

SJL-6

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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Strangers at Home

Mr. Peter Bird Martin
Executive Director
Institute of Current World Affairs
Wheelock House
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Dear Mr. Martin,

I had been many hours in earnest conversation with François Boer and his friends when we noticed it had gotten quite late: I had a long drive to make from Standerton back to Secunda, where I was staying. What had begun as a rather tense encounter between steadfast Afrikaners and a member of the Fourth Estate they so mistrust ended in the most convivial of spirits. As I advanced towards my car through the cold Transvaal drizzle, I turned and saw Gert Bierman, François's father-in-law, at the front door. His massive figure, framed in the warm glow of the hall and kitchen, radiated good will. "Tell them we don't have any problems," he shouted finally into the night. "There are no problems in South Africa."

This is not as remarkable an assertion as it may seem at first glance. After a delicious dinner and brandy among a roomful of stalwart fellows of like mind, there may indeed seem to be no problems in Oom (Uncle) Gert's South Africa. Perhaps the solid old patriarch -- he is 6'5 and 220 pounds -- didn't know that Standerton's black migrant workers had set fire to the municipal hostel that afternoon; he couldn't know that the black students in Secunda -- more properly, in Langvervacht, Secunda's black township -- would boycott school and stone the commuter buses the following day. Even if he had, though, Oom Gert might well have elected to stand by his words. There are still places he can go -- his church, the farm, his son-in-law's house -- where the illusion holds firm. But they are fewer and fewer.

Why should the nightly news's impression of "the troubles" in South Africa so diametrically oppose Oom Gert's? One reason, of course, is that "news" records (or is) that which is out of the ordinary or sensational, the myocardial infarctions of an otherwise normal, undistinguished heart.

Samuel Levy is a Fellow of the Institute studying the effects of decolonization in Mozambique and Portugal. He passed through South Africa on the way from Maputo to Lisbon.



Commerce doesn't miss
a beat...

Street riots in foreign places are notoriously televideogenic.

Notwithstanding the spasm of violence felt in the Transvaal in early October, which was directly related to the call for a "day of prayer" by the National Initiative for Reconciliation, the rhythm of daily life in the rural districts is not commonly punctuated by disturbances. As everywhere else, people have jobs, bills and naughty children to attend to, and cannot cower in their homes waiting for an "incident" to confirm their worst fears. Even in places where the threat of violence is much more imminent, such as the suburbs of Maputo or, for that matter, the South Bronx, life does not stop.

The real effect of such occasional fits of violence is attritional, a wearing down of the indispensable sense of security and well-being. It takes very little to start the collective morale eroding.

But the more important explanation for Oom Gert's sanguine parting opinion of the current situation in South Africa is the generalized ignorance of Afrikaners of just how deep and wide the river of resentment against apartheid runs. Most of them consider violent protest against the system to be the work of outside agitators roiling calm waters. And although those who organize strikes and demonstrations in the hinterlands often come from the cities, they are tapping a very real turbulence just beneath the placid surface on which black-Afrikaner relations are conducted.

That Afrikaners have little idea of how blacks really feel about apartheid is to be expected after 37 years of systematic dissociation of the races. It is instructive to note how pronounced the word "dialogue" is in the National Party's political diction: not "negotiations" but "dialogue." The disposition to talk with "responsible" black leaders ("if we could find any," remarked an Afrikaner business executive) may seem trifling or like a delaying tactic to foreign observers. But irrespective of whether talk is a politically sufficient policy, to the Afrikaner it is an enormous concession. "Dialogue" implies an exchange of ideas between parties who are, at least on some plane, equals. Even to many verligte ("enlightened" or relatively liberal) Afrikaners, the idea that a black man might be his talking equal is an uncomfortable novelty.

In Secunda, I attended a braaivleiss (a traditional barbecue) at which I met a number of executives from Sasol.

