

by Edmund Hill, O.P.

Plus c'est la même chose, plus ça change. It is only to be expected that this strange looking-glass country should even oblige one to put platitudes back to front. In the seventies, all appears to be exactly as it was in the sixties, if not more so, with the Vorster brothers reigning supreme in Church and State—the Prime Minister's elder brother was elected Moderator of the N.G.K., the biggest of the three Calvinist Afrikaner churches, at their synod last year. And yet there is a change in the smell of things, at least to my nostrils. I will try to illustrate this state of affairs by a miscellany of episodes that have marked the last eighteen months.

We begin with the Msini case. Mr Msini is a crippled African who works, I believe as a night watchman, for a firm in Wellington, about forty miles from Cape Town. He has worked for the same employer for ten years, and so he qualifies under the appropriate section of the appropriate Act to reside permanently in the area. He married fourteen years ago a wife who did not so qualify, and as the laws are now administered never will be able to qualify to reside there permanently; and so for most of that period she has been living with her husband and children in Wellington illegally. Towards the end of 1970 nemesis overtook her for this offence and she was 'endorsed out' and packed off to a place called Dordrecht, some 700 miles or so away in the eastern Cape. It so happened that she had no right to stay there either—there seemed in fact to be nowhere where she could legally reside. But that and the rest of this story as told so far is a commonplace of African life in this country, and particularly in the Cape Town area, where the authorities embarked on a campaign a few years ago to reduce the number of Africans living there by 5 per cent per annum. Nothing new so far, just the familiar South African pattern against which insignificant liberal elements like the English Churches, and the Black Sash, have been protesting in vain for years.

What was new in the Msini case was that for some reason or other it touched the consciences of two Dutch Reformed, Afrikaner, ministers, one at least of whom is teaching at the theological seminary in Stellenbosch, and they wrote letters expressing their concern to the Cape Afrikaans paper *Die Burger*, and *Die Burger* wrote a leading article on the case, saying that if the implementation of the policy of separate development involved this sort of thing on a wide scale, then the implementation, if not the policy, would have to be changed. Of course it has been common knowledge for years among those who have not shut their eyes to the facts that the policy and its implementation does involve this sort of thing on a large scale. But criticism—no, that is too strong a word; anxiety about it publicly expressed by Dutch Reformed ministers at Stellenbosch and by *Die Burger* cannot be brushed aside like merely liberal protest from

the Black Sash. Soothing noises had to be made by government ministers; senior officials gave Mrs Msini a temporary permit to return to her husband, and then visited the family to discuss ways and means; they were offered a house and work in a more 'African' part of the country; the final upshot was that Mr Msini decided not to forgo the security of job and residence he already enjoys, and so the family was split up after all, and Mrs Msini with her younger children was found a house somewhere or other in some homeland. No change, after all; no more leaders from *Die Burger*; silence from the two ministers of religion. And yet there has been a change, disillusion with crucial aspects of the sacred policy has shown itself among the faithful, and it is still there.

Next let us look at the small Free State dorp of Excelsior. About the same time last year the news broke that at least six eminent citizens of Excelsior were being charged with breaches of the Immorality Act with at least ten African women. After being charged, one of the six committed suicide. All this too is part of the familiar South African pattern, including the suicide, though on a rather more dramatic scale than usual. But then when the case came up for trial a month or so later, early in January 1971, it was announced that the charges had been withdrawn on the instructions of the Free State attorney-general. The reason eventually given, a rather thin one, was that all the witnesses for the prosecution, seemingly the African women involved, refused to testify. The whole affair was raised and discussed in parliament. After much government humming and hawing, and wondering what all the fuss was about, the minister of justice eventually made a concession to the critics—in future prosecutions under the Immorality Act will only be made with the fiat of the attorney-general of the province. Again, very little apparent change; but again, increasing disillusion among the faithful.

