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WHITHER SOUTH AFRICA?

S.P. du Toit Viljoen

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Dr. S.P. du Toit Viljoen is Chairman of the Corporation for Economic Development and of various Government Commissions, including the Commission for the Protection of Industry and the Water Plan Commission. He is also currently a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, and he was Chairman of the Wage Board (1950-58) and of the Board of Trade (1959-65).

Dr. du Toit Viljoen was Professor of Economics at the University of Pretoria from 1939-49 and at the University of South Africa from 1966-68.

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Southern Africa - the ideological conflict

Southern Africa has today arrived at the crossroads, and whatever might have been the issues that united or divided its peoples in the past, the choice which confronts them today is clear: it is between the institution of a free enterprise economy, an open society and a democratic polity, on the one hand, and a centrally administered economy, a monolithic society and a totalitarian polity, on the other hand.

Tendencies towards either freedom or control have always contended with each other on the world scene. But never in the history of the world has the co-existence of these two opposite systems been thrown into such strong relief, their differences so openly proclaimed, and their advantages and disadvantages as alternative methods of political, social and economic organisation so loudly, uncompromisingly and militantly propagated as in the world today.

The origin of this ideological conflict can be found in the fact that Marx and Engels, the founders of Communism, openly rejected any form of social solidarity and glorified class conflict and struggle as the means of achieving a new revolutionary society. Every conceivable means must be used to achieve this end. Class interests are inherently irreconcilable. No compromise must therefore be regarded seriously, no agreement permanently honoured. In the revolutionary struggle, the working class must not be hindered by bourgeois considerations of morality, justice and truth. In the words of the great philosopher Benedetto Croce, Marx indeed showed himself as the "most remarkable continuator of Machiavelli".

The result has been that the free enterprise economy has been systematically subjected to the most highly geared and organised system of misrepresentation that the world has ever seen.

The free world has been singularly ineffective in countering this propaganda. The dilemma of the free society is that it must, in deference to its own principles, tolerate freedom of opinions and of organisations which, given the chance, would destroy the system by which that tolerance is guaranteed.

South Africa - the failure of social integration

South Africa would seem to me at present to be suffering from all the symptoms, as described by Arnold Toynbee in his *Study of history*, of a society that has not succeeded in effecting the successful cultural integration of its peoples.

The result is the cessation among the working class of the *process of mimesis*, i.e. the imitation of and acceptance of the upper class's leadership, its institutions and its culture. The upper class ceases to be a *creative minority* and becomes a *dominant minority*. The society becomes divided against itself.

This social estrangement is reflected in:

a) *The secession and revolt of the Internal Proletariat*, the social element that feels itself "in" but not "of" the existing society;

b) *The revolt of the External Proletariat* - in our case the *Third World* - which becomes hostile, with the result that a permanent military frontier comes into existence;

c) *The revolt of the Intelligentsia* - scholars, students, churchmen - products of a vulgarised and mass-produced education, and they become especially radical when they fail to find work that conforms with what they regard as their "legitimate" expectations.

Such a society can be saved only by a dynamic force and change of policy which transform the society into one in which the aspirations of the lower classes can be met within the context of a new co-operative society - a change that is basically moral and intellectual as well as merely of the social, economic and political institutions involved.

But, concludes Toynbee, this is very difficult to achieve, because it requires a large measure of flexibility, spontaneity and sensitivity - even the willingness to live dangerously - on the part of the dominant minority.

This class, however, is basically conservative and rigid in its standards, and loathe to give up its privileged position. The easiest solution, therefore, is to do nothing, or to do too little under pressure.

Conditions for peaceful change

The free enterprise economy, the open society and the democratic polity form an inseverable unity. The question therefore is how conducive to peaceful change conditions in this country are in each of these three spheres, respectively.