Sasol is the company that makes automobile fuel, and other products normally derived from petroleum, from coal. A few years ago, the South African government, aware that it might become the object of an oil embargo, decided to make the country self-sufficient in one of the few indispensables that could not otherwise be produced locally. Begun at state initiative, the company's management is heavily Afrikaner.

The men at the braaivleiss, one of whom sits on Sasol's board of directors, were eager to talk to an inquisitive foreigner about South Africa's problems. They seemed genuinely forthright, and did not pretend any unfelt liberal attitudes for my sake. During the course of the evening I put the question "Do you think blacks are inferior to whites," expecting a round "Of course not, but..." I was surprised that the question, among this relatively verligte gathering, was greeted by an uneasy silence. After a few moments, my host, Johannes Botha, began a tortuous account of studies in which performance of intellectual tasks varied significantly by race. The upshot was that blacks did better than whites when both groups had taken drugs before the test.* When I insisted on a yes or no answer, Elmore Marshall (who despite his very English name is an Afrikaner) threw up his hands in a gesture of perplexity and asked "if any of us can really say. Can you, Sam?" I then found myself doing exactly what I had sworn not to: giving a spirited (if mercifully short) homily on racial equality. Fortunately, the meat suddenly became ready and we adjourned chummily to the grill.

*The implication was that, by golly, there are conditions (however ludicrous) under which blacks may be (not perform but be) superior. The answer is revealing because the question is best treated as one for intuition confirmed by day-to-day experience and not as a matter for science. From phrenology, the pseudoscience of measuring mental faculties by the size and shape of a person's skull (lo and behold, non-white crania were found (incorrectly) to be of lesser volume than white crania) to William Shockley, charlatans and scientists alike have tried empirically to demonstrate that mental capacity varies by race. As Stephen Jay Gould has proven amply, most of the experiments were classic examples of bad science. Interestingly, those who believe the races for all intents and purposes equal have spent more time debunking the race-determinists than proving the contrapositive, which is why I think the question is properly one for common intuition buttressed by personal acquaintance with significant numbers of people of other races. It has been my experience that people who answer the question "Are blacks inferior to whites" by resorting to scientific (or, perhaps, sciencified) explanations are, more often than not, racists. Because dogmatic racism is no

It's not that Elmore and Johannes don't know any blacks and therefore have no basis for comparison. It's that blacks of their acquaintance are invariably servants or subordinates, by custom and law their social inferiors. Few Afrikaners know many non-white social equals. This fact does not dampen the insistent refrain heard among middle-aged and older Afrikaners, that they grew up playing with black children, they were raised with blacks on the farm and so they know how blacks think and feel. A questionable claim, I thought, and decided to test it. I asked blacks if they thought the Afrikaners knew how they felt. The question made them laugh, in varying proportions of incredulity, irony and bitterness. The consensus, albeit not a statistically significant one, was that Afrikaners haven't the vaguest idea of how apartheid makes blacks feel.

I spent one day in Secunda with P.J. Maboja, a black man who is a Sasol public relations officer. He told me about the disputes between blacks and Afrikaners he often mediated when he worked in industrial relations. How does apartheid feel? "Imagine," he said, "a black man goes to bed at ten to get up at five for the six o'clock shift. He's in a deep sleep when he's woken up by a banging on the door. He opens it. 'Pass!' It's a white policeman on a pass raid. 'Hunh!' When he gets up to go to work in the morning, he meets a man on the corner who demands a pass. What color? White! 'Hunh!' Before he gets to work he stops at the Post Office, where he is abused by the little Afrikaner girl behind the counter when he asks to buy a stamp. 'Hunh!' So by the time he gets to work and his white colleague says 'Hey man, hand me a spanner,' he goes off the edge. 'Who you calling 'man,' man!' But the rage is something he brought with him from outside the factory, rage at all the white people who beat him down all day long...