This creeping uncertainty, in Afrikaner circles that are not without influence, about the real virtues of the policy of separate development may further be illustrated from two organs of the Nationalist press, *Die Burger* already mentioned, a Cape daily, and the Afrikaans Sunday paper, *Rapport*. Both remain staunchly and sincerely Nationalist in opinion, seeing the policy of separate development as the only feasible one for South Africa which will justly guarantee the continued existence of the Afrikaner *volk*. Both are acutely aware—though since about July 1970 *Die Burger* has tended rather cravenly to mute its expression of this awareness—that a *sine qua non* for the success of the policy is good race relations within the Republic; and both are aware, and try with a greater or less degree of frankness to make their readers aware, that good race relations are daily being spoiled both by the attitudes and behaviour of private white, and in particular Afrikaner citizens, and by the way in which officials administer government policy, and by many of the things that government ministers say in public. Particularly revealing, to my

mind, was a doubtless unconscious revelation of uncertainty about the moral rightness of the policy in a leading article of *Die Burger* some time in February 1971. Vast areas of the Cape Province and the Free State were suffering from a plague of locusts, I think at the same time there was an extremely serious threat of oil pollution on the coast from the stranded tanker the *Wafra*, but in any case the article quoted some anonymous official as saying that the country seemed to be suffering from the plagues of Egypt. Had this remark been made and quoted in the press in England, or even quoted by the English press here in South Africa, it would have been quite without significance. But practically every Afrikaner, and certainly the editor of *Die Burger*, must be presumed to know that the plagues of Egypt were the prelude to the liberation of the children of Israel from the slavery of Egypt. He must also be presumed to take almost for granted the comparison between his own God-fearing *volk* and the children of Israel. So to find an Afrikaans paper even considering a comparison between the Republic, which is dominated by the Afrikaners, and ancient Egypt, is rather startling. It raises the question, of course, who are the enslaved people destined to be delivered by the arm of the Lord from this land of bondage. Not that this question actually was raised by the article in *Die Burger*; but I do not think it can have been far from the surface of the writer's mind, and this indicates a mind by no means at ease with the moral, you could almost say the theological situation of this country.

The Sunday paper *Rapport* has been far less timid than *Die Burger* in airing anxieties and doubts. It recently published the results of an opinion poll conducted among the readers of the African paper *The World*, a poll organized by a leading political columnist and a lecturer in sociology at the Rand Afrikaans University. It was not an extensive poll, being answered by a mere 200 or so readers of *The World*. Its results were what anyone even slightly acquainted with the feelings of Africans and other 'non-Whites' in this country would have expected. Some 90 per cent or more of the answers said that good relations between White and non-White were non-existent, Afrikaners came way down at the bottom of the list for courtesy to Africans in shops and post-offices, Mr Kaunda came top of the list of admired leaders in Africa, and Mr Vorster at the bottom, with the compliant Chief Matanzima of the Transkei not far ahead of him—and so on. And all this published in an Afrikaans newspaper—that is the new thing in this country. The old thing was typified by the reaction of the more conservative Afrikaans press, which criticized the holding of the poll, and the publication of its results, as calculated to disturb good race relations. That is a typical establishment reaction, but more and more of erstwhile establishment supporters are alive to the idiocy of it.

Not so long ago Mr Vorster said that he did not know what petty apartheid was; as far as he was concerned there was simply apartheid,

or the policy of separate development. He was also unaware of any annoying elements in the policy. In spite of this oracle from on high, *Rapport's* political columnist invited readers to send in instances of what they regarded as petty apartheid, or of racial prejudice shown by officials or private citizens. And for a good four weeks the letters have been coming in. The columnist promised an eventual analysis of the answers, an article on the problem which has so far not yet appeared as I write. It is all evidence of a stirring of conscience, or at least of doubt, among the faithful.