According to an opinion survey made by a team of German social scientists in the seventies, urban Blacks tend to accept the free enterprise system. Had they insisted on the institution of a centrally administered economy, it would have meant that a basic conflict of interests and ideologies existed in South Africa and that the achievement of a compromise would have been impossible.¹

Blacks appreciate that in the economic sphere the various racial groups are complementary rather than competitive, and they want to participate in the fruits of the joint co-operative effort. They desire to improve their position within the existing system. Thus, they want to own their own businesses and to locate these where conditions are most favourable. They also demand freedom of entry into the professions and the public service. The former should cause no problems. The latter at present is largely an Afrikaans monopoly. It is interesting to note, therefore, that in the new constitutional proposals the State President will exercise executive powers in regard to all matters of joint concern, such as defence, central finance, and so forth. As far as the departments that administer these affairs are concerned, the President will be responsible to all three parliaments, and the logical consequence would be that Coloureds and Asians would have to be employed in key positions in these departments.

A problem that invariably causes friction in Third World countries is the unequal distribution of land and the concentration of ownership in large estates. In this country, both of these may be necessary to a certain extent for the maintenance of efficiency. The problem, not only in agriculture but also in other sectors of the economy, could probably best be solved by the institution of schemes of co-partnership and profit-sharing.

But, above all, the maintenance of an open society would depend on the development of attitudes of mutual respect, tolerance and goodwill. These are qualities that are unfortunately not conspicuously present in this country, and it would require the massive support of the mass media, the educational system and the political elite to gradually improve the position. Finally, in the political sphere, the conditions required for peaceful co-existence and collaboration seem to be the most difficult of all.

The Whites insist on the right of self-determination, the right to determine their own destiny. The Blacks insist on the same right. The Whites want to solve the issue by a policy of separate development; the majority of Blacks by the imposition of a unitary state based on the principle of one man one vote, which would leave the Whites in a hopeless minority position. On such a basis the problem of power-sharing becomes impossible.

But, fortunately, both Whites and Blacks seem to consider some form of consociational democracy as the second best solution.² It would therefore seem to be in this direction that a solution should be sought.

In search of a new dispensation

(i) On the economic level

According to the German survey already mentioned, the highest priority of urban Blacks was to rapidly increase their standard of living. In how far will it be possible for this country to fulfil these rising expectations?

It is seldom appreciated what an exceedingly poor country South Africa was until quite recent times. Thus, to take a reasonably good year, 1925: Our G.D.P. was only R530 million; our State budget R40 million, the same as that of a middle-sized town today. There were over 300 000 poor Whites, and the bulk of the Blacks lived in the greatest poverty. Then, in the thirties, we effected the take-off into self-sustained growth. We succeeded in building a compounded rate of growth into our economy, a rate of
4½% - 30s and 40s
5 % - 50s
5½% - 60s

Such is the effect of building a compound rate of growth in an economy that, if we could maintain these rates until the end of this century, South Africa would have nearly the same per capita income as the U.K. today - this in spite of the fact that the population would have nearly doubled - and would have become a major economic power. What is even more important is that poverty as a mass phenomenon among Blacks would have disappeared as it did among Whites in the thirties and forties.

The question is, can we maintain these rates of growth in future? Factors in our favour are the following:

1. South Africa is one of the four most highly mineralised areas of the world. It will consequently be in the position to supply materials that are going to be in increasing demand and in increasingly short supply, with beneficial effects on our terms of trade and balance of payments.

2. The country will be able to feed its rapidly growing population at steadily improving standards of living over the next quarter of a century. It is one of the seven countries of the world that still has an agricultural surplus for export.

3. We have developed a sophisticated industrial structure, which will undoubtedly continue to serve as the growth sector of our economy, as well as sophisticated financial and distributive systems, and an elaborate infrastructure of services.

4. Finally, last but most important of all, we have the people necessary for the development of the country - the administrators, the entrepreneurs, the managerial personnel and the workers.

But our future growth rate is also going to be determined very largely by exogenous factors: by political conditions at home and abroad, and by the economic climate overseas; neither of which look too encouraging at present. It can therefore be concluded that it is going to be far more difficult to maintain a high rate of growth in the foreseeable future than it was in the golden sixties.

The obverse side of the picture, however, is that we have to continue to develop rapidly in order to absorb the large number of new job seekers that will enter the labour market annually. According to BENSO, the number of new black entrants alone at present number 216 000 annually, and this number will increase to 312 000 by the end of the century. They will derive about equally from the Homelands and the independent black states, on the one hand, and from the white areas on the other. This means that over the next 22 years some six million new jobs for Blacks alone will have to be created in this country.