Now, the Afrikaner, he's a farm boy. He's not accustomed to black people disagreeing with him. Since he was a kid, all he's heard them say was 'Yah baas.' So if the workers get together to plan a job and a black fellow says to him, 'No, I think it's better to do it this way,' he can't understand it. 'I won't have no kaffir* talking back t'me!' I tell them both that they've got to leave behind the outside world when they step into the factory environment. Most Afrikaners make it, but some just can't take blacks as equals. They quit and go back to the farm."

longer acceptable in educated circles, they enlist objective Science to support a cause that common sense has abandoned.

Unlike the question of God's (non)-existence, where abstraction affords grounds for uncertainty, there are few serious "agnostics" when it comes to the (in)equality of the races. Intellectually, the forthright racist is preferable to his disingenuous cousin, for whom Science is a schoolcrafty scrim.

* roughly, "nigger."

It is increasingly the case in modern working environments that the races are, as a matter of policy, treated equally. At Sasol, which is a very new company (their Secunda operation is only eight years old), black and white workers receive equal pay for equal work, and some facilities are integrated. Mr. Wienand, the director of non-white labor at the plant, observed that "the chaps have integrated on their own. We built the black sports facility before the white one and then ran short of money. So the white chaps started using the black facility. We were going to build a separate one, but now we'll probably just expand the black one."

The pattern of integration in South Africa, Wienand continued, was the opposite of America's. "In the States, the legislation is far ahead of people's attitudes. Here, people are integrating faster than the legislation allows." While that may be the case, it's also true that blacks and whites (but most especially Afrikaners) still have very little unaffected human contact. An example: during our conversation, Wienand occasionally turned to a black subordinate to confirm his opinions ("isn't that so?"). This man, whom I knew to be very articulate and insightful, relaxed his command of the English language and parroted his less fluent Afrikaner boss's sentiments when answering. I was nonplussed by his unnatural conduct. In Wienand's presence, I was no longer "Sam," but "Mr. Levy." Wienand never lost the honorific mister, but treated the black man by his first name. We were two misters and a third fellow. The distinction, however minor it may seem, was telling.

(When a subject is very delicate, man's most precise tool, language, often becomes as clumsy as an anvil. No euphemism seems adequate to people's tender sensibilities, and refined corporatese can be a particularly blunt instrument. I winced as Wienand, for whom English is, admittedly, not the first language, waxed enthusiastic about his plans to improve the living and working conditions of the non-white miners. There had been some complaints about the cafeteria, he said, so he was planning a new "feeding pattern" for the workers. (The term called to mind an aerial view of the Chicago stockyards, not an inappropriate image. The Sasol hostel complex, which has good accommodations, is nevertheless a tightly controlled environment. Black miners cannot chassé across open spaces any old way. Eight-foot wide steel mesh corridors, enclosed on three sides, channel traffic at 90° angles between many buildings. Like the 35-foot high prison-style, high-intensity arc lights in the townships, not easily extinguished by rocks thrown from below, the obnoxious corridors are presumably a security measure to keep crowds of blacks under convenient surveillance and control.) If I was curious to know what was being done on "the Third World-First World side," the company offered a course in "free enterprise education," including

literacy training (the three r's) and the "six m's: money, manpower, management, morale, material and machinery. No one is any good without the others." The longer we spoke, though, the more Wienand lapsed from picturesque corporatese into plain English. Few people, he said, understand just how difficult his mission to improve and educate the non-white workers is: "We virtually catch 'em in the bush in the homelands...we've got to show 'em what side of the shovel to use." The spirit is good willing but the diction is weak.)

The workplace was, until very recently, about the only place the races could meet as equals. They do shop together in the white commercial districts and shopping centers, but I didn't notice any black and white matrons clucking together over the rising price of eggs. Once declared "international" by the appropriate ministry, hotels and restaurants may cater to all races. I did see a leavening of non-whites among the white diners.