A few more incidents. Bishop Zulu is arrested at about 4 a.m. in a raid on a conference attended exclusively by Black clergymen. Nothing unusual about that; Bishop Zulu did not have his reference book on him, and hundreds of Africans are arrested and charged daily with this offence. But there are several interesting features about this case. The establishment was clearly annoyed at this unwelcome publicity, and the charge against the bishop was dropped; various Afrikaans papers rebuked the local officials of Roodepoort for being 'indiscriminate' in their application of 'discriminatory' laws; the blame was put by a minister in parliament on the bishop and on his White Lutheran host for not making his identity known sooner to the arresting officers—and as so often in such cases, it soon became clear that the minister had got his facts all wrong (being badly briefed, no doubt by the local official concerned), and was moreover guilty of highly improper remarks on a case still *sub judice*. And lastly, it is interesting that the occasion for the raid and its consequences was a conference on Black theology. What emerges is that local officials and police were merely applying the old policy in the old way, and I suspect they felt especially stimulated to this action by the government's current confrontation with the Churches; a splendid opportunity to do their bit by harassing not merely clergymen, but Black clergymen too. And the thing misfired; the establishment was rattled, its supporters once more given a dose of disillusionment. And the occasion was a formal expression of an ever increasing Black consciousness, which the incident can only have served to heighten.

The same effect must follow from another recent incident involving one of the most eminent Black men in the country. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi is in his own person a sign of the changing times. For many years one of the most adamant opponents of the whole apartheid policy, he has been the main reason why the Zulus have not until last year accepted the Bantustan policy. But last year they did finally agree to come in—and Chief Buthelezi was chosen chairman of their executive authority. And from the moment of his inaugural speech, in the presence of high government ministers and officials, he has made no bones about his policy; he will do all he can to forward the separate development of the Zulu people, provided the emphasis is on the development and not on the separate, and provided the government is prepared to take the practical steps

to make this development feasible, the most important step being the granting of more land to the Zulu territorial authority. The government are not going to like talking to Mr Buthelezi, but they are going to have to do so. Well, one day the Chief was driving into a town to get his car licence renewed, and with him in the car was a member of the Zulu royal family, and they were stopped by a traffic policeman, who doubtless noticed that the car licence had expired. In the course of the conversation that followed the policeman addressed the Chief as 'My boy'. Nothing unusual about this; it is the commonest way of addressing Kaffirs. But this was not the right Kaffir to try it on. The Chief asked for an apology, and on failing to get it he put a complaint through official channels, and made the whole episode public to the press. The matter is not yet closed; the official this time destined to make a fool of himself over it is the member of the executive committee of the Natal provincial council in charge of traffic control, who one must note is a part of the United Party and not the Nationalist establishment; the two are however almost equally antidiluvian in outlook. He merely asked for the traffic officer's version of the story, and then announced that the Chief's complaint was unfounded, and added a few insulting remarks of his own. The one man to emerge from the episode with increased stature and prestige is Chief Buthelezi.

To generalize, now, from these and many similar episodes; one's first impression is that the government and the establishment behind it, for all its still massive power, is on the run. Their setback at the elections in May 1970, quite insignificant by British standards, put them on the defensive, and they do not seem to know how to organize a political defence. Of course they neither can nor wish to repudiate their apartheid policy; and yet they find themselves embarrassed when the good old policy is implemented by officials in the good old way; and they show even more embarrassment when Black leaders call their bluff, and ask them plainly to implement to the full the few positive aspects that the policy may claim to have.

It seems to be true that those whom the gods wish to destroy they first drive mad. The government has never stopped since the general elections doing things that tended to lessen its credibility even among its own supporters. There was the extraordinary affair of Dr De Wet, minister of health and mines, and various doubts about his veracity and honour that were much publicized, never satisfactorily answered, no one taken to court by the doctor for libel (he would hardly have won the case), and yet Dr De Wet continuing in the cabinet and enjoying the loyal confidence of the Prime Minister. There was the case of two officials of the Pretoria City Council, in all probability both nationalists, suing another cabinet minister, Mr Coetzee minister of community development, for libel, and winning their case, though an appeal is still pending. There was the case of the two Anglican priests of Stellenbosch having to leave the country because the Prime Minister crassly misinterpreted a parish newsletter

written by only one of them. And then the government chooses this moment, at the beginning of the 1971 session to introduce an altogether prehistoric censorship bill, at a time when the censorship board has been earning nation-wide ridicule.

