arguments before? Why until recently they were hurled at the regime by its English-speaking liberal opponents.

At the rate things have been moving, apartheid could be dead and officially buried in five years. If so, I like to think that South Africa will be only the first African state to recognize that its particularism cannot work, and the repudiation of apartheid will be followed by the dissolution of similar ideologies elsewhere on the continent.

Certainly any acceptance of power-sharing by the Republic will have a beneficial effect on its neighbors, especially if it can be carried out peacefully. In many ways South Africa is the natural leader and former of opinion, at any rate in the southern half of the continent. The Republic had a baneful and destructive influence during the 1950s and 1960s, when apartheid was riding

triumphant, and undoubtedly contributed to the spirit of intolerance and violence which destroyed civilized government in so many of the new black states during these decades. If South Africa is sickening of social engineering and the ideological superstructure built upon it, it may mean that this dark period in African history is drawing to a close, and that the Republic will lead other Afri-

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can nations to better ways of conducting their  
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AGA[NST this historical background, and  
what amounts to a watershed in Afri-  
can development, what is the campaign for disin-  
vestment likely to achieve? It could have one of  
two effects. By far the more likely, in my opinion,  
is that it will ultimately strengthen both the regime  
and the South African economy. Economic sanc-  
tions are remarkably ineffective against a strong  
modern economy; often they merely enforce im-  
provements, in quite unexpected ways. South Af-  
rica was traditionally a colonial economy which  
exported commodities and imported manufac-  
tures. The sanctions imposed over the last quarter-  
century have simply hastened its progress toward  
economic self-sufficiency.

The arms embargo, now more than two decades  
old, merely led to the creation of an indigenous  
arms industry. South Africa exploited the ad-  
vanced technology of its mining industry to be-  
come a world leader in the manufacture of con-

- ventional explosives, rivaling the hitherto unchal-

lenged supremacy in this field of Sweden and the  
U.S. It also specializes in mine-resistant armored-  
security vehicles, in which it has outstripped all its  
competitors. From an importer of arms it has be-  
come an exporter, selling its products all over the  
world but especially to other African governments,  
whose needs are similar. In fact the United Na-  
tions, which once instructed its members to stop  
selling arms to South Africa, is now driven to beg  
them to stop buying arms from the Republic.

The oil embargo produced similar results. South  
Africa, as it happens, does not find much difficulty  
in buying oil these days. But to make itself more  
than 85-percent self-sufficient in energy, it has  
created a synthetic-fuel industry whose chief com-  
ponent, Sasol, the semi-public coal-into-petroleum  
firm, is now the world leader in this technology.  
This has involved modernizing and expanding the  
coal industry, and as a by-product South Africa  
has created the lowest-cost coal-export trade in the  
world. It has captured a huge slice of the Japanese  
market and even exports coal at a profit to the  
United States.

These two examples (there are many others)  
suggest that disinvestment will not work. As long  
as investment in South Africa, especially in min-  
ing, remains highly profitable, capital will find its  
way there, whatever the U.S. banks and multi-  
nationals decide. The only change will be a  
growth in South African financial institutions,  
with Johannesburg doing for itself what at present

is done by others. The net result will again be a broadening of South Africa's economic base by adding a strong financial sector, the elements of which already exist. The loser will be the United States economy.

There is, however, the possibility I put it no higher that the disinvestment campaign will suc-

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ceed in inflicting substantial damage on South African industry, especially mining. In that case, we must then ask ourselves who the victims will be. Who will suffer? :

It will not be the supporters of apartheid. They are, for the most part, small farmers, impervious to outside economic pressure. They are isolationist by instinct and by historical tradition. Their forebears undertook the Great Trek, away from Britain's Cape Colony and into the wild interior, precisely to escape from the world, to make themselves independent of it. They are far more isolationist than any prewar American Republicans. Their image of security is the laager, the circle of wagons drawn close together to keep alien forces out of their warm, inbred, Calvinist society. They regard Johannesburg and its business and financial palaces as Sodom, the city of Satan. Anything which damages the money-power is welcome to them.