Elsewhere, however, one is as likely to find blacks among whites as poppy seeds in a loaf of Wonderbread. In an Afrikaner home a black may be a maid or gardener but never a dinner guest; the janitor but never a congregant of the Reconstituted Dutch Reformed Church. He may spend eight hours a day with you at the same textile factory, sweating over the same machine, but when the whistle blows he takes his Putco bus back to the township and you drive home to your own neighborhood. Never, or rarely, do the twain really meet.

This is, in fact, the upshot of apartheid and what makes it so excruciatingly difficult to undo: people of different races are strangers to one another. The black man Elmore and Johannes claim to know is a figment -- alternately comic/docile and menacing -- of apartheid. When not the subject of anecdotes about dimwitted incompetence ("Then he hooked his pants to the tow hitch and pushed the 'up' button!"), blacks tend to be a faceless and threatening collective presence in the Afrikaner consciousness. Afrikaners don't speak of that one black "friend," the proverbial "credit to his race," whose exemplary nature redeems his fellows (Now, if they'd only all be like him). They say things like "They've got the numbers," and "The problem is, they breed like rabbits." Repeal the Group Areas Act (which requires racially separate neighborhoods), predicted François, and "every white woman would be in danger of rape when she stepped out the door...Besides, blacks don't know how to live in white people's houses."

That blacks tend to be an anonymous mass in the Afrikaner world view is implied as well in the way their neighborhoods are referred to. White people don't say "Langvervacht" to denote the black section of Secunda. They say "the township."

Although I do not know the origin of this term or its emotional value to the different races, it seems to have a marginally greater measure of dignity than the place blacks live in the white vocabulary of Standerton: "the location." "Township" seems to imply a place with some sort of legal and/or bureaucratic identity; might it be that Section 10 rights, blacks possessed of which may now, if the enabling legislation has been passed, buy freehold title to land, may only be exercised in townships? One can imagine "townships" eventually winning substantive charters and a measure of administrative autonomy. A "location," however, is more properly the place where blacks are tolerated or, at best, sojourn in the Afrikaner scheme of things: an economically efficient and emotionally distant point in space, impermanent and without even an interim identity. (The imagined daydream of an Afrikaner techno-bureaucrat from the Ministry of Cooperation and Development, formerly Bantu Affairs: a hovercraft-like device with which blacks and their "temporary residences" could be outfitted so that no blacks would be residing on "white" land. It would make removals and relocations obsolete (since hovering blacks could never be said to have settled anywhere and, like a good satellite, need only be "repositioned,") and resolve an enduring contradiction of apartheid in a modern economy: how to keep the black labor indispensable to white prosperity simultaneously in reach and far off. This fanciful example of van der Merwe-think (van der Merwe is the archetypal Afrikaner dullard) would more likely be rejected not as silly or too expensive but because hovering blacks could not be classified a "stable" labor force.) To grant a place a name is to confer identity and concede presence, and apartheid -- the state of mind, not the legal code -- cannot abide black abidingness. If Afrikaans were a romance language, Boers would undoubtedly discuss blacks in the subjunctive case.

Apartheid has not lost its theoretical appeal to the Afrikaner; as noted above, it is as much or more a state of mind than a welter of nasty restrictions and regulations. The more verligte Afrikaner understands that the latter kind of apartheid -- petty apartheid and all the shabby behavior it sanctions -- must go. The civil treatment of black people in public is gradually becoming the social norm, and a verligte man can shake a black man's hand or wait behind him in the checkout line without a second thought. (This is not yet true of verkrampste or "narrow" Afrikaners. A construction company owner who sometimes does business with blacks told me that he shakes hands with them "because I have to. But I don't like it." Still others will not shake hands under any circumstances.) The repeal of the Immorality and Mixed Marriages Acts, prohibiting interracial sexual relations and matrimony, did not shock or offend verligte people. They know that these laws' practical intent was to intimidate white men from seeking out black women, a task to which community opprobrium is still equal. (Since they were

