

THE SPECTATOR

The Spectator, 56 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LL
Telephone: 071-405 1706; Telex 27124; Fax 071-242 0603

A MAN, NOT AN ICON

Mr Mandela's triumphal progress through the United States before coming to Britain was instructive, if not edifying. Here was modern mass politics in all its superficiality, the continuation of show business by other means. One would hardly have guessed that the political and economic destinies of 30 million people were at stake: it was the triumph of packaging over product.

Despite Mr Mandela's admirable qualities — his personal dignity, his lack of rancour after many years of imprisonment — he is manifestly not a political leader of great stature. He sees in the totalitarian oppression of Castro's Cuba only freedom and justice; he has declared himself honoured to appear on the same platform as Puerto Rican extremists who shot five United States congressmen on the floor of the Congress itself; he has not dissociated himself from Colonel Gaddafi; he has called for talks between the British Government and the IRA on the grounds that 'differences have arisen' between them, and he has never expressed regret at his wife's egregious remarks about freeing South Africa by dousing people in petrol and setting them alight. Far from being a man of peace, he begins to sound like a man who believes that any grievance justifies any violence.

His thinking on economics is muddled, and displays wilful ignorance — or worse. In an interview with a German publication in June, he still chattered happily about the African path to socialism. Which path, one wonders, is that? The Sekou Tourean or Macias Ngueman path that reduced their respective populations by a half in a few years? Or perhaps the Kaundan path, which has merely cleared the shops of food and other goods for decades while the weeping President's family accumulated a huge fortune? Maybe he refers to the Nyererean path, which required the herding at gunpoint of 80 per cent of the peasantry into socialised villages, averting an economic catastrophe only by accepting billions of dollars of Scandinavian aid in the name of self-sufficiency. Failure on such a scale to learn from the experience of others can be attributed only to the very poorest of judgment.

Mr Mandela felt able to assure his interviewer that the African masses wanted nothing to do with capitalism. He did not explain how he came to this rather sweeping conclusion, but it was certainly not by consultation with either the masses, who have never shown any reluctance to consume what capitalism produces, or other political groups. In an interview given to an American publication during the same month, he said he failed to see the importance of talking to his rival, Chief Buthelezi — not a very auspicious beginning to the multi-party democracy to which his organisation is now said to aspire.

The adulation that Mr Mandela received in the United States was therefore quite

inappropriate. The suppression there by the press of inconvenient facts incompatible with Mr Mandela's status as secular saint illustrates the power of the liberal conscience to censor without any external compulsion to do so. It has to retain the illusion that for every evil, such as apartheid, there has to be an equal and opposite good.

Our own bastion of this wishful, and fundamentally dishonest, thinking, the *Guardian*, has suggested editorially that Mr Mandela's unfortunate remarks concerning the IRA were the consequence of jet lag, thus fatuously ignoring the innumerable occasions on which its hero, well-rested and with his feet on the ground, has proclaimed himself the friend of any thug with a gun and an ideology. It is possible that leaders do not always mean exactly what they say: but until they reach power, we have nothing else by which to judge them. *The Spectator* has been warning for a long time (Leading article, 6 August 1988) that Mr Mandela should be treated as a man and not as an icon: a man, moreover, with often objectionable views.

Alone of world leaders, Mrs Thatcher has had the courage to oppose the collective tide of *bien pensant* madness for no obvious political gain. Alone of world leaders she has had the intelligence and foresight to realise that the question of South Africa is *not* the question of apartheid, which cannot be maintained even if the ANC refrains from bombing supermarkets, but the question of whether the banks, mines and other businesses are to be packed with abjectly incompetent political appointees who will soon reduce the country to chaos and possibly to starvation. South Africa needs conservation at least as much as it needs change, and it is imperative that economic expectations among the black population which cannot possibly be met should not be aroused.

The South African question is one that displays the Prime Minister at her best. Pugnacious in defence of common sense, she will not be swayed by high-sounding, conscience-soothing phrases. If South Africa transforms itself peacefully, its people — of all colours — will have reason to be grateful to her.

THE SPECTATOR

SUBSCRIBE TODAY —
Save 10% on the Cover Price!
RATES

	12 Months	6 Months
UK	£66.00	£33.00
Europe (airmail)	£77.00	£38.50
USA	Airspeed US \$99	\$49.50
Rest of	Airmail £93.00	£46.50
World	Airspeed £77.00	£38.50
Students: £33.00 (12 months): £21.00 (6 months). Please state college.		