(ii) *The involvement of all sections of the population in the country's development*

The realisation of our economic potential requires, as an essential condition, that solutions to our social and political problems be found on a basis of peaceful and not of revolutionary change, and that consequently a favourable investment climate be maintained and a large proportion of our human and material resources be directed to economic and social growth and not be disrupted or directed to the maintenance of internal security and external peace.

An analysis of the South African position makes it clear that:

1. Black, Coloured and Asian South Africans are going to constitute an increasingly larger proportion of the population of this country;
2. they will become increasingly urbanised and industrialised;
3. they will become better educated and more conscious of their rights and role in our society.
4. This will entail -
 - a) the provision of work opportunities commensurate with their training and education, with the corresponding rates of remuneration and the maintenance of a high and stable level of employment;

- b) an increasing participation in the administration and government of the country.

If such evolutionary outlets are not available, the inevitable result will be:

1. the proliferation of an educated and unemployed elite, who usually constitute the most politicised and radical group of the population in developing countries;
2. the development of social movements that, in varying degrees of activism will be concerned with issues such as civil rights, the franchise and political participation;
3. the rise of political parties based entirely on race and non-cooperation.

Such developments would effectively neutralise the possibility of rapid and sustained growth in this country.

(iii) *On the political level*

It is the theme of this paper that in a highly diversified and segmented society such as ours, a democratic polity can be developed and maintained only on a decentralised, federal and consociational basis. Decentralisation and federalism tend in practice to go together as do unitary and centralised states.

The two principles of federalism are, first, that the component units enjoy a high degree of autonomy in managing their internal affairs and, secondly, that they all participate in the central government. If the boundaries of the constituent states are drawn in such a way that they coalesce as far as possible with cultural patterns, social groupings and ethnic divisions, the heterogeneity in the federal state as a whole tends to be transformed into a higher degree of homogeneity within the component units.

Federalism is also closely affiliated to consociation; it may, in fact, be regarded as a method of attaining concordance in a plural society. Both may be considered as the antithesis of a system of imposing majority rule in societies in which the different groups are interspersed and culturally and racially segmented.

(a) *The federal solution*

The case for a federal solution to the problems of a plural society has been stated most forcibly by the Swiss professor, Werner Käger.³ Only federalism, he says, can achieve multiplicity in unity. Freedom can exist only in a community in which the individuality of each member and the specific characteristics of each group are given free play - but naturally always within the framework of the community as a whole. It is an order based on the autonomy of the narrower communities. It allows each group to develop its own peculiar characteristics, cultural as well as economic and political. Only in such a community can the right of self-determination be freely exercised by each group.

Federalism, he says, is therefore an order in which the smaller circles and communities are granted the maximum possible power to direct their own affairs. The broader entities assume only such functions as the smaller ones are unable to fulfil, or to fulfil effectively.

It is based on the tolerance of the majority towards the minority, which differs from it, and on mutual respect between the various groups. By insisting on tolerance towards minorities and by safeguarding their rights, the federal concept introduces a wholesome modification of the absolutism imposed by the principle of majority rule.

Federalism is an order built upward from the smaller communities, within which conditions can, to a certain degree, be perceived and understood by the individual members and within which relationships have, to a certain degree, remained on a personal footing. Thus the Greeks, the first people to develop the democratic idea, insisted that the polis should remain small. In order to be able to direct their affairs with justice and to bestow office according to merit, citizens should, as far as possible, know one another.

Federalism therefore represents a vertical distribution of authority in which power is delegated upward. In the Swiss Federation a man is a citizen first of the commune, then of the canton, and only finally of the Swiss Federation. Power rests basically with the commune, and is delegated upward only in so far as the corporate or territorial authorities can administer authority more effectively. But between the individual and the federal state there are a number of intermediate authorities that first created and now maintain the federal authority. Each authority of the hierarchy is therefore bound to act in consultation with, or with the concurrence of, both the more centralised one above and the more decentralised one below. This is in strong contrast to the centralised state - and especially the totalitarian state - in which information flows upward and commands downward.