revealed, a black man told me in Langvervacht, "you don't see blacks cruising around Hillbrow (a mildly bohemian commercial district in Johannesburg) looking for white girls. But just go down to the Mobil station and you see the white men buying black girls. So who were they afraid of?". Afrikaners, who tend to be very politically astute, understand that such changes are a way to raise cheap political capital in the West. So petty apartheid is giving way, its most grotesquely convoluted branches snapping off in the prevailing political winds. Many verligte folks claim to have always found it offensive anyway, perhaps with a measure of sincerity. An Afrikaner employer's non-white workers are often referred to as "my blacks"; a vein of genuine paternalistic interest in his employees' welfare marbles the racist grain. The Afrikaner has come to associate some aspects of petty apartheid with the heartless way his best bricklayer or maid was "endorsed out" of the area (and his employ), and how badly these workers' children fared. The evil wrought by apartheid -- the laws, not the state of mind -- is thereby personalized and felt, albeit gently and vicariously, by the people who support the system behind it. No one likes bad things to happen to good (black) people. Thus, some reform, on humanitarian grounds, becomes admissible.

It is important to note in passing that some of these reforms are not "merely cosmetic" in the sense of being superficial and unimportant. Not having to suffer the inconvenience and indignity of separate, longer lines at the post office, and being able to rest on a public park bench are among small changes that, taken together, make a difference in the daily lives of most blacks. More interesting yet is the new tacit code of public interracial conduct. Amos Hlatshwayo, a Sasol worker who moonlights as a "black taxi" driver (another step forward -- deregulating black commerce) and who drove me from Secunda to Jan Smuts Airport the day I left the country, told me, "I like it at Sasol, sir. The money is good and nobody calls me a kaffir." It may not seem like much to Western observers, but by South African standards that's a big change. Distant critics should remember that the great majority of people does not live and breathe politics, and that the quality of their lives can be vastly improved before abstract questions of political participation are addressed. The erosion of petty apartheid does make a qualitative difference to this long-suffering majority.

But the reform of apartheid is beginning to suffer the iron law of diminishing returns. As movie houses and selected cars on the train are integrated (policies that were being discussed in the press as imminent when I left South Africa on October 10), those things that can be changed without furrowing the sacred pillars of "deep" apartheid become fewer and fewer. It is then that grand apartheid itself must be challenged and the fragile Afrikaner consensus behind P.W. Botha's "adapt or die"

policy may be strained to the breaking point. Elmore Marshall insisted that he'd always disliked petty apartheid, but that grand apartheid, or "separate development" in its most attractive incarnation, e.g. good schools and housing and "self-determination" for each of the races (also known as "positive apartheid"), was a fine and beautiful idea. "It would've worked too, except we ran out of money." The gold boom that left South Africa flush with cash in the late 1970s, just after the '76 Soweto riots had driven home the need for some change, has long since busted. But petty apartheid laws are the underpinnings of grand apartheid, and mining at the base of the mountain to supply the demand for reform undermines the mountain itself. Those demands are insatiable, and the foundations of the mountain -- Group Areas, Influx Control, the Pass Laws -- may soon be the only seams left to work. Then, the bedrock, the deeply ingrained notion of Afrikaner chosenness and apartness that predates apartheid as legal and political system, is exposed to assault. What is challenged is not where and with whom one may urinate but how people think of themselves. To repeal Group Areas and other such Acts is to compel the Afrikaner to reconsider, even to renounce, the self 37 years of apartheid education and scores more of religious doctrine and historical experience have created.

Afrikaners are very history-conscious. Any of them can recite the basic details of the Afrikaner ethnic saga, from Jan van Riebeeck's Cape landing in 1652, to the arrival of the Huguenot refugees in 1688, to the Great Treks beginning in the 1830s and the Anglo-Boer Wars. These events had been synthesized into a standard folk history even before the rise to power of the National Party in 1948. The development of Afrikaner ethnic consciousness was, in fact, instrumental in the Party's ascension to political preeminence.

