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- 2 J.P. Mackey, *An Introduction to Celtic Christianity*, Edinburgh, 1989. p. 19.
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Forces And Divisions that Contribute to Violence in South Africa

John Dzimba OP

Very few people in South Africa are satisfied with the present socio-political scene and its prevailing violence; most people agree that change is necessary. But that is the limit of their agreement. There are great internal differences amongst both black and white people about the means to be used in bringing about change. These differences amongst people of the same race, national group and even political party complicate the problem, generate further conflict, and could contribute

to violence.

Alternatively, such differences could be an optimistic sign in that people often shape their political goals in terms of their own individual thought and interest, instead of just adhering to a racial or national block. Leaving aside the varieties of political aim and outlook, this article focuses on the models of 'identity' different groups are using or are prepared to use (consciously or unconsciously) to generate or provoke violence in South Africa. To make this analysis I have distinguished five categories: race and apartheid; fear and closed-mindedness; clash of ideologies; fear and propaganda; and the international implications of conflict in South Africa. These categories should be discussed in the context of the present 'dominating' counter-identities existing in South Africa. These, in turn, centre around the idea of National Security, the maintenance of Afrikaner identity through racial separation, Black Consciousness, ' Liberalism', Capitalism, Marxism in its various forms, the Liberation struggle and several forms of ethno-nationalism or tribal exclusiveness. It is through understanding each of these 'counter-identities' that we can grasp the complex forces forging South African 'identities'.

Race and Apartheid

In terms of international law, Apartheid has been declared a crime against humanity. The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid came into force in 1976, having been ratified by a sufficient number of states.¹ The basis for this declaration is that legalized and systematically perpetrated racism is a denial of the fundamental value of human community and solidarity. Racial differences on their own are likely, through human failure, to give rise to prejudice, social ostracism and group animosities; these problems are prevalent throughout the world. But racism becomes entrenched in a country's social system, not just as an aberration within it, when, as in South Africa - racial or ethnic differentiation is coupled with:

- 1 — differential legislation for each race, especially when enacted by one race group alone.
- 2 — seizure and possession of land and its resources.
- 3 — the lack of equal and common opportunities, e.g. in education, medical care, housing and travel facilities.
- 4 — wide and unbridgeable economic disparities between rich and poor.
- 5 — military and police superiority of one race over another.
- 6 — lack of social channels for inter-racial communication.

7 — the limitation of effective political participation in the central government to one section of the population.

8 — the unilateral deprivation of South African citizenship for some of the population.

All these features are part of the apartheid system that has been built up steadily over the decades. Certain features of 'petty apartheid', as in separate entrances to post offices, statutory job reservation and fully segregated sport are being dismantled. Nevertheless, 'grant apartheid', which is most evident in the establishment of homelands, the forced removal of long and even legally settled communities, and the denial of people's South African citizenship, has been more stringently applied in recent years. Grant apartheid relies increasingly upon violence and coercion for its continuance. The destruction of people's homes and shelters, the removal of individuals at gunpoint, imprisonment of pass offenders are all overt acts of violence. Apartheid is really a legalized continuation of the wars of the last century. It is difficult for those in power to dismantle the apartheid apparatus once it has been legally sanctioned and enforced. However, it is ultimately a false solution to the problems of a plural society, since it only exacerbates the divisions and conflicts of interest between races rather than diminishing them.