The result is only too evident, especially on this continent. Whoever becomes the ruler obtains command of the country. In a truly federal structure, the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the members of the federation not only prevents the seizure of power at the centre, but the decentralised authorities have the power to wield authority if and when the central authority fails.

Finally, says Kägi, the federal state draws its inherent strength from the fact that its citizens are basically interested in what happens to them, first in their own communities, secondly in the territorial entities, and finally in the central state. It preserves their loyalty and interest and encourages each individual to assert his inherent right to judge and decide for himself and to act in accordance with his convictions. It is this involvement of individuals at all stages that acts as a unifying force and adds strength to the federal community.

The federal system has undoubtedly worked exceedingly well in Switzerland for centuries. But would this also apply to South Africa? There are certainly very important differences between the two countries. In Switzerland the whole system is rooted deeply in the history of the country; it evolved gradually from below and was not imposed artificially from the top. In Switzerland the different communes and cantons each has a largely homogeneous population - ethnically or linguistically as well as culturally and economically. In South Africa, outside the black states, the population is mixed, and cultural and income levels differ widely. In Switzerland there is a long tradition of political involvement by the people in the process of democratic government and a long history of social, racial and political tolerance. The same can unfortunately not be said of this country. Finally, Switzerland has only on rare occasions been attacked from outside, whereas this country is today threatened on all sides.

It is therefore clear that the Swiss system could not be imposed on this country in its entirety. But could certain adaptations and simplifications of the Swiss model be effected that would make it workable in this country?

Firstly on the local or municipal level

In South Africa we have White, Black, Coloured and Asian municipalities. It is now generally conceded, and the idea is being implemented, that they should all be given a very large measure of autonomy to administer their own affairs.

Initially the administration of non-European towns would no doubt leave much to be desired. The inhabitants have had little or no experience in self-government. As the example of a town like Nairobi shows, there would initially be an acute shortage of competent financial, technical and administrative personnel. The priorities imposed by councillors would probably sometimes be peculiar, though this is by no means an African prerogative, and there would be a prevalent lack of co-ordination between departments, with a consequent low level of efficiency.⁴ Self-government may nevertheless be preferable to good government, and many of these difficulties could be overcome by stretching the take-over period and by seconding experienced officials to the new autonomous bodies.

The administration of black towns would also, and above all, have to be changed from centrally administered centres to places where private ownership and enterprise would be allowed to operate freely, and from dormitory towns to viable servicing, distribution and industrial areas.

Inter-municipal and regional co-ordination could be achieved by metropolitan boards and by provincial authorities on the administrative level and by public corporations on the technical level. This would apply to the provision of services such as health, roads, energy, water and commuter services. Even the Railways, Harbours and Airways could each be organised as a public corporation. The same form of organisation could be applied to the Printing Works and to Tourism and even to Posts and Telecommunication.

Secondly, on the state and provincial level

In our highly centralised state, certain limited powers have, since Union, been delegated to the provincial authorities and, more recently, to the governments of the black states. If South Africa were to assume a more decentralised structure, many of the functions now carried out by the Central State would have to be devolved on the Provinces and black states. These would include Education, Health, Public Works, Sport and Recreation, and many of the functions now performed by the Departments of Forestry, Agriculture, Industry, Commerce, Mining, Justice, Police and Interior. As the country is at present over-administered, a number of departments and sections of departments could undoubtedly also be scrapped.

Whereas the black states would have to be consolidated, the two largest Provinces, the Cape and the Transvaal, could be divided into smaller entities.

Representation on the provincial bodies would be by the local authorities. At present, 85% of the Whites, 100% of the Asians, 72% of the Coloureds and over a third of the Blacks are urbanised. By the end of the century the vast bulk of all the racial groups will live in towns. The sphere of jurisdiction

of each municipal authority could be extended for electoral purposes to include the surrounding rural areas. This would have to be effected on the basis of language, culture or race, i.e. on the basis of what has been called "corporate" federalism. Where the population is culturally segmented and the various elements highly interspersed, this would undoubtedly be the best means of preventing tension between the different cultural groups.⁵

The third and final level would be constituted by the Central State.