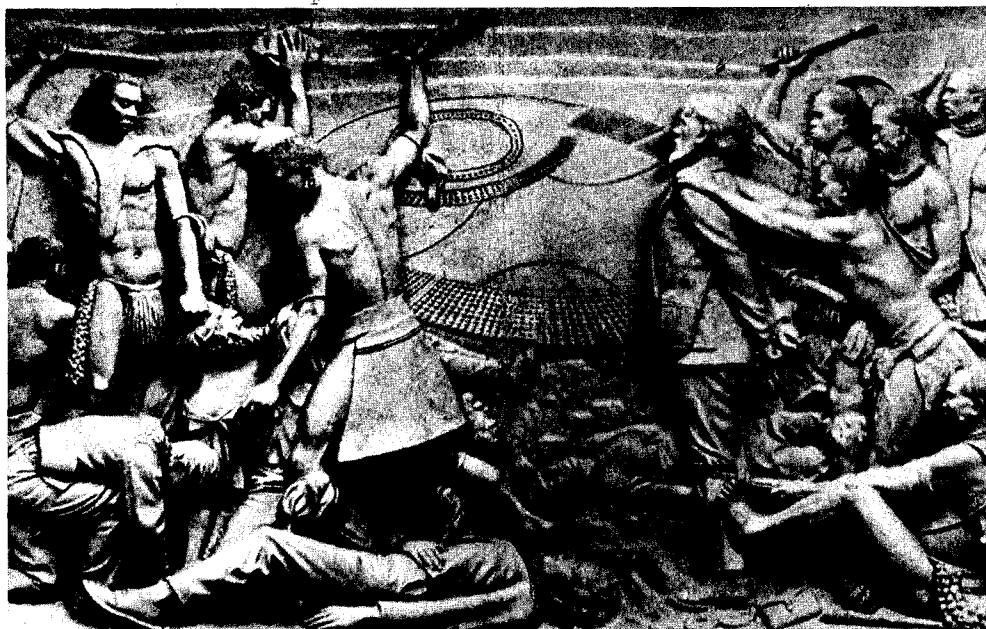
To most Western peoples, history has a linear quality. Consider an informed American high school student's vision of his country's past condensed into 25 words or less: first we were colonies, then we gained independence, then Manifest Destiny and the Civil War. We became an industrial power and then a world power. To Americans, history is evolutionary: America keeps changing, getting bigger and (perhaps) better, more egalitarian, more economically advanced, etc. Events don't repeat themselves because they happen at different stages, America is different. Progress and change are the operative words.

To peoples with particularly traumatic pasts, however, history has a cyclical quality: it may be likened to the poet's "ever-widening gyre," with new generations spiralling about a stationary central shaft of historical experience. The overwhelming power of a dominant ethnic memory makes current events, objectively dissimilar to those of the past,

seem like minor variations on an eternal theme. In the case of the Afrikaners, the dominant ethnic memory is of persecution, flight and resistance against frightening brushes with physical and ethnic extinction. Apartheid and the palpable fears of the Boers' fate in a South Africa without it are contemporary responses to the threatening stimuli of the Afrikaner past.

The Voortrekker Monument, built on a high hill overlooking Pretoria, is testament to the power that folk history retains over the Afrikaner imagination. Begun in 1938, on the anniversary of the Great Trek that carried Boers dissatisfied with British rule in the Cape over the Drakensberg Mountains and into the Transvaal, the monument is the constant object of pilgrimage by Afrikaners. Stone high reliefs with larger than life scenes of the national epic line the circumference of the soaring central chamber. The recurring theme is of momentous massacres and battles: the murder of trek leader Piet Retief by the Zulu chief Dingaan, the massacre of Boer women and children at Bloukrans and, most portentous, the battle of Blood River, at which a small group of Boers defeated a much larger force of Zulus and gained a decisive advantage for Afrikaner expansion into the Transvaal.