Fear and Closed-Mindedness

Another contributory factor in raising the level of violence in South Africa is the high proportion of the population which is unable to relate humanely to others different from itself in nationality, outlook, ideas or interests. Instead of showing an open mind by evaluating and acting on relevant information on its own intrinsic merits, many people are confined and limited by the norms of their cultural group. Their closed-mindedness stems both from personal anxieties and their need for self-aggrandizement; it is cultivated and reinforced by a strong authoritarian social system. Instead of viewing the world, and anything strange as basically friendly and inviting, everything that does not conform to their beliefs and expectations is regarded as threatening. People in this predicament rely almost solely on their own sources of information, are unable to accept alternative viewpoints or to evaluate critics constructively. Indeed, they usually dismiss or denigrate those who challenge their opinions. Such closed-minded people are fearful, and so can be easily manipulated by anyone who plays on their fears.²

The most glaring instance of intolerance and closed-mindedness is displayed in the sheer inability to behave civilly when dealing with someone of a different race. Displays of abuse, attempts to belittle, seen

in an individual's being as abrupt or unhelpful as possible, are regrettably all too common features of social intercourse in South Africa. At times intolerance is not confined to verbal abuse and the humiliation of persons of another race or outlook, but extends to physical assault on the part of both private and public officials.³ For those on the receiving end, such treatment can only increase their sense of despair, resentment and desire for vengeance.

Some indicators of the deep fearfulness prevailing throughout the society are seen in its widespread preoccupation with security, eg in employing guards, using dogs, erecting high walls and fencing etc. . . Undoubtedly there are many real fears in South Africa's violent society. However, while such defensive measures may protect people for a time, they do nothing to lessen the underlying causes of violence. In fact when they are the only measures used, they may, by cutting people off further from one another and so preventing understanding, make society more threatening and violent. It is also alarming that neither the government-controlled educational system nor its media—directed as they are to all race and national groups—are concerned to help people become more open-minded, to understand alternative viewpoints or be less dominated by threats and fears.

The Clash of Ideologies

Amidst the personal and societal insecurities in South Africa, many groups of people inevitably adopt a single framework for 'orientating' their thoughts and, especially, their feelings. These frameworks or ideologies predetermine how their adherents will view and interpret events. Ideologies also lay out for those holding them certain definite lines of action which in terms of the ideology are completely justified.

Within South Africa, various social movements hold and partly define their own membership by common adherence to a particular ideology. In this connexion we could cite the ideologies centred around National Security - maintaining Afrikaner identity through racial separation, Black Consciousness, Liberalism, Capitalism, Marxism (in various forms), the Liberation Struggle and several forms of ethno-nationalism or tribal exclusiveness. Each of these ideologies when rigidly adhered to is ultimately constricting, narrowing a person's capacity for thinking and feeling. At times when experience does not completely match what the ideology predicts, a person is likely to retreat into a rigid orthodoxy and shout the ideological jargon all the louder in order to cover his or her doubts about it. In this state, it is easy for an ideologically bound group to manipulate language in any way they wish, so long as it is useful to their cause.⁴ Ideological intransigence generates

and itself feeds upon opposition and hostility.

The combination of closed-mindedness, the capacity to tolerate people who are different and learn from them, the propaganda of self-enclosed ideologies make it very difficult for the many problems and tensions of South Africa to be resolved in any process of peaceful negotiation. Since various political and ethnic leaders rely for support on an exclusive group, they have frequently played upon its fears or presented issues only in terms of narrow sectional interests. This has only increased intolerance and widened the divisions between 'us and them'. Although it may have temporarily consolidated their political power base, it has increasingly closed channels of communication and weakened people's confidence in peacefully resolving their differences. Something of an exception to this has been the recognition and acceptance of the workers' rights in South Africa—though not in all homelands—to form trade unions that really can represent them in industrial disputes.

Fear And Propaganda

The limits of one's world are largely determined by the limits of one's communications. Largely because of its curtailed communications system, many people in South Africa are living within a very confined society, a society that is so restricted that everywhere else is sometimes referred to as 'the outside world'. Although there are many immigrants and a number of foreign visitors to South Africa, the ordinary people of the country—both black and white—are still very cut off from outside influence. The most striking instance of this is that South Africans cannot visit most other countries in Africa, and very rarely meet anyone from there. This lack of ability to check with reality makes it easy for rumours to spread and for propaganda to present a selective view of events in the rest of Africa. This simplistic picture portrays that where white rule stops, chaos begins. Although there is no denying that parts of Africa have suffered greatly and still face enormous problems, this simplistic view prevents any understanding of why these difficulties have occurred, and what could be done to avoid them in future. In concentrating so much on the rest of Africa's problems and failures, little or no news is given of genuine developments and successes. No mention is made of the military and economic sabotage, or destabilization, carried out to help ensure that non-compliant parts of Africa continue to experience difficulties. The overall result of the propaganda and the restricted communication between South Africa and the rest of Africa is one of fear, especially for white people.