Hence a successful campaign of disinvestment would simply drive the Afrikaners back into the laager and into the waiting arms of Dr. Treurnicht and his Conservative party. The forces of reform within the regime would lose their electoral base and the reform movement itself would come to a halt; perhaps be put into reverse. The political consequences of disinvestment would thus be the opposite of what its supporters claim. Those South African whites who support apartheid have always argued that big business and international finance were dragging the country along the calamitous path to multiracialism: the disinvestment campaign, if successful, would prove them right.

THEY are right, of course. The primary opponent of apartheid in South Africa is its only effective opponent, in practice capitalism. For it is a mistake to regard apartheid as the extreme right-wing end of the political spectrum. It is more accurately described as ethnic socialism, a system which necessarily involves state interference in every aspect of economic activity, a huge state sector, an ever-growing state encroachment on the national income, and a mass of restrictive laws which inhibit the operations of the free market. Capitalism is incompatible with apartheid for broadly the same reasons it is incompatible with feudalism: it cannot coexist with a social and political system based on inherited racial caste, which forbids freedom of movement and a free market in labor, and subordinates all business decisions to the needs of a primitive world view.

Hence it is in the nature of capitalism in South

Africa to destroy apartheid, and that is precisely what it has been doing. If we look at the aspirations of South African blacks, not as imagined in theory and from the outside but as they actually exist, we find that black priorities center on five

. practical objects. These are, in probable order of importance: better education for their children:

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rights of citizenship; the right to own property, especially house title, anywhere in the country; the end of Influx Control—that is, freedom of movement and residence; and a natural corollary of the last three demands, freedom from excessive police supervision. On each and all these demands, and in their overall aspiration, the blacks have the vigorous support of virtually the whole business community.

There is, in fact, a common interest for blacks and business to dismantle apartheid. This common interest is paradoxically underlined by the disinvestment campaign. For if it succeeds, both will be victims.

That business, and especially the mining industry, will suffer is obvious enough. The new very-deep-level gold mines, for instance, absorb colossal quantities of investment cash. To sink a single

shaft can cost over \$1 billion. On the other hand,

one big mine can employ 20,000 people or even more, three-quarters of them blacks.

If mines close or reduce production, the first to be turned away will be black immigrants. The effect on the economies of such countries as Mozambique, Botswana, and Malawi will be serious: they are poor enough already, and heavily dependent on foreign currency earned by such export of labor. If disinvestment does enough damage, South African blacks will lose their jobs too. There is a simple calculation: of every hundred jobs disinvestment destroys, between 70 and 80, and possibly more, are held by blacks, and these are the best-paid black industrial jobs on the whole continent.

I HAVE no doubt that this is exactly the effect which some of those who support the disinvestment campaign wish to achieve. It is certainly the aim of the African National Congress, which is no longer interested in reform

or a negotiated, gradualist settlement, but seeks a solution by force. The ANC and its followers believe that mass unemployment will increase the revolutionary consciousness of blacks.

The present situation in South Africa can thus be seen as a race. On the one hand, there are those within the regime, and the white liberals outside it, who want to dismantle apartheid and build a system of multiracial power-sharing. They know they are engaged in a race, but they must move slowly, because they have to carry the bulk of the Afrikaners with them. On the other hand, there is the ANC, which is racing to destroy the moderate elements within the Asian, Coloured, and above all the black populations before they can be integrated into the reformed regime. Its terror

campaign, which was brought to a head by young people under ANC influence, and which provoked the declaration of a state of emergency in July, has been aimed very largely at non-white moderates. Its object has been to murder as many of them as it can, and to frighten the rest into noncooperation. It is strongly reminiscent of the campaign waged by the National Liberation Front against Arab moderates in French Algeria, and of the efforts by the Grand Mufti and his killers to destroy the forces of Arab moderation in prewar Palestine.

Both these earlier terror campaigns succeeded, and it is possible that the ANC, helped along by disinvestment, will eventually succeed as well, in spite of harsh emergency measures adopted by the government. In that case, the black extremists will have won the race, the attempt to move away from apartheid will be abandoned, and South Africa will face a future of continuing and increasing violence. But it will be a future in which a refortified and emotionally strengthened regime of apartheid will almost certainly stay on top, using whatever force is necessary.