I recently read an article by Mr Alan Paton in which he airs the guess that the cabinet no longer really matters, because there is some back room Cabal, composed of the most reactionary influences in Church, Army, Police and Broederbond really in control—people who are terrified of any change. It is an interesting guess; if it has hit a nail on the head, it does nothing to increase the government's credibility, and brings me to the second general impression, that the substructure of popular confidence on which the power of the nationalist establishment has been based since 1948 is rapidly crumbling. This is one of the really important changes in the South African situation. We will consider some of its possible consequences later on.

The other really important change, and my third general impression is the growth of what is being called here Black consciousness, and the increasing articulateness of Black criticism of practically every feature of South African political, social and economic life. We have seen that Chief Gatsha Buthelezi is perhaps the most outstanding embodiment of this development. His lead, however, is being followed by other African Bantustan leaders, for example by Chief Mangope of the Tswana territorial authority, and most effectively, with the April opening of the Transkei legislative assembly, by Chief Matanzima. It looks as if one can expect concerted action in future from African leaders. But not only from them; the debates in the Coloured Representative Council of last autumn were given wide coverage by both English and Afrikaans press, and must have come as something of a shock to many White readers; and Chief Buthelezi has had conversations with representatives of the Coloured Labour party. The government, of course cannot complain about any of this; it has itself created these organs for the expression of political opinion, and the generation of political energy among the Blacks. But it has not yet really learned how to communicate with these disconcerting forces.

The move is not confined to strictly political persons or organizations. Last year the African members of the student organizations NUSAS (National Union of South African Students) and UCM (University Christian Movement), broke away to form their own body, SASO (South African Student Organization). Their aim is to foster Black consciousness, to discover and assert Black identity and humanity, to fight their own battles. One of their first and most symbolic actions was to repudiate the term 'non-White', and substitute 'Black', which is accepted by Coloured and Indian students as well as Africans as a positive description of themselves. The same kind of movement can be seen in the Churches, for example in the manifesto of February 1970 from five African priests representing

the old students of St Peter's Roman Catholic seminary, and in the very blunt reactions by the same group to the remarks reported to have been made by Cardinal McCann of Cape Town in a somewhat unfortunate press interview he had in Australia on the occasion of the Pope's visit there in December 1970.

These seem to me to be the three factors that will govern political developments in South Africa in the seventies. I will try to analyse them, and examine some possibilities of development in a subsequent article.

The 'Good Death' versus 'Euthanasia'

by Hugh Trowell

We pray for a good death and a perfect end in every service of Compline. When is death (*thanatos*) good (*eu-*)? Every man must answer this according to his definition of goodness. Does goodness depend merely on the absence of pain in the sufferer or of grief in the spectators? Death is such a negative subject that to make it good one must see some positive content of love, compassion, even bravery and perhaps immortality set around it, within it and beyond it. Only then is death *euthanatos* (the good death).

Dictionaries define euthanasia as 'gentle easy death', but euthanasia is a euphemism which like a shroud hides the reality. When the sprightly old lady died in her sleep no one would call it euthanasia, but it is. If a man had a stroke and sank slowly and gently without pain to death in a couple of days and the doctor gave only one brandy, no one would accuse him of assisting euthanasia. But the dictionary would.

All dictionaries proceed to give a second meaning to euthanasia, which has killed the first meaning by 'gentle and easy death'. Hence some of the muddle. Euthanasia, we are told, may mean 'bringing about death, especially in painful and incurable disease' (Concise Oxford Dictionary). It must be emphasized that euthanasia means bringing about a death. It is the killing of a person. It should never be called murder, which is too emotive a term, while manslaughter is too cold and implies an accident and a lack of intent. There is however an intention to kill in every euthanasia.

Voluntary euthanasia implies that an adult person has requested to be killed. Involuntary euthanasia implies that the person made no such request—as occurred to millions under Hitler. The (British) Voluntary Euthanasia Society has never supported involuntary