A similar process takes place within South Africa largely because

the transmission of news from one section of the population, and from one region of the country to another, is very unreliable. The numerous laws limiting the press, and the reluctant financial support for investigative journalism, make it very difficult to be fully informed about what is happening within the country. Television can be relied upon to give the government's point of view on those issues it dares think about.

The inability to face the truth, whether this stems from personal inadequacy or from the withholding of news, produces a state of fear. If you cannot see where present events are leading, or understand some of the reasons behind them, you cannot speculate as to what the future portends. In this state it is easy to be overwhelmed by fear and so want to maintain the status quo, however inadequate it might be. For white people, there is deep fear of what black people will do in future; while for black, fear is concentrated upon what will happen in the present. Yet there are very few opportunities for both black and white to gather together to share their fears, and in doing so receive some support and reassurance from one another. Only when people both have access to the truth and are able to bring themselves to face it, can any hope begin to arise. In place of that, at present both black and white have to try to suffocate their fears by a show of threatening bravado that frequently spills over into violence.

The International Implications of Conflict in South Africa:

The inter-racial conflicts and the structural violence of racial discrimination and dispossession has caught the imagination and moral concern of many people throughout the world. Many black people, and those who were formerly colonized, feel intensely that apartheid (the legalised application of force to perpetuate white domination), is a gross affront to their human dignity. Many white people are aware of, and feel guilty about, the crimes of former colonial powers, slave traders and the Nazis with their super-race arrogance. They see in the complete non-recognition of African human rights in South Africa a continuation of the racism they are trying to transcend.

There is no denying that racism is extensively practised in other countries of the world, but South Africa differs in making it into a principle governing an individual's whole life. The state legalizes it and provides it with an ideological justification. Many people in other parts of the world would readily sympathize with the difficulties South Africa has in building a non-racial society in which the rights of every individual and group may be recognised. If it were not for the white government's insistence that it alone can and will provide the solution

into which every other racial group must be fitted, such a non-racial society might be a more likely possibility. In a world where racial tensions are often acute, the perpetuation of apartheid in South Africa has been judged a threat to world peace;⁵ it is an issue that could disastrously divide the world along racial lines.

Undoubtedly it is the racism of apartheid that makes South Africa a focus of world attention, but other concerns and motives complicate the issue, for instance:

- overseas politicians have to take a stand on apartheid and relations with South Africa since this is increasingly a live issue in their countries' domestic and foreign politics.
- attitudes towards apartheid and support for either the South African government or the liberation movements (ANC and PAC), for refugees and exiles are issues in the clash of ideologies between East and West.
- due to its material wealth, its cheap labour, its attractiveness as a field for investment and given its potential as an expanding market, many Western nations have considerable economic interests in South Africa, which they do not wish to be jeopardised.
- continued safe use of the Cape sea route and access to South Africa's minerals are important for the Western nations; they do not wish the area to come under Soviet control or influence.
- its high proportion of imports and exports makes the South African economy very sensitive to both trade patterns, boycotts, disinvestments and sanctions.

On all of these features of the international scene, there are varied perceptions, different assessments, conflicting interests and mixed motives operating; these all fluctuate as conditions overseas are themselves subject to change. However, if apartheid began to be dismantled and its major grievances removed from within South Africa, most of the strain in South Africa's international relations with both its neighbours in Africa and the rest of the world could be eased by normal diplomatic contacts and negotiations. The prime reason for South Africa's international isolation, and the antagonism towards it, is its domestic policy of maintaining white domination in political and economic matters. Admittedly, there have been alterations in how that domination is sustained, but no lessening in the structural violence by which the state maintains itself in power.