The central chamber is suspended over a smaller one. A round opening about 30 feet in diameter affords the visitor a view of the only object on the lower level: a polished stone cenotaph, gravestone of Piet Retief, on which the words "Ons vir Jou, Suid-Afrika" -- "We for You, South Africa" -- are inscribed. On December 16th, the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River known as the Day of the Covenant, a beam of light passing through a tiny hole in the building's cupola illumines the inscription.



Murder of Piet Retief, Panel 13 of the Voortrekker Monument. Retief, who seems to be gazing into a brighter Afrikaner future, does not wince.

The mentality and message of Blood River persist among the Afrikaners. In fact, the notion that they are a divinely-chosen, civilized people surrounded and assailed by the numerically superior forces of barbarism and evil is reinforced by the international opprobrium of which they are the object. The covenant that the men at Blood River made with God on the eve of the battle, pledging a day of thanksgiving and eternal devotion for His intercession on their behalf, is repeated today as an Afrikaner vow to remain intransigent and true to his principles. Through the Great Trek and the bitterly fought Anglo-Boer Wars, the Afrikaner has acquired a tradition, even a taste, for embattled resistance. This history accounts in part for the measure of satisfaction many Afrikaners derive from flouting foreign critics and for their tendency to see compromise as gradual capitulation.

François Boer had heard from a mutual friend that I wanted to learn about the Afrikaners. When we met on an overcast Tuesday afternoon, one of the first places he took me to was a graveyard in Standerton containing Afrikaner war dead. François's English is good, if a bit colorless. I sensed he was having trouble expressing ideas and feelings he may never have articulated before, let alone in a language he uses only occasionally. It isn't every day that an inquisitive foreigner who doesn't speak your language asks you to plumb your subconscious as a therapist might. So François took me to a place that could speak for itself.

He said he had never visited the cemetery but somehow felt it was important for me to see. We pulled up at a field in a quiet part of town. Row upon row of small, rectangular pages of black slate, mottled by the fat raindrops that had begun to fall, lay just inside the walls. They bore neither names nor inscriptions. François explained that these were the graves of Afrikaner children who had died in British concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. We stood silently until the rain and cold drove us back to the pickup.

That brief visit impressed upon me how very real and immediate the Afrikaner memory and fears of extinction are. Race memories of physical decimation, during massacres and wars still within the living memory of the older generation, linger in the Afrikaner consciousness. Even more real, perhaps, than the prospect of physical annihilation are fears of cultural extinction. The Afrikaners were severely discriminated against under successive British governments that tried, at times with some success, to force them to assimilate English uses and customs. In the 19th century, Scottish ministers were imported and posted at the head of Dutch Reformed congregations to win them over to Presbyterianism. One reason Afrikaans language instruction has always been so hot an issue is that Afrikaans was, for a time, banned as a medium of instruction and denigrated as an obnoxious jargon for years thereafter. Ironically, introducing the compulsory