It would take the form of either a federation or a confederation, or a combination of both.

In the case of a federation, the functions of the Central State would be delegated to it by the constituent states. These would probably include External Defence, Central Finance, Customs and Excise, Foreign Policy and Economic Planning and Policy. Crucial issues would be how the constituent states would be represented in the Central Government and the relation between the Executive and Legislative Authorities, i.e. between the Cabinet and the Parliament in the Central Government Structure.

(b) *The consociational solution of our problems*

The question of whether the power struggle between different racial or ethnic groups within a plural society can be solved peacefully within a democratic framework has very generally been answered by political theorists in the negative - and the examples of countries such as Ireland, Cyprus and the Lebanon tend to substantiate this view.

Such a pessimistic conclusion has invariably been based on the assumption that the system of government would be a unitary one, established on the Westminster method of government, where a winner in a competitive election appropriates all the power.

According to the proponents of Consociational Democracy, however, a democratic solution of the problem becomes possible when a system is evolved for ensuring the separate identity of groups that desire it. It is, in fact, only when the maintenance of the political identity of these groups has been assured that power-sharing between them becomes negotiable. The possibility of conflict is in fact greatly reduced if each group administers those matters that directly concern it. This, as we have seen, can be effected either on a territorial or on a personal basis.

The main features of such a Consociational or Concordance Democracy - besides the autonomy of the local and ethnic groups - according to the exponents, are:

1. government by coalition,
2. the right of veto, and
3. the proportional representation of groups.

1. *Government by coalition*

In a Concordance Democracy conflicts between the different groups would be solved by the deliberate and institutionalised co-operation of their leaders. The political elite would, in fact, play a cardinal role in such a democracy.

"Strongly divided societies", says Hans Daalder, "can be stabilised by a conscious effort on the part of political elites, provided they deliberately seek to counteract the immobilising effects of cultural fragmentation."⁶

In a politically competitive system such as our own, the control of all spheres of potential conflict is considered essential for the survival of the dominant group, with the result that the party that once succeeds in obtaining a parliamentary majority, tends to remain in power indefinitely.

A Concordance Democracy, on the other hand, rests on the principle of obtaining the largest possible coalition. All groups are involved in the administration of power. Compromises consequently have to be effected, even in what are considered as basic ideological conflicts.

2. *The exercise of the veto*

The need to compromise is enforced by the right of the veto by any group. Important decisions consequently cannot be taken against the will of a minority group, and this ensures a very basic measure of security to minorities. Sparing use of it would be made however, according to the proponents, because its use by any one group in a particular case could evoke the corresponding use of it in an ensuing situation. Only when the basic interests of any group are seriously affected, would resort be taken to it in practice.

3. *The proportional representation of groups*

Finally, as far as possible, the various segments of the population are involved in the exercise of power on a proportional basis, not only in regard to the distribution of legislative and executive powers, but also in regard to the entry into public office and the division of public resources.

As the emphasis in legislative and executive bodies would continually have to be placed on reaching amicable agreement among contending parties, rather than on enforcing the will of the majority, representation on both state and central legislatures would, especially initially, have to be effected by consultation, and changes effected when necessary in the course of time.

Provision is, in fact, often made in consociational constitutions for the over-representation of minorities in societies in which a majority segment faces one or more minority groups.

Many consociational elements are included in the South African Government's new constitutional plan

Thus segmental autonomy is proposed by the conferment of decision-making authority in all internal matters to three separate parliaments (White, Coloured and Asian) and to their respective cabinets. Provision is also made for separate regional and local authorities.

The grand coalition concept is incorporated in the form of a cabinet council in which the three segmental cabinets will be represented. This council will be chaired by a president elected by an electoral college composed of members of the three different segments. Legislation applicable to all three segments has to be approved by all three parliaments.

The idea of proportionality is reflected in the maintenance of a rough proportionality between the sizes of the different population groups and the sizes of the respective parliaments and, above all, in their representation in the cabinet council and the presidential college.