Conclusion

This analysis has described many of South Africa's problems symptomatically, but certain tentative conclusions may be drawn. Without doubt all of South Africa suffers from a high degree of wild and structural violence. This is liable to damage seriously any and every aspect of human life. Its causes are deeply embedded in socio-historical events and their consequences, as well as lying within the disturbed personalities of many individuals. Whatever the intention may have been of those establishing it, this endemic violence is reinforced by the dominant legal, political and economic system. Furthermore, a variety of inter-linked military conflicts rages throughout South Africa. These are exacerbated by the interference and connivance of various world powers, who intervene in the region through the provision of military assistance and the negotiation of various (formal or informal) alliances.

In stating how extensive violence is amongst the peoples of South Africa there is no intention of overlooking the many people who are for peace, who do not wish violence on their neighbours, nor especially of denying or undervaluing the dedicated work for justice and solidarity. Rather, the fear is that even these people will be swamped by the prevailing violence and their efforts negated.

Everyone throughout South Africa is entangled in this violent situation. Conflicts need to be wound down and violence reduced by altering the conditions that provoke and sustain them. Since violence pervades every sphere of life and finally destroys its human value, efforts to counter it need to be just as comprehensive. This is especially true in South Africa where, besides those wounded or killed in quick violent battles, many more people are broken morally, psychologically, physically and socially –by persistent degradation and abuse. Slowly their strength, hope and human dignity are eroded.

Although no one can resolve all these problems, or even knows what would fully resolve them, opportunities are there for overcoming the conditions that provoke them. Concerning violence, then, the central moral issue is not whether a person should heed a call to arms, but whether he or she will grasp the real, even though still limited, opportunities of striving for:

- open communication rather than intolerance;
- justice rather than military domination;
- trust rather than suspicion and fear;
- co-operation and sharing rather than greed or economic exclusiveness;
- respect for human dignity rather than discrimination.⁶

- 1 *The United Nations and Human Rights*, (UNO, New York, 1984), p.212.
- 2 see M Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind*, (Basic Books, New York), 1960
- 3 Some examples are given in SABC, Report on Police Conduct during Township Protests (August - November 1984), 1984.
- 4 R.J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*, (Norton, New York, 1961), pp. 429-30
- 5 UNO Security Council, 1970. In 1983 the AD Hoc Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights described the policy of apartheid as 'a collective form of slavery'.
- 6 CF. World Conference on Religion and Peace, Statement on South Africa of the IVth World Assembly (Nairobi 1984)

The Incarnation and the Fully Human Life

Anthony Fisher OP

Hors-d'oeuvre: Jesus the party-goer

Søren Kierkegaard told a story about a powerful king who truly loved a humble maiden. The king's problem was: how was he to elicit from her a true love not based on mere homage or less genuine motives? He could make her a princess—but that would be an artificial and external act, testifying more to his power than his love. He could, as in the fairy-tales, disguise himself as a beggar and win her love as such—but true love cannot be based on deception. After much thought he realized that if the union could not be brought about by the elevation of the maiden or by his own pretence, there was only one possibility: he must resign his kingdom, and humbling himself to her station, become a slave. And this he did. God became man. No mere jest. No mere outer garment humanity. God must suffer all things, endure all things, experience all things—because God's love is genuine.¹

We do not know much about Jesus' particular temperament. We can glean from the Gospels that he liked periods of solitude, was prayerful, and had a strong sense of mission. He hated hypocrisy and had a special affection for the down-and-outs. One aspect of his personality that has not received much attention in traditional spiritual writing is that Jesus was a great party-goer.

Jesus loved eating and drinking with his friends. Partly this reflected his milieu. God became man at a particular time and place. He was born