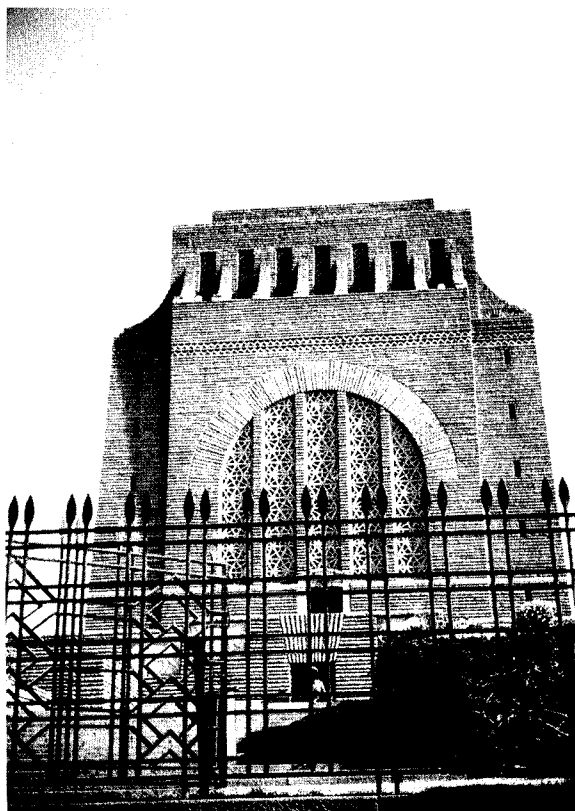
The Cemetery at Standerton

study of Afrikaans into black schools, a policy that helped spark the 1976 Soweto riots, was the National Party's replay of the British attempt to impose English on the Boers. In South Africa, language has long been used as a weapon of the ethnic group in power.

One fact that reinforces the cyclical immediacy of Afrikaner history is that much of that history is tangibly recent. Although this is by no means a prerequisite for perceiving history as cyclical -- witness the Jews, the seminal events of whose national history "reappear" on comet-like cycles-- the recentness of the events that forged national consciousness contributes to the cyclical world view. Middle-aged and older Afrikaners recall the National Party's historic rise to political power in 1948 and the derogatory treatment of their language and customs by English speakers. The eldest among them remember the brutalities suffered during the Anglo-Boer Wars. Even the Great Trek, which happened almost 150 years ago, occupies a curious location in time. It is chronologically distant enough to have been thoroughly mythicized, yet near enough in objective time to have left an incredible wealth of artifacts and documents, which make it feel immediate. At the museum at the foot of the Voortrekker Monument, one may see Bibles, tools, clothes -- even cakes of soap -- with which the trekkers crossed the Drakensberg. The Great Trek, perhaps the central moment in Afrikaner history, has a "reach out and touch" quality about it.

It is important to remember as well that the Afrikaner is hardly one generation removed from the economic landscape in which many of these events took place. He is not the city grandchild of country folks searching for his rural roots; he is, rather, just off the farm and not yet out of the strict Calvinist moral context of rural life. National Party policies, including apartheid, have struggled to keep the Afrikaner's mythicized history and "historical virtues" always before him, and keeping him isolated from other ethnic groups -- including, during the formative years, English speakers -- helps reinforce his exclusivist sense of identity. At the same time apartheid was created for the economic protection and advancement of the Afrikaner, it has been consciously used to ~~resist~~ the cosmopolitan consequences of modern, urban life. That, however, is a losing cause, and as petty apartheid breaks down, Afrikaners -- especially young city dwellers -- become citizens of the world and not merely of the Republic.

The more Afrikaners and blacks get to know one another -- in sports, university and church -- the better the chances for a peaceful solution to the issue of political participation. It is less difficult to enter into social contract with someone you know than with a total stranger. Unfortunately, it takes time to make friends, and even if the average Afrikaner were inclined to make the social acquaintance of blacks, which he generally is not, time to change gradually is something of which the country has less and less.



The Afrikaner can be nudged and encouraged to change his offending ways, but he cannot be bullied. That is the contemporary message of the Voortrekker Monument. Brooding squarely on the horizon of Pretoria, it is the living pledge of a people whom bitter experience has informed that political power is the sine qua non of ethnic survival and cannot be relinquished without cataclysmic consequences.

It is an unfortunate irony of history that the victims of persecution, once empowered, rarely prove models of tolerance. Critics who counsel redoubled pressure on the Afrikaner regime to coerce change should be aware that they are dealing with a people both victim and victimizer, whose traditional formula for survival is intransigence. Push too hard and you will engage

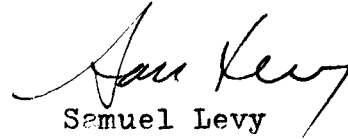
The Voortrekker Monument

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the Afrikaner's cyclical vision of history. Countless unhappy episodes of the national epic will then implode in his mind. He will draw the wagons into a laager and prepare for a second, apocalyptic Blood River.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sam Levy", written in dark ink. The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Samuel Levy

Received in Hanover 12/2/85