A serious defect in the proposed scheme, however, is that, apart from the granting of autonomy to black towns, no provision is made for the representation of Blacks on a regional or central basis. If provision had been made for the inclusion of a black parliament and for black representation in the cabinet council and the presidential electoral college, a very important advance would have been made in the establishment of a concordance democracy in this country. But it would, of course, have been impossible to do this without the sacrifice of white control. It is interesting to note also that no provision has been made in the proposed constitution for the imposition by the minority parties of an effective veto.

There naturally exists the grave danger that a right of veto could be used too frequently and that it could, in consequence, accentuate inter-segmental tension, as it did in the Cypriot consociation.

Provision is, however, made that if consensus cannot be obtained for the passing of important legislation, the State President can, with the support of one parliament, impose the necessary legislation. Too frequent resort to this measure could obviously also result in serious conflict.

Other weaknesses of the scheme, from a consociational point of view, are:

1. the dominant position maintained by the Whites;
2. no allowance is made for gradual variation in the representation of the different groups with changes in their relative importance;
3. the apparent lack of consultation between the racial groups

in the formulation of the new constitutional proposals.

Will a concordance system work in South Africa?

South Africans, of course, represent an extreme form of a plural and deeply divided society.

1. We have a great diversity of racial groups, and these differ in culture, education, political experience and income structure.
2. There is no strong sense of common identity and relations between the different segments leave much to be desired.
3. The country has a dual economy, with a very sophisticated section and one which is still largely on a subsistence level.
4. An essential condition for the success of the system is the ability and willingness of the political elite to implement the system and to persuade their followers to accept it. This condition does indeed exist among both Whites and Blacks. But among Blacks it is largely dependent on their unambiguous assertion of black rights and interests, and if they fail to maintain this stance, they stand the danger of being discarded and of being referred to as stooges. This has, incidentally, also happened to white leaders in the past.

Such conditions, of course, make any form of democratic government, whether consociational or majoritarian, extremely difficult if not impossible.

The proponents of the system, however, maintain that the long-term efficiency of the system can be high, and that the friendly co-existence of the various groups is in any case of overriding importance to the survival of the country. "Whatever the disadvantages of the system", says one commentator, "under the unfavourable conditions of segmented differences it represents the best type of democracy that one could rationally expect."

It is maintained that the political elite of this country have the power to introduce the system, should they have the desire to do so.

The German investigation already referred to shows that, as far as the urban Blacks are concerned, though the majority would prefer a multi-racial unitary state, at least half were prepared to accept the Concordance system - and would make serious compromises to put it into effect - provided the Whites were serious in implementing the proposal. A favourable response was also obtained from the other racial groups. According to the investigators, only the White Power Elite was not prepared to accept it. The status-quo orientated group within the power elite was still too strong.

The argument that the Government could not proceed too far ahead of the voters they however considered of doubtful validity. A very considerable proportion of voters, according to the investigation, were in fact ahead of their leaders, and the majority of voters would be prepared to follow their political leaders, even if it involved serious political sacrifices, and the bulk of the Whites, whatever their political affiliations, would be prepared to support a policy of peaceful political change. In view therefore of the very large measure of potential acceptance of these proposals, I think that the views of the Concordance Theorists should be given careful consideration.

The Government has indicated that its proposals for constitutional change should be regarded as indicative principles rather than as mandatory prescriptions. It would indeed seem that we at present have a climate in which discussions between members of our various racial groups should be initiated to see whether a large measure of unanimity could be arrived at in regard to the basic consociational proposals or variations of these proposals.

FOOTNOTES

1. Hanf, Weiland and Vierdag, *Südafrika: Friedlicher Wandel?*
2. Hanf et al, *op. cit.*
3. Werner Kägi, "Federation and Freedom", in *Freedom and Serfdom, An Anthology of Western Thought*, ed. A. Hunold.
4. H.W. Werlin, *Governing an African City: A Study of Nairobi*, New York, 1974.
5. The idea is that each individual should be able to declare, on the basis on the "personality principle", to which group he wishes to belong and that these groups should become cultural communities. The principle was applied in Estonia after the First World War, and is now being implemented in Belgium.
6. Hans Daalder, "The Consociational Democracy Theme", in *World Politics*, 26 (1973/74), p. 607.