Please enter a subscription to The Spectator

I enclose my cheque for £ _____
(Equivalent \$US & Eurocheques accepted)

☐ Please charge my credit card: \$/£ _____
Please tick ☐ VISA ☐ ACCESS ☐ AMEX ☐
DINERS

Card No.

Signature _____

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

☐ Please tick here if you do not wish to receive
direct mail from other companies

Send to: Spectator Subscription Department.
42 Bedford Square London WC1B 3SL

JP2

The Larger Context

Americans were so thrilled by the personality and celebrity of Nelson Mandela they forgot to ask him what he stands for.

NO HARD QUESTIONS, PLEASE

By Michael Novak



One of the most abiding signs of racism in the media is its application of a double standard to blacks and to whites. This tendency was quite visible during the recent U.S. visit of Nelson Mandela.

Mandela deserves honor for the good humor with which he has stepped into the sunshine of world acclaim after enduring 27 long years in prison. His smile, his self-assurance and his purposiveness command our respect. His gentle manner wins our affection.

But none of this puts him above criticism. Since he came to the U.S. billed as a political leader, the media should have done a great deal more than merely celebrate him as a personality. Nelson Mandela is the most visible public face of an otherwise secretive and extremist organization, the African National Congress. Surely the substance of the ANC's aims is germane. Surely these aims should be discussed. But they were hardly mentioned during his visit here.

If Mr. Mandela were white—if he

were Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl, Fidel Castro or even Mikhail Gorbachev—his substantive views would certainly have been subjected to criticism. Yet no one seemed to wish to be the first to criticize a black hero. This was cowardice, born of a double standard.

And there is another problem with this quite admirable and attractive man: He maintains a close alliance with the Communist Party. Consistently, he exalts collectivist over individual decision making. He boldly and openly (on *Nightline*, on *MacNeil-Lehrer*) supports—in Marxist terminology—"progressive forces": Qaddafi, Castro, the Cuban-backed Marxist government of Angola, the PLO and others.

As David Roberts Jr. wrote in *Commentary* two years ago, "The important point is that the current ANC leadership—all of it—has accepted the terminology, definitions, political program, tactics and the entire load of ideological baggage that make up the essence of Leninism." Hammer-and-sickle banners drape the stage at every ANC rally.

Praising Cuba earlier this year, Mandela said: "There's one thing where that country stands out head and shoulders above the rest. That is in its love for human rights and liberty." Does he show no pity for Armando Valladares and those prisoners still in Cuba's jails?

The "constitutional guidelines" published by the ANC in 1988 give immense ideological discretion to any future ANC government that might wish to deprive citizens of their rights, as the *New Republic* recently noted. Under the ANC the state would have control not only over social and economic life, but

also over habits, thinking, consciousness and behavior. It would have every instrument of control held by the current authoritarian government, plus new ones.

So what program was it that Americans were being asked to support during Mr. Mandela's whirlwind tour—\$200,000 from the National Council of Churches, \$5,000 per couple from a 1,000 people dinner in Boston, etc.? What will happen to black South Africans under an ANC regime? It could be what happened to dissenting Cubans under Castro. On this point, recent African precedents are not reassuring. Under an ideologically rigid ANC, South Africa could well suffer severe economic dislocations from a sudden descent into socialism, and thus experience damage far more severe than that of less-developed economies.

For one fact about current-day South Africa should not be dismissed: Execrable and humiliating as its apartheid system is, South Africa's economy offers brighter hopes for the future than does any other economy in sub-Saharan Africa. The ANC could easily destroy this hope, if its present thinking does not change.

Five years ago in *Commentary*, historian Paul Johnson noted that there were more black women in South Africa with professional qualifications (more than 100,000) than in the whole of the rest of Africa. Only in South Africa have the real incomes of blacks risen substantially for the last 25 years. There are more black-owned automobiles in South Africa than private cars in the whole U.S.S.R. All by itself, South Africa produces 75% of the total GNP of all of Africa south of the Sahara.

"If the Sahara is ever socialized," goes an Eastern European joke, "in two years there will be a shortage of sand." If Nelson Mandela is leading his people into a socialist night, he is no liberator. And his name will eventually live not in glory, but in infamy. It behooves those who would be his friends to question him closely on his aims—and to direct his attention to the disasters that have befallen socialist regimes during the 27 years he was in prison.

If we would not wish socialism upon European whites, we should certainly not wish to bring it down upon South Africa's blacks, who have already suffered more than enough. ■

Philosopher, journalist and ex-U.S. ambassador Michael Novak directs social and political studies at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. His book, The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism has been widely translated around the world.